

Colonizing Ireland in the Hybrid Performance/ Text of Shakespeare's *Henry V*

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Abstract

Shakespeare's *Henry V* is a hybrid play united and divided primarily between dramatic performance and textual historiography, the latter available mostly to the upper classes of the English monarchy, and the former to the lower. Through omissions, interpolations, and reorderings of sources, Shakespeare produces a mythopoetic ideal on the stage and on the page simultaneously presents a realpolitical critique of its falsified mythopoesis. The discursive context of the play's hybridity is the English colonization of Ireland. For its popular theater audience, *Henry V* supports an idealization of British martial imperialism embodied in the "mirror of all Christian kings," while the published text offers a critique of its own mythopoetic state propaganda to the literate classes of the political elite.

Keywords

hybridity, colonialism, Irish rebellion, stage and page, Michael Williams, Ancient Pistol, Gower, Fluellen, Holinshed, Alexander the Pig

Introduction

The hybrid performance/text of *Henry V* presents a complex critique of imperialist war produced during an unedifying episode in early British imperialism: the suppression of the Irish rebellion of the 1590s. Its textual discourse upon political propaganda and historiography addresses the ruling classes who were having trouble enlisting enthusiastic cooperation in their wars by the commoners who made up most of the public theater audience as well as most of the army. While critics such as Phyllis Rackin prefer to read

Shakespeare's texts "as playscripts to be performed in a theater rather than as 'literature' to be read" (ix), this paper argues that Shakespeare's *Henry V* shows one face to the reader and another to the public theater audience, the former available mostly to the upper classes and the latter to the lower. Recent Shakespeare scholars have tried to bridge the gap that has opened between text and performance based criticism. A glance at the Spring 2009 Cambridge UP Renaissance and Early Modern Studies catalog, for instance, turns up Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster's *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in the Elizabethan Theatre*, which demonstrates "the artful means by which Shakespeare responded to the competing claims of acting and writing in the Elizabethan era." In the same catalogue Patrick Cheney's *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* responds to "recent scholars [who] have attended more to [Shakespeare's] innovative theatricality, or his indifference to textuality, than to his contribution to modern English authorship." Cheney instead "demonstrates the presence throughout the plays of sustained intertextual fictions about the twin media of printed poetry and theatrical performance." Rackin also finds such discourses at work within Shakespeare's texts:

Renaissance historiographic texts excluded the unlettered masses who constituted the majority of the population. The theater, by contrast, was accessible to the illiterate as well as to the learned. Adapting historical writing for oral theatrical performance, Shakespeare transgressed the socially significant boundary between writing and speech, but vestiges of this boundary survive in his texts, distinguishing the invented colloquial dialogues between commoners from the transcriptions of historical reports recited in the elevated language of his kings and noblemen.
(233)

This paper argues that *Henry V* is a hybrid play united and divided primarily between textual historiography and dramatic performance which is engaged in a discourse upon modern imperialist war whose theoretical context is the English colonization of Ireland.

Rather than a transgression of the "boundary between writing and speech," the hybridity of Shakespeare's *Henry V* more

traditionally is attributed to the ambiguous character of its protagonist. Karl Wentersdorf observes that, for some critics, *Henry V* "presents the story of an ideal monarch and glorifies his achievements [while] for others, the protagonist is a Machiavellian militarist [. . .] whose deeds reveal both hypocrisy and ruthlessness" (265). Such an unfavorable evaluation of Henry's character is supported by historians. Lacey Baldwin Smith, for example, says that

Henry V, the hero, the paragon of kingly and soldierly virtues—loyal, just, upright, honorable, able, chivalric, and pious—turns out on closer inspection to have had feet not of clay but of iron. "Hard, domineering, over-ambitious, bigoted, sanctimonious, priggish" are better words to describe a king who had most of the least attractive qualities of a warrior-saint.

(14)

Herschel Baker in the *Riverside Shakespeare* quotes William Hazlitt, among several Shakespeare critics of similar opinion, who states that

The real Henry "was fond of war and low company" [. . .] and of very little else. "He was careless, dissolute and ambitious;—idle, or doing mischief. In private, he seemed to have no idea of the common decencies of life, which he subjected to a kind of regal licence; in public affairs, he seemed to have no idea of any rule or right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy and archiepiscopal advice."

(931)

E. M. W. Tillyard accordingly insists that Shakespeare "did not accept the supposed siding of God with the English against the French he so loudly proclaimed in *Henry V*" (210). For Lily Campbell on the other hand, "in *Henry V* the English are mirrored triumphant in a righteous cause, achieving victory through the blessing of God." She insists that "a mood of exultation pervades the play" and that "Henry V stands as the ideal hero in contrast with the troubled John, the deposed Richard, the rebel Henry IV"

(255). M. M. Reese likewise rejects the "formidable body of critical opinion," going back at least to Samuel Johnson, which holds that Shakespeare's "natural skepticism could not help revealing the essential hollowness" of the mirror of all Christian kings that Reese and others (such as Dover Wilson) read as sincerely intended in Shakespeare's *Henry* (317). And even Hazlitt admits that "we like him in the play" where

we take a very romantic heroic, patriotic, and poetical delight in the boasts and feats of our younger Harry [i.e. Henry], as they appear on the stage and are confined to lines of ten syllables; where no blood follows the stroke that wounds our ears, where no harvest bends beneath horses' hoofs, no city flames, no little child is butchered, no dead men's bodies are found piled on heaps and festering the next morning—in the orchestral

(qtd. in Baker 931)

Stephen Greenblatt, does not dispute interpretations of the prince as, "in Maynard Mack's words, 'an ideal image of the potentialities of the English character,'" but he observes "that such an ideal image involves as its positive condition the constant production of its own radical subversion and the powerful containment of that subversion" (30). Since Norman Rabkin's 1977 essay, "Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V*," several critics, along with Greenblatt and Rackin, have described the play itself as inherently self-contradictory or at least ambiguous. Citing Harold Goddard, who compares the play to the golden casket of *The Merchant of Venice*, "fairer to a superficial view than to a more searching perception" (284), Rabkin argues that *Henry V* is a kind of hybrid "rabbit-duck" (280) in which "Shakespeare creates a work that points in two opposite directions, virtually daring us to choose one of the two opposed interpretations it requires of us" (279). Rackin makes a similar observation. "In *Henry V*," she says,

two views are deliberately clashed against each other. We get not only two interpretations of the action but two accounts of the action, one in the discourse of the chorus and one in the dramatic representation staged before us; and the two accounts [. . .] insist upon each other's

inadequacies.
(69)

According to Greenblatt the "apparent subversion of the glorification of [Henry V] has led some recent critics to view the panegyric as bitterly ironic or to argue, more plausibly, that Shakespeare's depiction of Henry V is radically ambiguous." Against such radical ambiguity he suggests that "the subversive doubts the play continually awakens serve paradoxically to intensify the power of the king and his war, even while they cast shadows upon this power" (43).

Such critics who find these various types of hybrid play in *Henry V* have all based their interpretation, not upon viewing one or two performances, but rather upon several close readings of the "playscript." With the exception of particularly pointed directorial emphasis, only such a close reading reveals the play's ambiguities. Greenblatt says that "we are continually reminded that Hal is a 'juggler', a conniving hypocrite, and that the power he both serves and comes to embody is glorified usurpation and theft; yet at the same time, we are drawn to the celebration of both the prince and his power" (30). It is only on the stage, however, that we are irresistibly drawn with the pace of the performance away from contemplation of Hal's juggling towards the play's generically comic conclusion. On the page, we are drawn to multiple readings of the text and to comparison of the text with the textual sources, and it is here that the jugglings both of the play and of its protagonist become visible.

The hybridity of *Henry V* thus arises from its essential nature as performance/text. Reese observes that "critics who dislike the play may fairly be asked to give an honest answer to the question of what their response has been when—if they ever have—they have seen it acted on the stage," and he claims that "no play of Shakespeare's has such a simple, unvarying effect. It is absolutely proof against the perversity of directors. It is quite impossible to do anything 'clever' with it, and the only way of producing it is the way the author indicated long ago" (319). Such "clever" productions, of which Kenneth Branagh's 1989 version, "frankly antagonistic to its filmic predecessor, Laurence Olivier's [. . .] production" (Sutherland and Watts 108) in emphasizing the horrors of war, might be considered an example, themselves must be based upon

close readings of Shakespeare's text which were not accessible to the "unlettered masses" when the play was written. But while Reese affirms the performance of *Henry V* indicated by the author to be proof against the ambiguity of "perverse" interpretation, he therefore dismisses as irrelevant to the meaning of the play the ambiguities clear to many close readers of its text. Reese ostensibly would strongly approve Olivier's film which "glorified British martial spirit" and "was starkly patriotic, verging on propagandistic" (Sutherland and Watts 108). According to the Internet Movie Database, the government gave Olivier the enormous sum of two million dollars to make the film partly as a morale booster for the British who were being subjected to the German blitzkrieg, and there are consequently several omissions, at Winston Churchill's request, of elements that tend to provoke criticism of Henry as the "Mirror of all Christian Kings." Olivier's film comes off as an encomium on British nationalism and its glorious martial history. As Rabkin comments, "For the generation who came to know it under the spell of Olivier's great film, it is hard to imagine *Henry V* any other way, but Olivier's distortions, deletions, and embellishments only emphasized what is already in the play" (285). That is to say that, despite the moral ambiguities discoverable in its text, the text "indicates" just such a jingoistic performance as Olivier produced. Olivier's "distortions, deletions, and embellishments" do no violence to its dramatic coherence and only offend those who have read it.

It is the Chorus of *Henry V* himself who sets up the dichotomy between readers of a textual history and audience of a stage play. "Vouchsafe to those that haue not read the Story," he entreats us,

That I may prompt them: and of such as haue,
I humbly pray them to admit th' excuse
Of time, of numbers, and due course of things,
Which cannot in their huge and proper life,
Be here presented.

(lines 2851-2856)¹

He admits, though he makes excuses, that the literate audience may

¹ Quotes from Shakespeare's plays are taken from the First Folio text cited in the bibliography unless designated as Quarto.

know the ideal Christian monarchy passing over the stage is not the historical truth. The history of Henry V in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the nearly exclusive source of Shakespeare's play, itself introduces some question of the reliability of historical text. In reporting the number of English killed at Agincourt, for instance, Holinshed says that "Of Englishmen, there died at this battell, Edward duke Yorke, the earle of Suffolke, sir Richard Kikelie, and Dauie Gamme esquier, and of all other not aboute fieve and twentie persons" (555). Shakespeare follows this account closely. Henry first peruses a "Note" (line 2800) of the French casualties. Then asks for "the number of our English dead" which he recites from another note as

Edward the Duke of Yorke, the Earle of Suffolke,
Sir Richard Ketly, Dauy Gam Esquire;
None else of name: and of all other men,
But fieve and twentie.
(lines 2821-2825)

Holinshed qualifies his own account, however, "as some do report" and admits that "other writers of greater credit affirme, that there were slaine aboute fieve or six hundred persons" (555). While Shakespeare gives only the first account—ostensibly of lesser credit—Henry's center stage shuffling of the papers of different authors emphasizes the multiplicity of texts involved in the accounting and dramatizes the historiographic labor demanded by the play from the literate audience interested in the historical facts.

This essay will try to demonstrate that it is not only a careful reading of Holinshed's *Chronicles* that exposes the play's falsifications, but a close reading of Shakespeare's own text, without such "distortions, deletions, and embellishments" as were thought prudent by Winston Churchill (or whomever) during the second world war. The performance preserves the idealized "mirror of all Christian kings" for its popular audience while the text offers a critique of its own mythopoetic state propaganda to the literate classes of the political elite. Through omissions, interpolations, and reorderings of the sources, Shakespeare thereby produces a mythopoetic ideal on the stage, and on the page simultaneously, presents a realpolitikal critique of its falsified mythopoesis.

Shakespeare's Challenge to Elizabethan Imperialism

In explaining away the clear ambiguities evident to a close reading of its text, it is sometimes suggested that modern audiences of *Henry V* are troubled by actions that would not have been questioned by Shakespeare's contemporaries. "Where [Henry] seems to modern ideas to have been quite astonishingly insensitive," says Reese, "he was in fact directing the [French] campaign according to the recognised principles of his age" (328). Issues of historical moral ambiguity, however, are not projected upon *Henry V* from the future; they are clearly articulated, for example, in the Williams episode, thoroughly invented by Shakespeare, in which Henry incognito suggests to three soldiers that they should be glad to die for their king, as ironically he is glad to die for himself. "Me thinks I could not dye any where so contented, as in the Kings company," he tells them, "his Cause being just and his Quarrell honorable" (lines 1973-1975). One of the three, Michael Williams, replies that whether the king's cause is just is "more than we know," and another, John Bates, continues, "I, or more then wee should seeke after; for wee know enough, if wee know wee are the Kings Subiects: if his Cause be wrong, our obedience to the King wipes the Cryme of it out of vs" (line 1978-1980). It therefore is not modern criticism, but the text itself that centralizes the issue of moral ambiguity in imperialist war.

The allusion to "the Generall of our gracious Emprise" and Ireland by the Chorus of *Henry V* to introduce Henry's victorious return from France affirm that the issues of war and imperialism on which the play discourses were not remote and abstract speculation about the dead past, but immediate and concrete, and they were therefore dangerous subjects under conditions of Elizabethan censorship.

But now behold,

[.]

How London doth powre out her Citizens,
Like to the Senatours of th' antique Rome,
With the Plebeians swarming at their heeles,
Goe forth and fetch their Conqu'ring Caesar in:
As by a lower, but by louing likelyhood,
Were now the Generall of our gracious Emprise,

As in good time he may, from Ireland comming,
Bringing Rebellion broached on his Sword;
How many would the peacefull Citie quit,
To welcome him? much more, and much more cause,
Did they this Harry.
(lines 2873-2885)

Whether Elizabeth's "Generall" is the Earl of Essex, as many editors categorically state, or Charles Blount, as suggested by Warren D. Smith (Baker 930), it is the colonial war in Ireland that the Chorus selects as an analogue "by a lower [. . .] likelihood" to the warfare of France and Rome.

Some in the audience already may have spent long nights in the Irish fens thinking about whether they should seek after the justice of the queen's cause, or whether their obedience to their sovereign wiped the crime of it out of them.² In the context of a palpable anxiety over the justice of the Queen's cause in imperialist war, the carrying forward of the Williams episode for two hundred lines during the climax of Henry's conquest of France, omitted both by Olivier and Branagh, seems less a dissonant intrusion than one of the "Mock'ries" by which, according to the Chorus introducing the episode, we are to "mind true things" (line 1842). In the first part of the episode early in act 4, Henry surreptitiously infiltrates the trio of common soldiers who are despairing of their chances around a fire on the eve of the battle and launches into a discussion of the king's character. He perhaps is fishing for compliments, but this is a good way to elicit treasonous self-incrimination, as he himself suspects Williams of speaking disingenuously "to feele other mens minds" (lines 1972-1973). After the argument about the king's responsibility *vis-à-vis* his soldiers, Williams suggests that the king's vow that he will not be ransomed alive (iterated twice in Holinshed 553, 554), and repeated four times in Shakespeare (lines 1604; 2039; 2371; 2594), might merely be conventional propaganda calculated "to make vs fight chearefully: but when our throats are cut," says Williams, "hee may be ransom'd, and wee ne're the wiser" (lines 2040-2042). This observation clearly is a rejection of

²It should be borne in mind that the literary text to which I am contrasting the ostensible Globe performance is the First Folio published twenty years after the Irish campaign.

just the sort of jingoistic propaganda the play itself often is mistaken for. Baker thinks that "in presenting Henry V's career [. . .] Shakespeare abandons clear-eyed reappraisal for the religious-political slogans of popular tradition" (933), but Williams's clear-eyed appraisal of medieval warfare makes Henry's claim unlikely to say the least, and he, for one, is not convinced. As Henry is victorious, we are left to agree with Williams's view or not, but, if nothing else, the political chaos ensuing the sudden death of a king, or any powerful noble, made submission to capture and ransom a matter of course in medieval warfare.

Shakespeare here implies that it is unreasonable for the state on the strength of its simplistic propaganda to expect commoners to ignore the evidence of history and their own reason. The disguised Henry vows that if "the King" should break his public oath, he "will neuer trust his word after" (lines 2043-2044). The hubris of another common soldier threatening the king with "a poore and a priuate displeasure" (line 2046) angers Williams, who knows that even if state propaganda is a tissue of lies, there is little the commoners can do about it. Williams replies with a peculiarly stretched metaphor, joking that the upstart soldier might as well try "to turne the Sunne to yce, with fanning in his face with a Peacocks feather" (lines 2046-2049). Having lost the argument, Henry succumbs to his warlike nature and tells Williams he would take offense if time permitted. Williams throws down the gauntlet, and they exchange gloves which they wear in their hats, so they may find each other if they survive the battle. After denying the soldiers' right to plead that they are only following orders, Henry gives his one really dramatic soliloquy in which, for more than fifty lines, as he is about to lead thousands of tired and sick soldiers to almost certain slaughter because he seeks possession of the throne of France, he ponders the hardships of being a king.

Williams has suggested that "if these men doe not dye well, it will be a black matter for the King, that led them to it; who to disobey, were against all proportion of subiection" (lines 1991-1994). Shakespeare here foreshadows the "Nuremberg Defense" so commonly used by Nazi defendants in the war crimes trials after World War Two. It was first approximated unsuccessfully in 1484 (about sixty years after the events of *Henry V*) by Peter von Hagenbach, when he stated that the various atrocities that he had allegedly committed were not his responsibility, for he was being

ordered by his superior, the Holy Roman Emperor (Greppi 531). Nuremberg Principle IV states that "The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him" (Greppi 531). Although Henry refuses the "Command responsibility" of the king assigned to him by Bates with the principle that "Euery Subjects Dutie is the Kings, but euery Subjects Soule is his owne" (lines 2024-2025), he has taken the charge seriously:

Vpon the King, let vs our Liues, our Soules,
[.]
[. . .] and our Sinnes, lay on the King:
We must beare all.
O hard Condition, Twin-borne with Greatnesse,
[.]
What infinite hearts-ease must Kings neglect,
That priuate men enioy?
(lines 2079-2087)

Henry concludes that kings have nothing that slaves and peasants do not enjoy "Sae Ceremonie, saue generall Ceremonie" (line 2089). He declines any mention of enormous estates and vast wealth which a modern view might identify as the real object of imperialist war. "What are thy Rents? what are thy Commings in? / O Ceremonie" (lines 2093-2094), he asks, ignoring the rents and comings in, the luxury, power and privilege, the freedom from want, toil, and the innumerable depredations of poverty that military conquest will help him preserve. Greenblatt observes that "Hal's meditation on the sufferings of the great [. . .] suffers a bit from the fact that he is almost single-handedly responsible for a war that by his own account and that of the enemy is causing immense civilian misery" (43).

Instead of ending the Williams business with this speech, as do many if not most performances, which would seem proportional to the episode's historical insignificance, in the text it intrudes into the conclusion of act 4, interrupting the dramatic illusion in order to emphasize the author's own rhetorical position. The resumption of the Williams episode takes place after the miraculous victory at Agincourt.

Enter Williams.

KING. [. . .] Call yonder fellow hither.

EXETER. Souldier, you must come to the King.

KING. Souldier, why wear'st thou that Gloue in thy
Cappe?

(lines 2648-2652)

Williams humbly tells the story to his dread sovereign, whom he does not recognize as the soldier he has challenged, and Henry sends him off to fetch Captain Gower. Henry then gives Williams's glove to Captain Fluellen to wear in his hat and sends him off to fetch Gower. He then sends Warwick and Gloucester to follow and make sure no harm comes of it. When Williams sees his glove he picks a fight with Fluellen, which is interrupted by the lords, until Henry enters to make peace on all sides.

KING. Giue me thy Gloue Souldier;

Looke, heere is the fellow of it:

'Twas I indeed thou promised'st to strike,

And thou hast giuen me most bitter termes.

FLU[ELLEN]. And please your Maiestie, let his Neck
answere for it, if there is any Marshall Law in the World.

KING. How canst thou make me satisfaction?

(lines 2756-2762)

Williams fearing the consequences of his rash words to the disguised king in the earlier scene defends himself, and the king shows his magnanimity, forgiving the soldier's impudence and giving him his glove full of crowns for being a man of honor, not backing down from a just quarrel. Williams exits, and the play is allowed to proceed to its happy conclusion. Williams, a commoner, thus comes close to being hanged after being too free of his tongue regarding the king's character, coercive state propaganda, and the injustices of war. Explaining himself to the king, he is instead rewarded with a glove full of crowns. By a lower, but by loving likelihood, William S., a glover by birth (though the glove as a conventional symbol of challenge admittedly needs no rationale), makes his rhetorical defense and is rewarded by the state—as Shakespeare's company later was with royal patronage—for

fanning in the sovereign's face with a feather, i.e., for representing the complaints of the commoners to the monarchy with a quill pen. Rackin also thinks that Williams is a representative of William Shakespeare (243), and elsewhere observes that Henry's "movement from the historical court of [his father] to the Boar's Head Tavern³ can also be seen as a movement from the elevated *locus* of theatrical representation to the *platea* of plebeian theatrical performance" (222, note 37). I would add that in performing the Henry and Williams dispute at popular and courtly venues, as its disguisings move on the stage between the fire circle of the common soldiers and the king's tent, Shakespeare positions the role of the dramatist of the public theater as an intermediary between the complaints and sentiments of the commoners and the state. By raising problematic issues of English history and politics in both popular and aristocratic theaters, at universities and Inns of Court, both on the stage and on the page, the Henry and Williams dispute suggests that the acting company itself is a hybrid, on the one hand, like the disguised Henry: representing state ideology to the commoners, so they fight the state's wars cheerfully, and on the other, like Williams: representing the voice of the commoners to the state.

The late century Elizabethan state surveillance thus figured by Henry incognito, as an agent of the state might visit the public theater incognito to join in a discussion of the Queen's character, is demonstrated by Janet Clare particularly to be focused on subversive historiography. She cites a proclamation of 1587 which "prohibited the spread of seditious rumours" and which "extended to restrictions on the publication of history of topical interest" (47). Regarding the suppression of John Hayward's *First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie III*, explicitly dedicated to Essex then in Ireland, Clare also suggests that "Attorney General Coke, who conducted the prosecution of Hayward, entertained no doubts about the historian's intentions, as is evident from his note that 'the Doctor selected a story 200 years old, and published it last year, intending the application of it to this time'" (47). Nothing but interpretation of its ambiguities prevented the state from laying this same charge upon Shakespeare's play. In Henry's hybrid character

³The name "Boar's Head" that has been traditional since the seventeenth century never appears in Shakespeare's texts.

as state surveillance of the commons and the commons' perception of the state, the soliloquy following his argument with the soldiers is the product that Shakespeare markets to the state. As Greenblatt comments, "where the whole State seems—to adapt More's phrase—a conspiracy of the great to enrich and protect their interests under the name of commonwealth, even here the audience does not leave the theatre in a rebellious mood" (41). If critics have disparaged Henry's sentiments in this speech, it is some of the best poetry in the play, and few spectators fail to sympathize with Henry's predicament. Shakespeare's dramatic poetry simultaneously presents the character of English monarchy in the most credibly flattering light to the audience of the public theater and for aristocratic and bourgeois readers points the monarchy to the ambiguities of its character in the eyes of the commoners preventing them fighting the Irish war cheerfully and therefore effectively. As Clare also observes, fears of domestic insurrection "intensified as successive attempts to subdue the [Irish] rebels miscarried. By the end of the decade it was forbidden 'on pain of death, to write or speak of Irish affairs,'" which may account for the absence of the Chorus's reference to Ireland from the Q texts. During the period of the play's production, "in the latter part of the decade [. . .] the current Irish troubles came to present ever more serious threats to Crown ascendancy" (Clare 62).

The happy resolution of the Williams dispute in which a royal grant befalls the insubordinate soldier instead of the hanging suggested by Fluellen therefore makes a plea for relaxation of state censorship of the public theater. The dramatist and audience (much more vocal and participatory than in modern theater) should be allowed to express their political sentiments freely, as Williams initially does to the disguised Henry, rather than being terrorized by the state into jingoistic propaganda or obsequious silence, so that the state may know and address their discontents. If Williams is self-referential of William S., Hayward's fate gave him good reason to fear the consequences of incurring the wrath of the queen by too openly staging a critique of the myths of just war, as they were canonized in Tudor historiography and were currently being pretended in the bloody suppression of the Irish. David Hume critiques this claim to just war by contrasting Spenser's support of Elizabeth's suppression of the Irish with Walter Raleigh's simultaneous condemnation of Philip II in the Netherlands. While

Raleigh calls the Spanish king "Turk-like, to tread under his feet all [. . .] natural and fundamental laws, privileges, and antient rights" of the Dutch, Spenser, speaking of some grants of the English kings to the Irish corporations, says "All which, tho', at the time of their first grant, they were tolerable, and perhaps reasonable, yet now are most unreasonable and inconvenient. But all these will easily be cut off with the superior power of her majesty's prerogative, against which her own grants are not to be pleaded or inforced" (qtd. in Hume VR.2.261). Hume thus identifies the double standards that early entered the modern ideology of just war.

Henry the Pig vs. Henry the Great

The year that Shakespeare's *Henry V* likely was being written, Hayward came close to being racked for questioning the Queen's prerogative as reported by Francis Bacon who says that

The Queen was mightily incensed against Haywarde, on account of a book he dedicated to Lord Essex, being a story of the first year of Henry IV, thinking it a seditious prelude to put into the people's heads boldness and faction: She said, she had an opinion that there was treason in it, and asked me, if I could not find any places in it, that might be drawn within the case of treason? Whereto I answered, for treason, sure I found none; but for felony very many: And when her majesty hastily asked me, Wherein? I told her, the author had committed very apparent theft: For he had taken most of the sentences of Cornelius Tacitus.

(qtd. in Parry 39)

Bacon's witty intercession seems in part to have saved Hayward not only from the corporal rack but from a more capital charge of treason. It is treason for which Fluellen, angry that his authority is challenged by a common soldier, claims Williams deserves hanging, and it is the same kind of intervention for which Pistol unsuccessfully pleads to Fluellen on behalf of Bardolph:

Therefore goe speake, the Duke will heare thy voyce;
and let not Bardolphs vitall thred bee cut with edge of
Penny-Cord, and vile reproach. Speake Captaine for

his Life, and I will thee requite.
(lines 1493-1496)

Fluellen declines to intercede, but later does report Bardolph's fate to Henry.

I thinke the Duke hath lost neuer a man, but one that is like to be executed for robbing a Church, one Bardolph, if your Maiestie know the man [. . .] [H]is nose is executed, and his fire's out.
KING. Wee would haue all such offenders so cut off [. . .] for when Leuitie and Crueltie play for a Kingdome, the gentler Gamester is the soonest winner.
(lines 1547-1561)

Levity (i.e. "lenity" to the French victims of English thieving), seems a peculiar description of the hanging of his own former tavern companion. Fluellen himself makes the case ambiguous, first stating Bardolph is "like to be" hanged, next that "his nose is executed." It is not clear whether Henry here refuses Bardolph a pardon before or after the fact, but his denial of lenity to old friends makes Bardolph's death recall the death of Falstaff described at length in act 2. After failing to influence Fluellen in Bardolph's case, Pistol gives him the finger. "Dye, and be dam'd," he tells him, "and Figo⁴ for thy friendship" (line 1504). It is the betrayal of friendship that offends him, and the refusal to intercede for Bardolph hanged or about to be hanged, like the killing of Falstaff's heart (line 587), entitles Henry to the same "Figo." It is ironic therefore that in a later scene Pistol gives it to him in person with another reference to the bond of friendship. After being told the disguised Henry knows Fluellen, Pistol asks "Art thou his friend?" "And his Kinsman too," the king answers. "The Figo for thee then" (lines 1905-1907). While Pistol can get away with such a gesture to Captain Fluellen and to the "Gentleman of a Company" the disguised Henry calls himself, giving the finger openly and plainly to the king could earn him Bardolph's fate. In an earlier scene, Henry pardons a man "that rayl'd against [his] person"

⁴ A "contemptuous gesture made by thrusting the thumb between the next two fingers, or between the teeth" (Baker 952).

owing to "excesse of Wine" (lines 670-671), and declines advice to "Let him be punish'd Soueraigne, least example breed (by his sufferance) more of such a kind" (lines 670-675). Henry says "O let vs yet be mercifull" (line 676) before proceeding to execute three conspirators with whom his former close friendship is emphasized. Like Williams and the anonymous drunken man pardoned by Henry, Pistol therefore gets away with a potentially capital attack on the authority of the king through theatrical disguise and dramatic displacement. In his altercation with Williams, Fluellen stands between him and a directly treasonous challenge to the monarch, and in his displaced *figos*, Pistol stands in for Shakespeare—whose name likewise "sorts well with [his] fiercenesse" (line 1910)—in the play's discourse upon dangerous political critique, art, and censorship.

Chiefly in evidence in Shakespeare's complaint as a dramatist attempting loyally to serve his country are the unreliability, ambiguity, omissions, and obvious falsifications of the historical record and the difficulties and perils entailed in the polemical use of historical representation in a state repressive of free speech. The problematics of historical representation further intrude into the idealization of Henry V when Fluellen's Welsh interferes with his search for an historical parallel to legitimize Henry's repudiation of Falstaff. He tries with all his might to fit Henry into a Plutarchian parallel life, "for there is figures in all things" (lines 2557-2558). As the Chorus has analogized Henry with Caesar and the Earl of Essex, Fluellen offers "Alexander the Pig" (lines 2537-2538)—ostensibly a Welsh mispronunciation of Alexander the Big—as an appropriate double, for the compelling reason that there are salmon in the river at Macedon (Alexander's birthplace),⁵ just as in the Wye at Monmouth (Henry's birthplace), and because Alexander killed his friend in a drunken rage just as Henry has "turn'd away the fat Knight with the great belly doublet" (lines 2571-2572). I agree with David Quint that "the joke, it turns out, is to be taken seriously" (51). "Fluellen's language comically backfires, and his attempt to improve his subject with rhetorical elegance merely introduces ambiguity" (Quint 61). Like Quint, Campbell cites *The Historie of Quintus Curtius, Conteyning the Actes of the Greate Alexander*

⁵Shakespeare may well have known that there are no salmon *per se* in Macedon.

in which "the killing of Cleitus was the act of Alexander the Great which turned many of his friends and followers against him and gave him cause for repentance." The rejection of Falstaff "which every reader has tried to rationalize is exposed by the king's fellow-Welshman who belonged to those 'literatured in the wars'" (304). Quint claims that this episode in the life of Alexander "refers the play's ambivalence towards Henry to a Renaissance debate over Alexander's moral character, a debate whose larger subject was the didactic usefulness of reading history" (53). Fluellen's "pig" thus identifies Henry with Alexander as a "classical test case for objectivity in historical writing" (59). A comparison of Henry with Alexander may be implied by Canterbury in the opening scene. Praising Henry's command of politics, Canterbury says: "Turne him to any Cause of Pollicy, / The Gordian Knot of it he will vnloose, / Familiar as his Garter" (lines 86-88). Alexander famously unloosed the Gordian Knot, not by unraveling it, but simply by slicing it in two with a blow of his sword. The metaphor should be obvious.

Gower corrects Fluellen's epithet: "Alexander the Great." "Why I pray you, is not pig, great?" Fluellen replies; "The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, saue the phrase is a litle variations" (lines 2539-2543). As Quint observes,

The result is not a poetically embellished portrait of the perfect prince, but rather the complicated, morally indeterminate Henry of Shakespeare's play. By satirizing Fluellen's inept use of the encomiastic style, the play portrays a poetic temptation to the historian to which it apparently knows better than to succumb.

(60)

More precisely, I rather would suggest that the play portrays a temptation to the dramatist which it warns the close reader to reject. The significance of the morally ambiguous Alexander as a parallel for Henry perhaps is suggested by the name of Williams's and Bates's fellow soldier Alexander Court. This third soldier otherwise has only one insignificant line and serves no other apparent function. Alexander the Great, of course, is not the same as Alexander the Pig, as with Henry V (and Elizabeth), an open

verdict for historians.

"Big," "huge," and "mighty" is not "one reckonings" with "great" or "magnanimous," and between them is more than "a little variations." The fate of Collingbourne, the fifteenth-century composer of the verses on Richard III's henchmen: "The Rat, the Catte and Louell our dogge / rule al England under the hogge" (Hall 34), demonstrates the perils of such humor. According to Hall, the reference in the verse to Richard as "the hogge" was a poor choice of variations:

Meanyng by the hogge, the dreadfull wyldre bore which
was the kinges cognisaunce, but because the fyrste lync
ended in dogge, the metrician coulde not obseruinge the
regymentes of metre ende the second verse in Bore, but
called the Bore an hogge. Thys poetycall schoole mayster
Corrector of breues and longes, caused Collynborne to bee
abbreyate shorter by the heade, and to bee deuyded into
foure quarters.

(34)

In the sixteenth-century *Mirror for Magistrates*, Collingbourne himself is made to warn:

Beware, take heede, take heede, beware, beware
You Poetes you, that purpose to rehearce
By any arte what Tyrantes doynge are,
[.]
He must be swyft when touched tyrants chafe,
To gallop thence to kepe his carkas safe.

(53)

As pointed out by Tillyard, "in the prose that follows the story of the poet Collingbourne" in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, "the company is enthusiastic on the liberty that should be allowed the artist and the benefit a king can get from frank speech."

If King Richard and his counselors had allowed or at least but winked at some such wits, what great commodities might they have taken thereby. First, they should have known what the people misliked and grudged at and so

mought have found mean, either by amendment (which is best) or by some other policy, to have stayed the people's grudge, the forerunner commonly of rulers' destruction.
(qtd. in Tillyard 95)

Similarly to the Chorus's ambiguous vocabulary, Fluellen's pidgin English admits a critique of imperialism into the dramatically comic resolution of the history tetralogy. His ambitious attempt to idealize his beloved royal countryman involves the piggish aspect of imperialist war with the question of the true greatness of princes, parodying the tactics by which dramatic histories often succeed in converting the pigs of history into the "Great." Fluellen's clumsiness evokes the real / ideal dialectic embodied in Tudor mythology by Henry V and thereby covers for the critique of the monarchy in Shakespeare's "art made tounge-tied by authority" (*Son.* 66.9). The censor may suspect there is something treasonous in the joke, but, along with modern criticism, he can not prove it.

That the king's cause is just is, according to Williams, more than the common soldiers know, but, while the sophistical and pointedly obscure discourse on the Salic law in the second scene of the play may convince a theater audience, it is also more than the careful reader knows. A. P. Rossiter observes that "despite all that Archbishops may say—the political reason for Henry V's French campaign" really is, as Henry's father has advised him in *2 Henry IV* (lines 2750-2751), to "busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels" (43). Whether the Salic law argument is defensible or not, which I would refute, Henry replies to Williams objection by analogy. "So, if a Sonne that is by his Father sent about Merchandize, doe sinfully miscarry vpon the Sea," he proposes,

the imputation of his wickednesse, by your rule, should be imposed vpon his Father that sent him: or if a Seruant, vnder his Masters command, transporting a summe of Money, be assayled by Robbers, and dye in many irreconcil'd Iniquities; you may call the businesse of the Master the author of the Seruants damnation: but this is not so [. . .]
(lines 1995-2002)

While refusing common soldiers claim to the Nuremberg defense, neither of these cases answers the question whether the master remains blameless of the servant's fate if the enterprise is criminal. Shakespeare's Henry fails convincingly to demonstrate the justice of his cause because history fails to demonstrate it. An unconflicted reading of Shakespeare's Henry V as ideal Christian king does not easily accommodate the intrusive Williams business at the climax of his conventional *apothēsis*. Directors like Olivier and Branagh prove that it is possible by the episode's omission to present on the stage a nationalistic panegyric to an ideal British monarch. The most complete text of the play, on the other hand, by including both episodes of the Williams dispute, must be acknowledged explicitly to raise the issue of moral ambiguity in imperialist war staged during the period of a particularly problematic imperialist war.

The hanging of Bardolph and Nym for petty thefts attributes the fate of several anonymous soldiers briefly noted in Holinshed to characters purportedly known affectionately to many Elizabethan fans. "Bardolfe and Nym had tenne times more valour, then [Pistol] and they are both hang'd," says the boy of the Eastcheap crew, "and so would this be, if hee durst steale any thing aduenturously" (lines 2449-2453). Probably giving the hint to Shakespeare for Bardolph's hanging, Holinshed says of Henry's troops in France, that "a souldiour tooke a pix out of a church, for which he was apprehended, & the king not once remooued till the box was restored, and the offendor strangled" (552). While Holinshed makes it clear that Henry ordered the hanging, Shakespeare's attribution of the sentence to the Duke of Exeter along with Fluellen's confused verb tenses again displaces the moral question from the king. Again this displacement easily would be noticed by those who compared Shakespeare's text with Holinshed. Later, in a scene reminiscent of Henry's incognito inspection of the troops in Shakespeare's play, "the king in going about the campe, to surueie and view the warders, he espied two souldiers that were walking abroad without the limits assigned, whom he caused straightwaies to be apprehended and hanged vpon a tree of great height, for a terrour to others, that none should be so hardie to breake such orders as he commanded them to obserue" (566). Reese defends Henry's arguments with the claim that the soldiers "would not be there unless they chose to be"

(330), referring (I assume) to Henry's command that "he which hath no stomack to this fight, / Let him depart, his Pasport shall be made, / And Crownes for Conuoy put into his Purse" (lines 2279-2281). Holinshed's account of Henry's treatment of wayward soldiers contradicts such liberality. The soldier Bates moreover thinks that even Henry "could wish himselfe in Thames vp to the Neck," rather than on the French battlefield, "and so I would he were, and I by him, at all aduentures, so we were quit here" (1964-66). And the Eastcheap company shares this sentiment before the battle of Harfleur. "Would I were in a Ale-house in London, I would giue all my fame for a Pot of Ale, and safetie," says the boy, and Pistol agrees (lines 1129-1131). The assignment of the execution of common soldiers, lightly touched on in Holinshed, to familiar and sympathetic characters problematizes Shakespeare's dramatic idealization of King Henry. In the matter of Bardolph's hanging, Shakespeare furthermore anomalously follows a single obscure source in place of Holinshed in making the object of theft, according to Pistol, a "Pax of little price" (line 1492)⁶ rather than a valuable "pix." Shakespeare thus implies a comparison of the petty theft that hangs the common soldier with the grand larceny of the peace from France by the king who endorses the hanging, and it again only is the reader of the text and its sources who will remark the substitution, along with its F1 capitalization. As with the moralistic disputes of the Williams episode, the moral contradictions apparent in the available historical records do not merely contaminate the text, but in *Henry V* they have become what Hamlet calls a "necessary Question of the Play" (lines 1890-1891).

Captain Gower's Chronicle

It occasionally has been remarked that Gower's proclamation in the field of Agincourt that Henry "most worthily hath caus'd euery soldiour to cut his prisoners throat" (lines 2534-2535) involves a curious treatment of Shakespeare's source text. According to John Sutherland and Cedric Watts, "The 'kill the prisoners' issue is raised on a number of occasions in the play, but in such a way as to make it almost impossible to formulate any clear verdict on where

⁶The Q text spells it both times phonetically as *packs* (1488, 1492).

Shakespeare stands" (110). On finding that the French have looted the king's luggage, Fluellen says: "Kill the poyes and the luggage, 'Tis expressly against the Law of Armes, tis as arrant a peece of knauery marke you now, as can bee offert in your Conscience now, is it not?" To which Gower replies:

'Tis certaine, there's not a boy left aliue, and the Cowardly Rascalls that ranne from the battaile ha' done this slaughter: besides they haue burned and carried away all that was in the Kings Tent, wherefore the King most worthily hath caus'd euey soldiour to cut his prisoners throat. O 'tis a gallant King.

(lines 2526-2535)

The iambic "most worthily" modifies Henry's violation of "the express law of arms," which is glossed by Holinshed as "a dolorous decree and pitifull proclamation" (554). Gower's favorable estimation is based on the implication introduced to Henry's history by Shakespeare that Henry acted out of righteous anger in response to the massacre of the boys. Gower's language bears out Quint's observation that, in *Henry V*, "Shakespeare insistently points to the poetic components of his history-play and implies that such rhetorical structures inevitably shape the historical understanding" (50).

To the Elizabethan readership of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, it would be clear that Shakespeare here works to put the best possible light on Henry's ambiguous reputation. Because it is clear that the theory of righteous anger is an invention, however, it is counterproductive as propaganda. To emphasize this point, Shakespeare attributes the theory solely to Gower, who appears nowhere in the sources and must reference John Gower the fifteenth century nationalist poet who was poet laureate to Henry V's father. Fluellen, whose name bears no such distinguished allusive relevance, calls Captain Gower "literatured in the wars" (line 2680). The historical John Gower began as a propagandist for Richard II, but became increasingly critical of his reign until finally becoming an early propagandist for Henry IV. "However one interprets the rededication of the *Confessio [Amantis]* from Richard to Henry," suggests Frank Grady, "as a principled act of admiration [. . .] or as Gower's opportunistic (and amazingly foresightful)

switching of horses in midstream, it is clear from the evidence of the vehemently anti-Ricardian *Cronica* that by early 1400 Gower's adherence to the Lancastrian cause was wholehearted" (554). John Gower⁷ died before the accession of Henry V, and the suggestion of his presence at Agincourt ironically is another violation of the pretension to nonfictional historiography, but we might suppose that the idealized *Henry V* that Olivier's performance shows us is the history that John Gower would have written.

The faint emphasis of Holinshed's reference to some servants being slain in the luggage while dwelling at length on the dolorous and pitiful fate of the French prisoners is rhetorically inverted by Shakespeare's Gower. Branagh follows Gower's emphasis by omitting the latter, while having Henry carry Pistol's dead boy away from the bloody scene, but Shakespeare's text undermines Gower's abuse of poetic license in several ways. In addition to removing the mitigating detail (weak as it is) in Holinshed's account of Henry's hearing the outcry of some boys and lackeys who were fleeing the French looting of the English tents before giving the order for all soldiers to kill their prisoners, he has Gower base his characterization instead on the bald assertion that it is certain that all the boys are dead. Any reader concerned with the facts of the case would quickly discover this claim to be unsupported both in the play and in the historical record. While on the stage, unable to turn back to check Gower's propaganda against the rapid confusion of the preceding events, we can only accede to his characterization as our attention is drawn to the approaching *dénouement*, on the page we are at leisure to check the order of events against the record, and we can confirm that Gower indeed clearly gives a misreading of the historical text. We may furthermore learn that this was not the only such worthy act in Henry's career. Like Fluellen's one-sided application of the "law of arms," therefore, an episode in his source that Shakespeare goes to exceptional lengths to revise, ostensibly to mitigate our preconceptions that Henry V was possibly a war criminal, is so imperfectly written as to force an interested reader to Holinshed's account, which only expands upon Henry's offenses. Shakespeare thus illustrates a further aspect of the dramatic poet of English

⁷John Gower appears in person as the Chorus to Shakespeare's *Pericles* which is based on a tale from the *Confessio*.

history through Gower, whom he shows misrepresenting chronological sequence and carefully choosing words like "gallant," "worthily," and "wherefore." In leading a careful reader to the inescapable conclusion that Gower is misrepresenting the facts of the historical record, and even of the play's own already bowdlerized version of events, Shakespeare's text sabotages his dramatic rehabilitation of Henry's reputation and thereby demonstrates (to those who have read the story) the inadequacy of the jingoistic treatment of English historiography permissible on the public stage under late-Elizabethan censorship. I agree with Rossiter that what Shakespeare produced in *Henry V* "was a propaganda-play on National Unity: heavily orchestrated for the brass" and that "the sounding—and very impressive—Rhetoric shows how something is being stifled. The wartime-values demand a determined 'one-eyedness'" (57). While wartime-values might demand such 'one-eyedness' on the late-Elizabethan stage, however, the text—especially the Jacobean Folio text—supplies the play with stereo vision.

The slaughter of boys in the luggage episode is introduced by the boy left alone on stage by Pistol. He says: "I must stay with the Lackies with the luggage of our camp, the French might haue a good pray of vs, if he knew of it, for there is none to guard it but boyes" (lines 2453-2456). The emendation of Holinshed's "lackies and boies" (554) to "none but boyes" implies that anyone slain protecting the luggage must be boys, but the retention of "lackies" also acknowledges its source for the literary audience and thus admits to them its obvious alteration in favor of mitigation of Henry's war crime. The short scene following the boy's exit shows us the French despairing of the order of battle in the face of defeat.

ORLEANS. *O signeur le iour et perdia, toute et perdie.*

DAUPHIN. *Mor Dieu ma vie, all is confounded all*

[.]

O meschante Fortune, do not runne away.

CONSTABLE. *Why all our rankes are broke"*

(lines 2460-2464)

The massacre scenario suggested by the boy, followed by the chaotic image of panicked French nobles amid broken ranks of soldiers in the rapid movement from short scene to short scene

create the sense of the inevitable atrocity following the exit of the French. The next scene begins with the long speech by the Duke of Exeter euphuistically mourning the heroic deaths of York and Suffolk which allows time for the suggested massacre to take place so that Henry's war crime seems to the audience, at least chronologically, to follow the war crime of the French nobility which will be reported by Gower at the opening of the following scene.

As Sutherland and Watts put it, "So rapid and equivocal is the sequence of events during and after the battle that the audience may well be rather bewildered. What actually happened to those prisoners? [. . .] It would be interesting to quiz an untutored audience as to what impression they carry away, having seen the play" (115). They also affirm that both the killing of the innocent boys and Henry's order to cut the French prisoners' throats were war crimes. They cite Baker who "blandly notes" that Henry's command to kill the prisoners was an approved procedure in fifteenth-century war. "Approved?" they ask. "If that were the case, what foe would ever be fool enough to allow himself to be taken captive?" (109). "Orderic Vitalis, writing on the battle of Brémule in 1119 informs us that [. . .] the knights, as 'Christian warriors, had no desire to shed the blood of their brothers'. Indeed not; they desired instead to ransom their brothers for large sums of money" (McGlynn 4). Froissart furthermore says of the battle of Crecy nearly a century before Agincourt that "among the Englishmen there were certain rascals that went afoot with great knives, and they went in among the men of arms, and slew and murdered many as they lay on the ground, both earls, barons, knights and squires, whereof the king of England was after displeased, for he had rather they had been taken prisoners" (27). Unlike Henry's violation of medieval laws of arms, the French atrocity as reported by Gower does not occur in Holinshed's version, which only says that some retreating French nobles

entred upon the kings campe, and there spoiled the hails, robbed the tents, brake up chests, and carried awaie caskets, and slue such seruants as they found to make anie resistance[. . .] But when the outcrie of the lackies and boies, which ran awaie for feare of the Frenchmen thus spoiling the campe, came to the kings eares, he doubting

least his enemies should gather together againe, and begin a new field; and mistrusting further that the prisoners would be an aid to his enimies, or the verie enimies to their takers in deed if they were suffered to liue, contrarie to his accustomed gentlenes, commanded by sound of trumpet, that euerie man (upon paine of death) should incontinentlie slaie his prisoner. When this dolorous decree, and pitifull proclamation was pronounced, pitie it was to see how some Frenchmen were suddenlie sticked with daggers, some were brained with pollaxes, some slaine with malls, other had their throats cut, and some their bellies pached[. . .]

(554)

While Holinshed's Henry, unlike Shakespeare's, heard the cries of the fleeing boys before ordering the bloody summary execution, even he apparently was not aware that some of those guarding the tents had been killed. Clearly it was not all the boys, as they were running away, not making "anie resistance," when he heard them. The syntax of the "boies, which ran awaie" denotes either that he heard those of the boys that ran away or that he heard the boys, all of whom ran away. Holinshed's whole description thus allows for the conclusion that there was not a boy killed better than it does for Gower's "'Tis certain there's not a boy left alive," unless Gower intentionally is misrepresenting the escape of the boys as their massacre. The historian attempting to idealize his subject is free to move around within such syntactical ambiguity, and Gower is so convincing that every production I have seen includes the corpses of boys in the luggage. Gower's rhetorical diction itself ambiguously identifies Henry's motive more directly with the burning and theft of the king's luggage than with "this slaughter," but the audience finally is steered by his "worthily" and "gallant king" to the nobler interpretation.

Holinshed essentially describes a mere looting in which only some who resisted were killed, probably not boys who would not likely resist a mounted assault of armed knights, and certainly not a massacre, and, as even Shakespeare shows us, "Henry actually acted from policy" (Quint 52), ordering the execution only because the enemy seemed to be regrouping, and he feared rebellion behind the lines. In an earlier play, the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry*

V, the tents are burned, but no one is mentioned killed in the act, and Henry's order is omitted altogether. Shakespeare's Henry gives the order so offhandedly before exiting that it is often dropped in performance. "But hearke, what new alarum is this same? The French haue re-enforc'd their scatter'd men: Then euery souldiour kill his Prisoners, Giue the word through. Exit" (lines 2520-2523). It is impossible to tell from the series of short scenes which event actually occurs first, but it is clear that, contrary to the account of Shakespeare's Gower in the following scene, Shakespeare's "Henry cannot have known at the point that he ordered the massacre of prisoners" of any slaughter of boys (Sutherland and Watts 113). He hears an alarum not of fleeing boys and/or lackeys, but of the French mounting a new assault. According to the represented events then, as in Holinshed, this was not a crime of passion, but a "pitifull" and "dolorous decree" of cold-blooded murder. The discrepancy between what the play shows and what Gower reports easily might have been effaced by emending one or the other. If Shakespeare was uncharacteristically unwilling to distort his representation of historical events to suit Gower's propaganda, the whole problem might be erased in the manner of *The Famous Victories* by omitting the summary execution, as did both Olivier and Branagh, who thus "ducked what is the most contentious element in the play for British audiences" (Sutherland and Watts 109). The sequence of events on the stage instead allows for Gower's "wherefore" to create the impression that Henry's deed was a justified and even "gallant" and "most worthy" act of passion while Holinshed, as we have seen, makes no such implication. Sutherland and Watts comment that

It would [. . .] seem more natural to have had this scene [. . .] *before* Henry ordered the killing of the prisoners. It evidently preceded that dread command and to have seen it earlier would have made the point that the first breach of 'the law of arms' was French, not English. Coming as it does afterwards, it looks like *ex post facto* justification or special pleading.

(113)

Because Henry again threatens to kill all prisoners present and future after seeing the ruins of his camp, Rabkin states that "Olivier

justified this violation of the putative ethics of war by making it a response to the French killing of the English luggage boys," that is, by omitting the first order. "But the timing is wrong." In fact, in the text "the announcement comes twice, first as illegitimate, second as if it were a spontaneous outburst of forgivable passion when it actually is not" (292). Note that the F1 stage direction as Henry enters his ruined camp again calls for prisoners, including Burbon, further complicating the question of their execution at the end of the previous scene.

Alarum. Enter King Harry and Burbon
with prisoners.⁸ Flourish.

KING. I was not angry since I came to France,
Vntill this instant. Take a Trumpet Herald,
Ride thou vnto the Horsemen on yond hill:
If they will fight with vs, bid them come downe,
Or voyde the field: they do offend our sight.
If they'l do neither, we will come to them,
And make them sker away, as swift as stones
Enforced from the old Assyrian⁹ slings:
Besides, wee'l cut the throats of those we haue, [i.e. the
group who follow him onto the stage]
And not a man of them that we shall take,
Shall taste our mercy[. . .]
(lines 2578-2590)

It is possible that these are new prisoners taken in the short interim, but outside of a cue to readers that the execution issue is being complicated, it is hard to see the point of their presence in this scene. Not only does Shakespeare here make Henry indirectly deny that he was angry, righteously or otherwise, when he gave the former order to kill all prisoners, but he omits the comment in Holinshed that it was "for preservation of the prisoners" (who were being murdered) that the French were assembled together "to giue a new battell." Holinshed's Henry promises "that if they did

⁸The previous s.d. reads "Alarum. Enter the King and his trayne, with Prisoners" (2483-84).

⁹The Assyrians whom Shakespeare interposes to Holinshed's account were renowned for mercilessness in war.

offer to fight againe, not onelie those prisoners which his people already had taken; but also so manie of them as in this new conflict, which they thus attempted should fall into his hands, should die the death without redemption" (555). It is not clear whether those already taken are already doomed. Shakespeare therefore merely may expand upon an ambiguity he found in his source. "In such moments as this," according to Rabkin, "we feel an eloquent discrepancy between the glamor of the play's rhetoric and the reality of its action" (292). Olivier's film actually omits even Henry's second threat (though Branagh includes it), and Rabkin fails to note that the confusion is resolved by Gower's speech so as hardly, if at all, to be felt by an audience. Reese concedes that, "if Shakespeare had any secret reservations about the character, they are not apparent on the stage [where] it is quite evident that Shakespeare approves of him [. . .]" (320).

While he earlier tells us that "few prisoners were saved" from Henry's order (554), Holinshed himself reports at the conclusion that "There were taken prisoners, Charles duke of Orleance nephue to the French king, John duke of Burbon, the lord Bouciqualt one of the marshals of France (he after died in England) with a number of other lords, knights, and esquiers, at the least fiteene hundred, besides the common people" (555). Without referring to Holinshed's report of cut throats and paunched bellies, Sutherland and Watts finally are uncertain that any French prisoners are killed in Shakespeare's play, as Henry later asks for an accounting of the prisoners taken. "We may [. . .] assume one of two things," they suggest. "In the heat of battle Henry gives a command that may not have been carried out—at least not in full. Alternatively, only the unregarded ordinary prisoners of war have been put to the sword. And who cares about them?" (116). If prisoners are not to be executed upon this order, as they are in Holinshed "upon paine of death" and in gruesome detail, the confusion would easily be avoided by saying so, or omitting the order. Sutherland and Watts do not acknowledge the third alternative argued here that such ambiguity is characteristic of the play's historiography, so that what becomes problematic in close readings manages to pass unquestioned in stage performance. The Quarto versions of the play seem to confirm the supposition that at least some of the noble prisoners are slain. One means of profiting by war is by ransom, which is illustrated in Pistol's taking of a French

nobleman, Monsier Le Fer, on the field of Agincourt. "O Signieur Dewe," Pistol tells him thou dyest on point of Fox,¹⁰ except O Signieur thou doe giue to me egregious Ransome," to which the latter pitifully replies "*O prenes miserecordie aye pitez de moy*" (lines 2393-2396), and vows to give Pistol two hundred *écus* to save his life. Pistol obviously does not have two hundred gold pieces when he steals back to London, and the most likely reason is that he was forced to kill Monsieur Le Fer on Henry's order. Before exiting for the last time, he tells us "Baud Ile turne, and something leane to Cut-purse of quicke hand: To England will I steale, and there Ile steale: and patches will I get vnto these cudgeld scarres, And swore I got them in the Gallia warres" (lines 2979-2983).

In the Q text, as in the F text, Pistol first threatens to cut his prisoners throat: "Ony e ma foy couple la gorge. Vnlesse thou giue to me egregious raunsome, dye. One poynt of a foxe" (2416-2419). After Henry's execution order and exit from the stage however, the Quarto repeats a line from Pistol's threat suggesting he is forced to carry it out. Before *omnes* exit, Henry says "what new alarum is this? Bid euery souldier kill his prisoner," to which Pistol says, apparently aside, "Couple gorge"¹¹ (lines 2520-2522) which seems to indicate he must carry out the king's order and explains his penniless condition at the play's conclusion. The defense of wartime-values on the public stage, noted by Rossiter, was necessary to counter popular discontent with ongoing Elizabethan military adventures. As Campbell comments, "the choice of begging or stealing for a living on their return from the wars was not one to make men enthusiastic about becoming soldiers" (248). This problem characterized both the Elizabethan state and that of Henry V which, according to Campbell, mirrors it. She cites Barnabe Googe who compares the present situation to Henry's wars in France.

What a number was there of noble Gentlemen, and worthy
souldiours, that in the dayes of that victorious prince King
Henry the fifth (after the honourable behaving of

¹⁰ *Sword* according to the OED.

¹¹ In addition to its French translations, the cutting of various throats is referred to nine separate times throughout the play, perhaps echoing Holinshed's description of the treatment of the French prisoners.

themselves, as well at *Agincourt*, as other places [. . .])
returning to their countrey, were pitifully constrained (and
which was indeed most miserable) in their olde and
honourable age for very want and necessitie to begge,
whyle a great number of unworthy wretches that lyved at
home, enjoyed all kindes of felicities.
(qtd. in Campbell 245)

Pistol exemplifies the fate of such soldiers. Before the battle of Agincourt Henry vows, contradicting Gooze, that all who fight that day somehow will be promoted, unlike the "unworthy wretches" that stayed at home.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers:
For he to day that sheds his blood with me,
Shall be my brother: be he ne're so vile,
This day shall gentle his Condition.
And Gentlemen in England, now a bed,
Shall thinke themselues accurst they were not here[. . . .]
(lines 2302-2307)

Williams goes home with a glove full of crowns, but the play is silent on the fate of his two companions.

The addition of the pathetic M. Le Fer to Holinshed's anonymous prisoners is consistent with the hanging of Bardolph and Nym in place of an anonymous soldier in Holinshed, and the inclusion of Pistol's boy in Holinshed's anonymous "boys and lackeys." For the Henry of Holinshed, the order to kill the French prisoners is a particularly atrocious example (perhaps because the victims are noblemen) among several similar matter-of-fact expediencies. In addition to the English soldiers made examples of throughout, Henry hangs twelve French soldiers for giving opprobrious words to his herald (576) and he hangs twenty Scots for fighting on the French side against their king Robert (577). Shakespeare's Gower refutes such a Machiavellian description of Henry's actions and therefore must be introduced anachronistically to the French battlefield as a demonstration of bad historiography. Finding the summary execution in Holinshed together with the firing of the English tents, Shakespeare uses Gower to demonstrate the rhetorical abuse of historical facts to produce a false

justification for Henry's bloody reputation and develops the episode as support for the critique of state propaganda and censorship implicit in the confrontation of Henry and Williams. Henry warns Canterbury in act 1 not to disingenuously construct a spurious *casus belli* from a misreading of text:

And God forbid, my deare and faithfull Lord,
That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,
Or nicely charge your vnderstanding Soule,
With opening Titles miscreate, whose right
Sutes not in natiue colours with the truth:
(lines 160-164)

This is what Canterbury ultimately accuses the French of doing with the text of the Salic Law. It is just such a misreading of Holinshed that Gower demonstrates in act 4, but the episode is written so that stage productions speciously seem to support his approving evaluation of Henry's actions, and they thereby demonstrate to the literate audience the temptations and pitfalls facing a dramatist treating non-fictional subjects on the public stage. For Quint "the Shakespearean complexity not only makes a puzzle out of Henry's motivation [for the summary execution] but also suggests the confusion of values in the minds of the captains who attempt to judge him" (53). It is not Gower who is confused, however; nor are most spectators sufficiently bothered by the contradiction to interrupt the dramatic logic. Only close readers ever are confused by it. Together with further departures from the historical record in the belabored Williams dispute, the textual analysis of Gower's propaganda *vis-à-vis* Fluellen's obsession with the "express law of arms" implicit in the performance/text of *Henry V* amounts to a critique of a jingoism associated with the historical Gower's Lancastrian propaganda. It is a response to Elizabeth's repressive censorship during the Irish campaign. Campbell thinks that the issues disputed in the Williams episode explore "fundamental problems raised by the dispute over the surrender of Deventer" (276). While England was at war also in Spain, Scotland, and France, it is the Irish campaign to which the text explicitly refers, and the issues are the same.

Williams the soldier swears that his intentions in challenging Henry are not treasonous: "All offences, my Lord, come from the

heart: neuer came any from mine, that might offend your Maiestie" (lines 2763-2764). William S, the poet tongue-tied by authority, justly may have been concerned that the many ambiguities rightly or wrongly identified in his portrait of the monarchical ideal of the Tudor myth might subject him to the charge of treason that Elizabeth tried to lay against Hayward. Like Williams's complaint, a close reading of Shakespeare's text insists that political critique is appropriate to the public theater, where jingoistic propaganda, such as Fluellen's simple-minded "pig" and Gower's sophistical "wherefore" and "worthily" inevitably sabotage themselves, as does censorship of commonly held opinions of the justice of the state's cause in war. As a client of state patronage, Shakespeare offers the public theater as a venue where such opinions can be known and addressed. As a representative of the commoners, however, he insists that the state has no viable alternative but to make certain that the wars it asks its subjects to fight cheerfully in fact are just. Campbell cites King James who wrote to his son in 1599, "and therefore warres upon just quarrels are lawful: but above all, let not the wrong cause be on your side" (267), and this is the lesson that the literate classes must take from the 1623 Folio text of *Henry V* looking back upon the imperialist war in Ireland of the previous dynasty. If the state's position is that "Euery Subjects Dutie is the Kings, but euery Subjects Soule is his owne" (lines 2024-2025), then the common soldier can not be expected to fight cheerfully in an unjust cause.

Quint argues that Shakespeare's *Henry V* "challenges the claim of the historian to provide a fully objective account of past events, uncolored by his own present circumstances and self-interest [and] presents itself neither as a collection of improving moral and political exemplars, nor as a true and impartial narration of historical fact." He therefore makes it a kind of hybrid "in the quarrel between humanism and historicism" (49), but this was a quarrel among the literate, and only those who had read Shakespeare's text could be challenged by it. The critique of British imperialism and its propaganda in Shakespeare's *Henry V* is available to the literate classes who were the political classes, but also increasingly the commoners themselves, who, like Williams can see through the simplistic jingoism that characterizes the stage performance. Greenblatt says that in *Henry V* "we have all along been both coloniser and colonised, king and subject. The play

deftly registers every nuance of royal hypocrisy, ruthlessness, and bad faith, but it does so in the context of a celebration, a collective panegyric to "This star of England", the charismatic leader who purges the commonwealth of its incorrigibles and forges the martial national State" (42).

Greenblatt reads the play in the context of the colonization of the natives of the New World, but he cites "evidence that middle- and upper-class English settlers in the New World regarded the American Indians less as another race than as a version of their own lower classes; one man's tinker is another man's Indian" (36). In light of the Chorus' dedication to the "Generall of our gracious Emperesse," we must add that one man's Indian is another man's Irishman. As Quint concludes, "A critical understanding of the past may thus have first emerged through the recognition of the historical text as text" (64), but this was not a recognition that emerged all at once for "mankind" as a consequence of the humanist Renaissance. It rather filtered (and continues to filter) slowly over the course of centuries from a small literate elite through the modern proletarian classes. In the one-eyedness of *Henry V*, Rossiter thinks Shakespeare violated his "intuitive way of thinking about History [as] *dialectical* [. . .] a thoroughly English empiricism which recognizes the coextancy and juxtaposition of opposites, without submitting to urges (philosophical, moral, etc.) to obliterate or annihilate the one in the theoretic interests of the other" (62). Through Gower's falsifications, Fluellen's emphasized mispronunciations, and Williams's skepticism, however, a close reading of the play moves Shakespeare's customary juxtaposition of opposites into the hybrid nature of the performance text.

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