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Abstract

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The character of Henry V (in Shakespeare's play of the same name) has been a matter of debate among critics, some of whom accept the historical view of Henry as an extraordinarily able and heroic king, while others view him as an extremely unattractive personality, a spiritual hypocrite, and a conqueror of unmitigated cruelty. Cited as supporting evidence for this unflattering portrait is a passage in Act IV which consists of a conversation between two characters, Gower and Fluellen. In this conversation, Henry is compared to Alexander the Great or "the Pig" as Fluellen terms him.

Two critics, Ronald Berman and Robert Merrix, have published studies of this passage; a close examination of the allusion, however, reveals serious flaws in the theories of both scholars. Berman asserts that Henry is a reconstruction of Alexander, but an extended comparison of the two men confirms that, although they have a number of attitudes and circumstances in common, there are too many basic differences for Henry to be viewed as Alexander's reconstruction. Furthermore, scrutiny of the passage demonstrates that, although Shakespeare could have employed the mentioned similarities between Henry and Alexander, he chose, instead, trivial examples that deprive the comparison of meaning. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare meant his audience to take the comparison seriously.

Merrix has identified an interesting structure in the allusion, but the sources he uses to establish Alexander's character (and by implication, Henry's) are uniformly negative, although the preponderance of information on Alexander's life, that Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar with, consisted of either histories that presented Alexander as worthy of respect, if not admiration, or romances that depicted him as a larger-than-life hero. The Renaissance was fascinated by the character of Alexander; therefore, it must be assumed that even if the comparison had been a serious one, it would not have rebounded to Henry's detriment.

Although the main burden of proof rests on the passage itself, additional avenues of investigation include the political situation at the time the play was written and how it might have affected both the playwright and his audience, other references to Alexander in the play, and the attitude of the speakers towards Henry. In conclusion, the character of Henry V does not suffer from the Alexandrian allusion. Shakespeare presented Henry as a complex, but not flawless, character but he never entirely departed from the historical view of Henry, as a king whose honor and glory would be remembered forever.

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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this thesis in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree Master of Arts.

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William Shakespeare's history play, Henry V, was first performed in 1599; as far as is known today, it did not attract immediate attention. It may not have been particularly popular, or if it was initially, the popularity may have been of short duration. No contemporary reviews or information exist to give us insight into the play itself, its chief character, or how either was received by the Elizabethan audience. It was not performed, thereafter, with any great regularity, a fact which Ronald Berman attributes to a general decline of interest in medieval history (14). When it was performed, not much reaction to the play was observed, or at least recorded, for almost two hundred years. However, in the eighteenth century, Henry V began to be both performed regularly and analyzed seriously. It was soon apparent that the critics of the play and their analyses would fall into sharply defined camps.

One group of critics accepted Henry simply as the "mirror of all Christian kings" (2.prologue.6). This was the historical version of Henry and Shakespeare hardly had to change the wording of his sources in some instances; for example, Edward Hall, in his Chronicles, had referred to Henry as "the mirror of Christendom" (113). In a passage which can only be described as laudatory, Henry is depicted as:

> a kyng whose life was immaculate & his liuyng
> without spot. This kyng was a prince whom
> all men loued & of none disdained. This prince
> was a capitaine against whom fortune neuer

> frowned nor mischance once spurned. This capitaine was a shepherde whom his flocke loued and louyngly obeyed (112).

The passage is a long one and continues in the same vein, summing up the life of the king who apparently, in Hall's view, set the standard for all kings to come. Raphael Holinshed's description of Henry follows Hall's closely and concludes:

> A maiestie was he that both liued & died a paterne in princehood, a lode-starre in honour, and mirrour of magnificence; the more highlie exalted in his life, the more deepelie lamented at his death, and famous to the world alwaie (Nicoll 89).

Some critics, such as Henry Hudson, have held that the historical Henry is essentially one and the same with the dramatic character who was delineated by Shakespeare. An admiring Hudson wrote that:

> The character of Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth may almost be said to consist of piety, honesty, and modesty. And he embodies these qualities in their simplest and purest form . . . And all the other manly virtues gather upon him in the train of these (22-23).

Charles Knight shifted from this position when he stated that bad, as well as good, traits were to be noted in Henry.

> We may, indeed, say that, if Henry V was

> justly fitted to be a leader of chivalry,-
> fearless, enterprising, persevering, generous,
> pious,-he was, at the same time, rash,
> obstinate, proud, superstitious, seeking after
> vain renown and empty conquests, instead of
> making his people happy by wise laws and the
> cultivation of sound knowledge (5.388).

With this description, Knight is presenting his perceptions of a more complex individual, a man who had many faults, but was equally possessed of many virtues and that, furthermore, his faults were human and explainable. A large number of critics, however, not only do not join in the eulogizing of Henry, but are unwilling to grant him any virtues whatsoever. The only good William Hazlitt grudgingly had to say of him was that he was a "very favorite monarch with the English nation." Otherwise,

> he was fond of war and low company;-we know
> little else of him. 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 license; in public affairs,
> he seemed to have no idea of any rule of right
> and wrong, but brute force, glossed over with
> a little religious hypocrisy (159).

Hazlitt sums up his description by referring to Henry disparagingly as

a "very amiable monster, a very splendid pageant" (161).

Many reasons are given by critics for their dislike of Henry. John Cunliffe, among others, finds his wit and wooing offensive (325); A. C. Bradley damns with faint praise by referring to Henry as "efficient" (256); Mark Van Doren resents his heartiness (149); John Masefield describes him as "quite common, quite selfish, quite without feeling" (Gregson 82); John Palmer (237) and Charles Mitchell (99) have isolated Henry's most prominent characteristic as his desire to justify his actions, while at the same time, evading moral responsibility for them; A. R. Humphreys (35) and Gary Taylor (32-33) speak of his ruthlessness and coldblooded approach to war. The specific war examples which are taken to support this view are Henry's terrifying speech at Harfleur (3.3.1-43) and his command that the French prisoners should have their throats cut (4.7.63-65).

A conversation between Gower and Fluellen is juxtaposed with the second incident in which the soldier, Fluellen, draws a comparison between Henry and Alexander the Great, or the "Pig" as Fluellen terms him; this passage is taken by many critics (when it is considered at all) to support the view of Henry as a cruel and ruthless individual. However, I believe that a close examination of this passage and its related circumstances reveals a far different and far more likely interpretation. An analysis of the examples which Shakespeare chose to use in his comparison indicates that he could hardly have expected his audience to take the comparison seriously, as his examples were either too general or not applicable and when, in fact, far closer parallels

between the two individuals did exist and could have been used. Even had Shakespeare been serious about this comparison, however, it is unlikely that it would have been considered in a negative light by his audience. Alexander was an extremely popular figure in the Renaissance (although some detractors certainly existed); in all likelihood, the majority of the audience would simply have considered that the comparison merely added even more luster to the king who was considered a national hero. To cast further light on the passage, two articles (by Ronald Berman and Robert Merrix) will be considered and their findings critiqued. Shakespeare's perception of Alexander will be further elucidated by examining other references to Alexander in Henry V and finally, the attitudes of the speakers, Gower and Fluellen, will be examined to determine how they, the trusty soldiers in the play, view their king.

The passage in question occurs towards the end of Act IV, when the two captains, Gower and Fluellen, meet during a pause in the battle. Gower has just referred to Henry as a gallant king and Fluellen responds:

Flu. Ay, he was porn at Monmouth, Captain Gower. What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born?

Gow. Alexander the Great.

Flu. Why, I pray you, is not "pig" great? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the

phrase is a little variations.

Gow. I think Alexander the Great was born in Macedon. His father was called Philip of Macedon, as I take it.

Flu. I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is porn. I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the orld, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth. It is call'd Wye at Monmouth; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you make Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well, for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend Clytus.

Gow. Our king is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends.

Flu. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it: as Alexander kill'd his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet. He was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks--I have forgot his name.

Gow. Sir John Falstaff.

Flu. That is he. I'll tell you there is good men porn at Monmouth (4.7.11-53).

This particular passage, which compares Henry to Alexander has not been the recipient of a large amount of critical attention; other sections of Henry V have been examined much more thoroughly. When it is noted, it has usually been disposed of in a few words or, at most, a paragraph or two. M. M. Reese refers briefly to the "enchanting comparison of Henry of Monmouth and Alexander of Macedon, and of the fish that swim in the rivers at both these towns" (328). This reference is unusual, not because of its brevity (which is typical), but because of the positive attitude taken towards the passage by Reese. In most cases, the comparison is cited in unfavorable critical reviews of the

play as supporting evidence for a negative portrait of Henry. Although she is not entirely negative, Lily Campbell points out the juxtaposition of the allusion to the throat-cutting episode in Act IV and underlines the fact that the killing of Cleitus by Alexander "turned many of his friends and followers against him" (304).

Taylor feels that the comparison strengthens the picture of Henry as absolutely coldblooded. Henry has turned away (in effect, killed) Falstaff without possessing the mitigating excuse of drunkeness which Alexander at least possessed. The side-by-side placement of this passage with the killing of the defenseless prisoners merely underscores the inhumanity of Henry's treatment to friend and foe alike (33). Gerald Gould views the play quite differently, but is no more favorable towards Henry. In his investigation of Henry V as an exercise in irony, Gould contends that Fluellen's speech not only heightens the ironic impression of the play in general, but focuses on the irony of the treatment accorded the Southampton traitors for ingratitude towards a former comrade, contrasted with the relative unimportance of the same action, when it is undertaken by one of kingly stature (54-55).

Ronald Berman's "Shakespeare's Alexander: Henry V," first published in 1961, is one study which is devoted to the problem of this passage. Berman discusses the characteristics of both Henry and Alexander as exemplifying the triumph of pragmatism over ideas, and stresses that both men are obsessed with the power of the will, of imposing themselves and their philosophical order upon the chaotic events of the world around them. History, however, is linked with tragedy; Berman

points out that, although Alexander and Henry triumph over history momentarily, they are in turn conquered by mortality. The study examines some parallels between the two individuals but, in effect, limits the parallels to Berman's perception of shared attitudes such as pragmatism and intellectualism, rather than including similarities found in their lives and actions. Berman asserts that Henry is Shakespeare's reconstruction of Alexander, as he feels that Henry does not fall completely into the traditional Renaissance mold of Christian ruler, but exhibits almost equally the unattractive traits of cruelty and arrogance, traits more appropriate to a pagan despot than a Christian king. Berman establishes that Plutarch was Shakespeare's chief source of information concerning Alexander (a view held by most critics) and calls attention to similarities in the form of Plutarch's and Shakespeare's presentations, as both begin their work with an initial apology for their inadequacy in presenting the great deeds of the heroic Henry or the mighty Alexander to their respective audiences.

If, indeed, Berman is correct in his assertion that Henry is a reconstruction of Alexander, the points of comparison which Shakespeare chose to present must be examined to discover whether a true basis for comparison exists or, whether Shakespeare was entirely serious about this comparison. It must be admitted that the initial example of being born by a river is superficial and could apply to any number of individuals, even limiting the rivers to those which contain swimming salmon. The fact that both Macedon and Monmouth begin with the letter "M" also seems incidental to a serious comparison. Or perhaps, it may

be more useful to note the similarities between the two young kings which Shakespeare chose to omit in his comparison.

A dramatic incident in the play, Henry V, concerns the Dauphin's unwise and insulting gift of tennis balls to the English king. Shakespeare tells of the "tun of treasure" (1.2.255) which, when opened, was revealed to be tennis balls accompanied by the mocking message:

> there's nought in France
> That can be with a nimble galliard won;
> You cannot revel into dukedoms there (1.2.251-53).

Henry replies to this mockery with a promise to disturb the courts of France with the coming game that he, as a "wrangler," will provide. This incident came straight from Holinshed and hardly required any enlargement:

> At Killingworth there came to him from Charles Dolphin of France certeine ambassadors, that brought with them a barrell of Paris balles; which from their maister they presented to him for a token that was taken in verie ill part, as sent in scorne, to signifie, that it was more meet for the king to pass the time with such childish exercise, than to attempt any worthie exploit . . . Wherefore the king wrote to him that yer ought long, he would tosse him some London balls that perchance should shake the walles of the best court in France (Boswell-Stone 173).

Holinshed is probably the source for Shakespeare in this, although other sources also relate the incident. The Brut (thought to be written before 1430) tells the story this way:

> Þe Dolfynne of Fraunce answeryd to our ambassetours & sayde yn þis mannere, þat þe King was ouyr yonge; & tendir of age to make eny warre ayens hym, and was not like yette to be no gede warryor to make such a conqueste þere vpon hym; & yn scorne & despite he sent to hym a tonne fulle of teneys-ballis, be-cause he schulde haue sumwhat to play with-alle, for hym and for his lordeȝ; & þat become hym bettir þanne to mantayne eny warre (374).

The passage continues in much the same manner as Holinshed, again mentioning that the "Dolfyn" will soon have "grete gune-stonys" to play with. A variation in this version is that the place where the incident occurs has been radically altered. In Holinshed, French ambassadors come to Henry at Killingworth (Kenilworth); in this version, the English ambassadors receive the balls and message from the Dauphin in France. They then:

> tokyn hir leue & comyn yn-to Engelond ayen, & tolde þe Kinge and his Counsel of the vngodely answere þat þey hadde of the Dolfyn and of þe present þat he hadde sent

vnto the Kinge (375).

C. L. Kingsford (editor of The First English Life of Henry V by Tito Livio) mentions an unpublished manuscript of John Strecche which states that the French ambassadors offered to send "little balls to play with, and soft cushions to rest on, until what time he should grow to a man's strength" (Mowat 110). And in his detailed study, History of the Battle of Agincourt, Nicholas Nicolas also includes a manuscript poem, entitled "Battle of Agincourt," attributed by some scholars to Lydgate (a contemporary poet), some stanzas of which deal with the same subject:

> And thanne answerde the Dolfyn bold
> To our Bassatours sone ageyn,
> Me thinke youre Kynge he is nought old,
> No werrys for to maynteyn,
> Grete well your Kyng he seyd, so yonge,
> That is bothe gentill and small,
> A tonne of tenys ballys I shall hym sende,
> For to play hym with all (11).

Scholars are divided on the question of whether or not the incident of the tennis balls ever took place, either at Kenilworth or the alternate location of the Dauphin's court. Although the event is recorded in a number of contemporary sources (and other sources not far removed in time), it is significant that the episode is not mentioned by any French historians or by a number of contemporary English chroniclers, including Tito Livio, Walsingham, and the chaplain (who

reported on Henry and his actions until 1416). Therefore, one can only speculate on the probability of this intriguing incident occurring as Holinshed, Shakespeare, and others related it.

Perhaps the strongest reason for regarding the story of the Dauphin's gift of tennis balls with skepticism is that it too closely resembles a reported episode in Alexander's life. Plutarch (the Alexandrian source for many scholars) records that Alexander played tennis (1302), but much more fascinating parallels to this scene are to be found in the seldom quoted Kyng Alisaunder, a verse romance from the thirteenth century, and in The Prose Life of Alexander. In Kyng Alisaunder, Darius sends gifts to Alexander that express his contempt for the statesmanship and military prowess of the young king. The gifts are a top, a scourge (or whip), and a ball (lines 1585-1904). These are gifts that are only suitable for a child or a young boy; they certainly indicate mockery for Alexander in his role of military commander and the occasion causes the young king great annoyance. The recounting differs little in the The Prose Life. Messengers are sent between the two men on more than one occasion and "þay hade grete wounder of þam & of þe witt & þe wisedome of Alexander" (12). Once again, accompanied by an insulting letter, the gift of a ball is sent by Darius to Alexander; the message contains so many allusions to Alexander's youth and lack of military experience that his knights become quite daunted and fearful. Other parallels occur in the lives and attitudes of Henry and Alexander. As young men, both had trouble relating to their fathers. Philip of Macedon worries that Alexander is not like him. "Son, I love thy speed

and wit of mind for its work. But I am sore and feel foolish that thy form is so unlike mine" (Prose Life 7). He worries over which son will succeed him as ruler (Kyng Alisaunder lines 753-838). The two quarrel: Alexander insults Philip and Philip draws his sword on Alexander (Plutarch 1255); Philip is unhappy with Alexander's companions and temporarily banishes them (1256). These uncertainties and tensions bring to mind some of the same problems which existed between Henry IV and his son, then usually referred to as Harry or Prince Hal. Henry is extremely concerned about his son's low friends; he refers to them as weeds overspreading Hal's ground. He is little comforted by Warwick's theory that Hal is merely studying the type of humanity which these individuals represent, that he will cast them off when he has learned what he needs to know of life (2 Henry IV 4.4.54-78). In point of fact, Hal does follow Warwick's prediction and casts off his base associates when he assumes the crown and its responsibiities, despising his former way of life with its companions:

> Presume not that I am the thing I was
> For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
> That I have turn'd away my former self;
> So will I those that kept me company (5.5.56-59).

Henry IV's doubts are more serious than merely the company which his son keeps; they extend to his son's character as well. When he compares Hotspur to his son, it is considerably to the detriment of the latter. Of his own son, he says, "For thou has lost thy princely privilege with vile participation" (1 Henry IV 3.2.86-87) while he

lavishly praises Northumberland's son:

> Now by my sceptre, and my soul to boot,
> He hath more worthy interest to the state
> Than thou the shadow of succession.
> For of no right, nor color like to right,
> He doth fill fields with harness in the realm,
> Turns head against the lion's armed jaws,
> And being no more in debt to years than thou,
> Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on
> To bloody battles and to bruising arms.
> What never-dying honor hath he got
> Against renowmed Douglas! (3.2.97-107).

The king is even more direct in expressing his dissatisfaction with his son when in conversation with the Earl of Westmerland in Act I:

> Yea, there thou mak'st me sad, and mak'st me sin
> In envy that my Lord Northumberland
> Should be the father to so blest a son--
> A son who is the theme of honor's tongue,
> Amongst a grove the very straightest plant,
> Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride,
> Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him
> See riot and dishonor stain the brow
> Of my young Harry. O that it could be prov'd
> That some night-tripping fairy had exchang'd
> In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,

And call'd mine Percy, his Plantagent! (1.1.78-89).

The estrangement between father and son lasts, in both cases, until the fathers are on their respective deathbeds. Alexander comes to visit and comfort the sick Philip, hoping to be reconciled. He speaks to Philip as a "gud frend" and Philip's "hert tendird"; the attempt at reconciliation is successful (Prose Life 11). When Philip is slain, Alexander kills the murderer and he weeps at Philip's death, after being absolved by the dying man: "Wit a glade hert [I] may now dye, for þat þou so soune hase venged my dede" (13). Henry, also, is only reconciled with his father at the end. After a final bitter disagreement over Hal's premature donning of the crown, all misunderstandings are cleared away in a new and happy (but necessarily brief) glow of mutual comprehension. As his end approaches, Henry IV speaks:

> God put [it] in thy mind to take it hence,
> That thou mightst win the more thy father's love,
> Pleading so wisely in excuse of it!
> Come hither, Harry, sit thou by my bed,
> And hear (I think) the very latest counsel
> That ever I shall breathe (2 Henry IV 4.5.178-83).

Another area in which Alexander and Henry may have been similar is in their treatment of women. This statement does not address itself to either Henry's supposed carousing before he became king and his reported continence thereafter, any more than it does to the stories about Alexander, which ranged from his willing himself to remain chaste to promote readiness for the more important matters facing him, to

dissipation with both sexes (promulgated by different critics), to his servicing Darius' three hundred and sixty concubines. Rather, it refers to the unusual courtesy which both Alexander and Henry extended to captured females during their military campaigns. It cannot be denied that Alexander sold many women and children into slavery; this practice was commonly accepted as one way to raise the revenues necessary to wage war. In addition, barbarians were not considered as otherwise than enemies and slaves, a viewpoint which was advocated by such philosophic luminaries as Plato (65-66) and Aristotle (10-12).

On one occasion, Alexander's respect for and kindness to the captured women of Darius' family reportedly far exceeded the treatment they could have expected at the hands of their foe and conqueror, especially since they had unwittingly offered him insult. Arrian tells the story and adds that the tale might be apocryphal, but if so, "it was at least inspired by Alexander's character" (123). Curtius Rufus asserts that Alexander's courteous behavior, in the context of warfare, was so unusual that Darius could hardly believe it to be the truth. When however, he finally became convinced that Alexander had acted honorably, he reacted with respect and admiration, saying:

> O God of my fathers, above all make firm
> my rule, but if it be now finished with me,
> may no one, I pray, be king of Asia, rather
> than that enemy so just, that victor so
> merciful (1.263).

Again, when a noble lady of Thebes was raped by one of Alexander's

captains (after having had her belongings looted and her house ruined), she took revenge by pushing her attacker down a well and killing him. She was brought before Alexander for justice, but he amazed his soldiers by his respect for her nobility and courage; he released her unconditionally, ordering that she should not be bothered again (Plutarch 1259-60). On yet another occasion, Alexander noticed a woman brought in to entertain at a banquet. When he discovered her high birth, he freed her, restored her property, and organized a search for her missing husband (Curtius Rufus 2.19).

After the siege of Harfleur, to make room for English settlers who would anglicize the town (thus making more certain that Harfleur would adhere to the British side in the future), Henry evicted two thousand individuals, many of whom were women and children. He provided a guard for these unfortunate emigrants so that they would not be robbed (of what possessions they still owned) by disobedient English soldiers, roving French bandits, or others of their unscrupulous countrymen. Furthermore, because of Henry's explicit orders (The Brut states he "commaunded . . . no man so hardy to defoule ne robbe no womman . . . but late hem passe yn pes ypon deth" (384).) forbidding the molestation of women, the latter were as safe from rape as could be expected. It was not always possible to ensure this safety, but historians agree that Henry not only issued the command (which was typical of the age), but also, insofar as it was possible, personally saw that it was enforced. According to Hibbert, one French chronicler reported that during the Agincourt campaign, the French troops were not nearly as well

disciplined as their English counterparts, and that the blame for the worst offenses against women and civilians would have to be placed on the French (85).

As a final point of comparison, it should hardly be necessary to point out that both men ascended their respective thrones when relatively young, and led brief but meteoric careers, before dying untimely deaths while still young. Henry became the king of England at the age of twenty-five. He invaded France the following year and by 1420, when the Treaty of Troyes was signed, was the acknowledged heir to France. He had followed in the victorious steps of his great-grandfather and great-uncle (Edward II and the Black Prince), although the triumph at Agincourt far outshone the earlier victories at Crécy and Poitiers. He died in 1422, while still in France, seeking to unify that country under his vigorous rule. Within less than a generation, however, the gains had become losses and only the memory of the victories was left.

Alexander became king when his father, Philip of Macedon, was murdered. He was then twenty years old and by the time of his death, at the age of thirty-two, he had led his army on a tour of conquest that extended from the Greek Peninsula through Asia Minor, into northern Africa, east to India, and north to Russia. He never returned to Greece and died at Babylon. He had conquered the world, as it was known, but he had not lived to rule it. At once, there was division in the empire he had formed as Alexander's former associates fought to retain and consolidate their power; new kingdoms began to split away and

Alexander's empire immediately began to crumble.

With these serious similarities before him--the misunderstandings and estrangements between father and son, the respectful attitude toward women, the rapid rise arrested by an early death, even the dramatic episode of the tennis balls--to choose from, if Shakespeare was indeed setting up a serious comparison in a logical fashion, why would he choose the examples which he did: i.e., being born by salmon-filled rivers in countries beginning with the letter "M", and losing friends by one means or another (which upon enlargement and clarification by the speaker, turns out to be a contrast, instead of a comparison)? As a comparison, the passage simply does not ring true. Furthermore, Berman's statement that Henry is a reconstruction of Alexander is not believable, for an examination of the two demonstrates that, although there are certainly similarities to be seen, there are very basic contrasts in their lives and attitudes which exist, as well.

In the matter of their temperaments, it may be thought that Fluellen is implying that Henry also possesses the rages, furies, wraths, cholers, moods, displeasures, and indignations imputed to Alexander in lines 34-36. However, if Gower and the reader allow Fluellen a little time to explain that he is speaking but in the "figures and comparisons of it" (line 44), he then acquits Henry of cholers, etc., by stating that he was in "his right wits and good judgments" (line 47). In Act IV of 2 Henry IV, the king has spoken of Henry's moodiness and temper (4.4.27-41), but since the king does not, at least until he is on his deathbed, show any comprehension whatsoever

of his son's character, he may be safely disregarded as an authority. Nym also states that the king "passes some humors and careers" (Henry V 2.1.125-26). Again, however, Nym's testimony must be discounted. It is only natural that Nym, as one of the disreputable group that surround Falstaff and have been disappointed in their expectations (which Falstaff himself expressed so eloquently upon Henry's accession in 2 Henry IV: "I am Fortune's steward . . . Let us take any man's horses, the laws of England are at my commandement" (5.3.130, 135-37)), would rather attribute his fall from favor to Henry's changeableness or "humors" rather than to the unworthiness and bad character apparently possessed by all members of the Eastcheap group.

Berman speaks of Henry's "bona fide Alexandrian rage" (537), but in fact, Henry is remarkably even-tempered and not given to either wrathful tantrums or quakings of fear. When he receives the French ambassadors (who are fully aware that the taunting message they bear from the Dauphin could rebound on them and place their lives in jeopardy), he reminds them that, no matter what message they bring or how he may personally feel about it, his passion is subject to the grace he bears as a Christian king (Henry V 1.2.241-42). In actuality, the message is a deadly insult, but Henry responds, not with anger, but with a jest. The sober truth of the coming war underlies the jest, but Henry is cool and in control, both of his feelings and of the situation. When treason is discovered and Henry must sentence three men who have been close to him (including his dearest friend), his speech is moving and it is clear that he is deeply affected, but he neither breaks down in

disillusionment, nor lapses into uncontrolled rage at his courtiers' lack of loyalty. Henry calmly delineates the reason for their punishment--not because of their crime against him, but because of their crime against the kingdom. In the end, he tempers justice with compassion as he commends them to God's mercy (2.2.166-81).

Humphreys and Taylor (among others) find Henry's speech at Harfleur, and the manner of threats he utters, a strong indication of his brutal and coldblooded character. Indeed, it must be admitted that the picture he paints of Harfleur's fate, should she choose not to surrender, is hardly a pretty one. The people may accept his present mercy but,

> If not--why, in a moment look to see
> The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
> [Defile] the locks of your shrill-shriking daughters;
> Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
> And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls;
> Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
> Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
> Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry
> At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughter-men.
> What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid?
> Or guilty in defense, be thus destroy'd?
> (3.3.33-43).

Admittedly, this depiction of possible events is both violent and unsettling. However, it must be remembered that war is an occupation

which includes, to some extent, the strategy of bluff. The images which Henry so feelingly (and so successfully) brings to the minds of the governor and citizens of Harfleur may be violent and bloody, but their end result is the saving of lives. Henry's soldiery (certainly a precious commodity and his prime concern) are, by this ploy, spared any excessive losses, losses which, this early in the campaign, could spell defeat for England and her cause.

Furthermore, the citizens of Harfleur are protected and spared, something which would have been impossible in the wake of a bloody struggle, when the soldiers were in the grip of battle lust and virtually uncontrollable. Maurice Keen points out that military law (adhered to since Roman times) allowed any excess, except against church and clergy, in a city which did not surrender under duress, but compelled its attacker to subdue it by force (121). Enguerrand de Monstrelet, the Burgundian chronicler, also notes that Henry observed the law which has existed since the book of Deuteronomy--that justice demands peace shall be offered before the attack begins (1.138). Henry's offer of peace might be couched in images of ferocity, but he did offer the option of surrender which was accepted. It should also be noted that, immediately upon Harfleur's capitulation, Henry ordered the Duke of Exeter (whom he had placed in charge of the city, to see that it was reinforced) to show mercy to all the inhabitants (3.3.54). Some critics, including Gould and Derek Traversi, have referred to the Harfleur speech as a wrathful one, but anger has not been proven; Henry's words constituted a monumental bluff which (in the absence of

support from the Dauphin for the beleaguered city) was successful.

Henry, himself, disregards the occasion of Harfleur as a cause for anger; this is shown when he discovers the slaughter of the servants (a scene that occurs immediately after the passage between Gower and Fluellen) which causes him to exclaim:

> I was not angry since I came to France
> Until this instant (4.7.55-56).

Henry remains calm throughout the play; he does not give way to anger, displeasure, or fear, even during the most trying of circumstances. His calmness is apparent, even when his army is depleted in size, and those who remain are hungry and ill. During the entire campaign, he has allowed common men to speak to him very directly, without reprisal, whether or not they recognize him as the king and address him with appropriate respect. Early in the play, Henry pardons a man who talks against him, attributing the man's heat to an "excess of wine" (2.2.40-43). He obviously feels that this man's rantings do not besmirch him in any way and he is comfortable in releasing him without knowing whether his mercy will bind the man to him, or leave him free for further vilification in the future.

Henry's encounters with his men on the night before Agincourt reveal again his ease at mingling with commoners, especially provided that the individuals themselves are protected from the rigors of ceremonious behavior by not knowing his identity. He does not quibble at being insulted by Pistol (4.1.60), and he freely joins in the discussion with Bates, Court, and Williams as an equal (4.1.90-194).

Henry is not initially annoyed concerning their disagreements with the war or that their views do not correspond with his. In fact, he almost seems to welcome the chance to patiently lecture them as a teacher might explain a problem to his students. Throughout the night, while appearing as himself, Henry has bolstered his men up with his encouragement, easing their fears with his comfort and comradeship It is only as the anonymous Welshman, Harry le Roy, that he demonstrates his awareness of the army's desperate situation when he refers to his soldiers as "men wrack'd upon a sand, that look to be wash'd off the next tide" (4.1.97-98). This moment of discouragement passes almost unnoticed, however, as he falls to defending his point of view to the common soldiers who are all too uncertain of what the morrow will bring and whether or not they will have a future. Henry does flare up at Williams when Williams impeaches his honor by suggesting that the king may allow himself to be captured and ransomed while his men die in the battle, but this lapse is momentary. He does not hold this argument against Williams and, in fact, arranges the charade with Fluellen the next day for Williams' protection.

If Henry's words to Williams, "I embrace it" [the quarrel] (4.1.206), constitute anger, it is certainly a very different type of anger than that which moved Alexander to kill Cleitus, a man who was not only his friend, but who had saved his life on an earlier occasion. In spite of being repeatedly restrained by his companions, Alexander (who Curtius Rufus says, "was filled with such great wrath as he could hardly have mastered when sober" (2.245)) threw an apple at the offending

Cleitus, struck a guard who refused to sound the general alarm, and finally seized a "partisan" (or spear) from a guard which he used to murder his friend (Plutarch 1320-21). He was instantly sobered and filled with remorse, but the deed could not be undone. How different was this unbridled act of rage from the restraint of Henry, whether personally taunted by his foe, or his values misunderstood and impugned by those around him. Towards the end of Alexander's reign, Plutarch writes that Alexander has "become cruel enough" (1326); he may have been suffering from paranoia as he comes to suspect that the gods have abandoned him and even his old friends cannot be trusted. The result of Alexander's suspicion is that he has come to behave in surprising ways: for example, he seized the hair of a luckless newcomer to Babylon (who was so unfortunate as to laugh at the, to him, bizarre sight of barbarians kneeling before Alexander as to a god) and dashed the man's head against a wall (1349).

Referring to Alexander and his feeling that the gods had forsaken him, brings me to the last point of difference between Henry and Alexander which is their relationship to God. Naturally, Alexander could not be expected to worship only one god; he came from a polytheistic and pre-Christian society. But his relationship with the gods was both curiously dependent as well as strangely arrogant. In almost any historical version of Alexander, it is at once apparent that he is "devout." He offers sacrifices; Zeus, Diana, Athena, and Heracles are especially mentioned as recipients. On a single page, Arrian mentions Alexander sacrificing to three separate gods on separate

occasions (109) and in general, he sacrifices to gods on a daily basis (Plutarch 1276). We might label him superstitious as he depended upon both dreams and oracles, especially before a battle, and was distinctly uneasy (sometimes changing his battle plans) if the omens were inauspicious. His devoutness also appears in folk literature; in The Prose Life, Alexander visits Jerusalem, worships God, and sacrifices in Solomon's temple (19-20).

Alexander relied so heavily on the advice of soothsayers that he made decisions he might otherwise not have made. Plutarch relates that Alexander had a young man put to death at the behest of his soothsayers (1349); he must, however, have felt that this decision was, at the least, ill-advised, for he was distressed after the man's death and it was at this point that he felt the gods had abandoned him. Curiously enough, after he had lost his former confidence in the gods, he increased his religious activity to greater levels, "so that his tent was always full of priests and soothsayers that did nothing but sacrifice and purify and tend unto divinements" (1350).

It might be thought that his reliance on the gods would also indicate humility, but in Alexander's life, such was not the case as he elevated himself (or allowed himself to be elevated) to the stature of a god. The story had early been put about that Alexander was not the son of Philip but of a serpent god who had lain with Olympias and that Alexander's birth had been greeted with physical manifestations and portents (Plutarch 1245-47; Prose Life 4-6). In Egypt, Alexander visited a prophet who greeted him as the son of Ammon or Zeus (Arrian

153). Alexander's contemporary historian, Callisthenes, in reporting on this visit emphasized the fact that Alexander's lineage was divine; if, as Fox states, Callisthenes was writing what Alexander wished to hear, it must be assumed that Alexander wished the divine sonship idea to be promulgated (211). This promotion to divinity occurs in the romances, as well as in the historical accounts. The Prose Life recounts that the "persyenes . . . bi-gan to wirchipe hym, & loue hym riȝte als he hade bene a godd" (59).

Plutarch states that after the experience in Egypt, Alexander acted arrogantly as though he were indeed the son of a god (1285). This attitude, although accepted by Alexander's eastern soldiers, caused many problems with his old Macedonian and Greek allies (to whom bowing down indicated worship as well as respect) who refused to treat their old comrade Alexander in the reverential manner he now demanded. When Callisthenes refused to bow to Alexander, his defiance began the grudge Alexander held against Callisthenes (1324) which ended with Callisthenes being put to death (a set of circumstances, incidentally, to which the historians grant much more space and attention than they do to the murder of Cleitus, an event which they seem to regard as unfortunate, but not particularly surprising). Arrian reports that Alexander elected himself as a third god for the Arabs (who had previously worshiped two) because he considered his feats to be as great or greater than those of the existing deities (382). After the killing of Cleitus, Alexander was consoled by the wise man Anaxarchus who assured Alexander that he need not worry about acting justly or doing right, because whatever he chose

to do was right (Arrian 217). Possessing this reassuring sanction, Alexander felt free to elevate, as well, his beloved friend, Hephaestion, to the level of a demigod, as after Hephaestion's death, Alexander ordered that his friend should be sacrificed to and worshiped (Plutarch 1347).

What a contrast to this self-aggrandizement is Henry's consistent life of humility and religious conviction. Again, his religious stance has been heavily criticized by critics of a more modern age who feel that his constant appeals to heaven can only be some sort of false piety, a deceptive religious front which makes his personality both unattractive and false. J. M. Gregson considers Henry's religious utterances to be no more than "an elaborate public display of rectitude for the benefit of the onlookers" (83), while Hazlitt sneeringly refers to Henry's "brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy" (158). E. E. Stoll, however, reminds us that what may seem to us to be an obtrusive morality was not only the norm for Henry's time, but would not yet have been out of date in Shakespeare's time (128). In Henry's age, large households maintained their own clerics who held daily services, personal devotions were commonly practiced, a prie-dieu was a common article of bedroom furniture, and much written matter, whether prose or poetry, dealt with religious themes. The chaplain, who left a record of a portion of Henry's reign, wrote in this style of the capture of Harfleur:

> But God Himself, gracious and merciful to
> His people, sparing the bloodshed which

> must undoubtedly have occurred in an assault upon the walls, turned away the sword from us and sruck terror into our enemies" (Gesta 49),

and described the victory of Agincourt in these words:

> And that same just Judge, Whose intention it was to strike with the thunderbolt of His vengeance the proud host of the enemy, turned His face away from them and broke their strength--the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle (89-91).

Granted, these are the words of a cleric, which might be supposed to be designed to communicate a sense of spirituality. The Brut as well, however, employs God as a personal presence upon whom His people rely:

> God almyȝti was his gide, and saued hym and alle his peple, and withstode alle his enymys purpos, þankyd be God, þat so sauyd his own knyȝt & King yn his riȝtfull tytyl! (377).

It is evident from these quotations that the perceived relationship of trust between God and man varies greatly from the modern, approaching more closely, in fact, a biblical attitude. In this environment of open religiosity, Henry's piety and faith do not seem false or forced; neither do these attitudes seem bizarre when Shakespeare wrote his

play--a time when in the preceeding fifty years, over five hundred individuals had lost their lives for the sake of their religious beliefs.

Shakespeare is consistent in his representation of Henry as a pious monarch. Henry's longing for glory may be great, but he is also concerned that his claim is morally defensible and the war justified. For this reassurance, he turns to his spiritual advisors, the Archbishop of Cantebury and the Bishop of Ely, asking for their help in defining the problem and their counsel as to the solving of it. He shows by his speech in Act I that he is all too aware of the horrors of war and does not feel it should be entered into lightly:

> Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,
> How you awake our sleeping sword of war--
> We charge you, in the name of God, take heed;
> For never two such kingdoms did contend
> Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops
> Are every one a woe, a sore complaint,
> 'Gainst him whose wrongs gives edge unto the swords
> That makes such waste in brief mortality
> (1.2.21-28).

As the play continues, there are other references which demonstrate Henry's trust in God and reliance on Him. At the end of the tennis ball incident, after Henry has responded to the Dauphin's mockery with a catalogue of the consequent events which France will experience, he pauses and remarks thoughtfully,

> But this all lies within the will of God,
> To whom I do appeal, and in whose name
> Tell you the Dolphin I am coming on
> To venge me as I may, and to put forth
> My rightful hand in a well-hallow'd cause
> (1.2.289-93).

He also remarks that in the future he will have no thoughts but those pertaining to France, except of course, those devoted to God (302-03), thus indicating that the spiritual is very much a part of his everyday life. Possibly because of this spiritual devotion, Henry was even more strict about protection of the clergy, during the Agincourt campaign, than current military law demanded. Reportedly, his protection of the clergy was so well enforced that the French peasants in the path of the English army disguised themselves as clergy, even to receiving the appropriate tonsure (Walsingham 2.322).

Although he has marked anxieties, which would only be natural as he considers his small and weakened army, Henry's trust in God continues unabated to the extent that he may, at times, appear foolhardy. When one of Henry's knights, Sir Walter Hungerford (a role Shakespeare assigned to the Earl of Westmerland), expressed a wish that the army contained ten thousand more good English archers, the king replied:

> That is a foolish way to talk because, by
> the God in Heaven upon Whose grace I have
> relied and in Whom is my firm hope of victory,
> I would not, even if I could, have a single

> man more than I do. For these I have here with me are God's people, whom He deigns to let me have at this time. Do you not believe that the Almighty, with these His humble few, is able to overcome the opposing arrogance of the French who boast of their great number and their own strength? (Gesta 79).

After Montjoy's visit, with a final request that Henry submit himself for ransom, Henry places the outcome of the battle in God's hands: "And how thou pleasest, God, dispose the day!" (4.3.133). "God be with you all!" (4.3.78) he says to the English soldiers just before they take their places.

His last act before the battle begins is to kneel down and receive the sacrament and it should be noted that his soldiers do not find this devout act surprising; according to Jean Le Févre they respond, "Sire, nous pryons Dieu qui vous doint bonne vie et la victoire sur noz ennemis"[1] (1.251). After the battle is over, Henry loses no time in giving credit to God. When Montjoy announces, "The day is yours," Henry immediately responds, "Praised be God, and not our strength, for it" (4.7.86-87). He even forbids his men to boast of the victory, for their vain glory would take praise away from the God who had fought for them (4.8.115-20). Elizabethans would have applauded this modesty, not only

[1]Sir, we pray God give you a good life and the victory over your enemies.

from a spiritual point of view, but as militarily correct, besides. In 1579, Thomas Digges advised a general to give the glory of victory first to God and only secondarily to his men, while ignoring his own part altogether. In this way, he will "make his honourable Actions shine the more glorioustie, but also wonderfully combine with harty good wyll his Souldiours to love and honor him" (S_1). There is no reason to believe, however, given Henry's consistent piety and humility, that he gives the glory to God for any other reason than he feels that God is the appropriate recipient. Henry appeals to God on a more personal level as well, for when Fluellen states that he will never need to be ashamed of his king so long as he continues to be honest, Henry replies earnestly, "God keep me so!" (4.7.115).

This extended comparison/contrast between the lives of Henry and Alexander has revealed a number of important likenesses between the two men, but it has also revealed a number of significant diversities. In reviewing these similarities and differences, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare has chosen to create Henry as a reconstruction of Alexander. Shakespeare did not select for his comparison either important parallels between the attitudes of Henry and Alexander or dramatic events of Alexander's life which may have been mirrored in Henry's experience. By his choice of trivial examples, Shakespeare has deliberately robbed the comparison of any validity which it might have possessed. With further investigation, it becomes apparent that there are too many differences between the two men for Henry to be viewed as a reconstruction of Alexander. Alexander's rages were legendary, while Henry remained calm,

no matter what the provocation. Alexander elevated himself and was worshiped as a god; Henry consistently displayed a sincere humility and reliance on God. It is possible that he might have been horrified at being seriously compared with Alexander, who, on occasion, exhibited both cruel and capricious behavior, exclaiming as he did in Act I, "We are no tyrant, but a Christian king" (1.1.241).

The second study to be devoted to the conversation between Gower and Fluellen is "The Alexandrian Allusion in Shakespeare's Henry V," which Robert Merrix published in 1972. Merrix calls attention to Fluellen's language problem and considers that the reference to Alexander as "the Pig" is a strong clue that Henry will be satirized by the parallel, an impression which is fortified by Gower's reference to the king's throat-cutting order as "gallant." Merrix feels that:

> the location of Fluellen's allusion, the reference to the monarch's mood and rages, the long involved parallel between Alexander and Henry, and Henry's own violent rhetoric, repeating the throat-cutting allusion--all are designed to focus on and embellish the comparison itself (323).

In addition, Merrix has identified a pattern concerning the parallels which Shakespeare chose to present. An action is described (the rash throat-cutting order), followed by the classical allusion (Alexander), returning to the contemporary figure (Henry). Merrix urges that the portrait of Henry is meant to be satirical by calling attention to

another classical allusion in the play, a comparison of Pistol and Mark Antony. He then turns to medieval and Renaissance accounts of Alexander and quotes from a number of authors who present Alexander in an unfavorable light. Merrix concludes that the apparently heroic figure of Henry has been undercut by the Alexandrian allusion, that Henry's actual rashness and ambition have been emphasized by the comparison with the rash and ambitious Alexander.

I believe that Merrix has chosen the wrong particulars on which to focus his attention. It is true that, if one takes Fluellen's comparison of Pistol and Mark Antony seriously, a possible satirical pattern may be perceived. However, Merrix omits the comparison Fluellen makes between the Duke of Exeter and Agamemnon, both soldiers of valor who have earned Fluellen's approval. Exeter is the king's uncle, and he has functioned as Henry's trusted right-hand man during the play. He is in his nephew's confidence concerning the Southampton traitors (2.2.2), and he is entrusted, by Henry, with the refortifying of Harfleur (3.3.51-52). There is no reason to distrust Exeter or to consider him as anything but a brave and capable soldier. Agamemnon, as well, is described as "a good king and a mighty spearman" (Homer 68). Apparently, there can be nothing satirical in the linking of these two individuals. Furthermore, the sources which Merrix uses to establish Alexander's character are almost uniformly unfavorable. He ignores the many sources which present Alexander as a romantic and heroic figure so that the portrayal cannot help but be incomplete.

Certainly, as Merrix reminds us, Dante places Alexander in the

circle of the Violent (54), Lucan terms him, "a plague, a universal thunderbolt, a disastrous comet" (226), and St. Augustine relates the anecdote which shows Alexander in conversation with a pirate:

> the king asking him how he durst molest the seas so, he replied with a free spirit, 'How darest thou molest the whole world? But because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief: thou doing it with a great navy, art called an emperor' (1.115).

Merrix refers to this anecdote as a damning indictment without understanding that this is one type of story which enlivens interest in both individuls considered in the tale. Diogenes is another example of the spunky commoner standing up to the conqueror of the world; the reader feels admiration both for the philosopher who could say without temerity, "Stand out of my light," and for the powerful ruler, who admiring this spirit, could say, "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes" (Plutarch 1261).

The world-at-large, certainly through the medieval period and especially in the Renaissance, displayed a fascination with Alexander. Chaucer, discussing fortune in "The Monk's Tale," had said, "The story of Alexander is so widespread that every wight of discretion has heard somewhat or all of his fortune" (126). With clerics and philosophers, the fascination expressed itself in negative fashion and condemnatory terms, but in plays and romances, Alexander was shown as a dashing and

romantic, almost mythical figure. In his exhaustive study, The Medieval Alexander, George Cary points out that the emphasis on the courtly tradition during medieval times, especially in France (which continued to strongly influence England), had almost completely nullified the negative portrait of Alexander presented by the theologians (141). He also lists the types of anecdotes which have been passed on concerning Alexander, such as simple tastes, forethought for his soldiers, political and strategic wisdom (160-61), and demonstrates how the shifts in Alexander's reported qualities specifically correspond with the qualities of the age associated with greatness (208).

A romantic view of Alexander is presented in The Prose Life, where he is pitted against dragons that:

> hadd' crestis one þaire heddez & þaire brestez
> ware bryghte lyk golde, & þaire mowthes open.
> Þaire annde slew any quikk thynge þat it smate
> apon, and oute of þaire eghne þare come flammes
> of fyre (70).

Alexander is equal to the occasion; he fights the dragons with net, shield, and spear and slays many. He also contends with huge crabs, gigantic swine, a horse-shaped animal that is larger than an elephant and has three horns, and with wild men and women, each with six hands (70-71). A further quest brings Alexander to "clere water as cristalle. And it was als nureschand to manes body, as it hadd' bene mylk wit-outen eny oþer mete" (91) and he shows his resourcefulness once again when he meets the basilisk. Alexander uses a "grete Mirroure" for a shield so

that the basilisk "wit a grete ire he bi-helde þe Mirroure and saw hym-selfe þare-in. And of þe refleccion of þe bemes of his sighte strykande appon hym-self. Sudanly he was dede" (92). In the Romance of Alexander, written five hundred years after his death (Fox 26), Alexander is the bold explorer and adventurer who builds a most unique flying machine and is lowered to the bottom of the ocean in his submarine--a glass sphere (417). In Kyng Alisaunder, he shows himself to be both clever and ingenious as he disguises himself on a number of occasions: in order to visit the enemy camp (lines 4062-4280); to fool an adversary whom he meets (lines 5453-5562); and to rescue a lady in distress (lines 7446-7727). He is described as "a noble man" (line 1577), the "grettest of kingus" (Gests 210), and as "chiefe of chiualrie" in the Renaissance romance play, "Clyomon and Clamydes" (Waith 39). These romances were tremendously popular and it is not surprising that their hero, the fantasy figure of Alexander, was a popular one in Shakespeare's England. Margaret Greaves states that Alexander "caught the imagination of the age and became the mirror in which it saw the qualities it most admired" (29).

Comparisons between famous personages appear to be inescapable. Today, a young actor may be called the James Dean of the eighties, or a homespun politician referred to as the new Harry Truman. Henry, as a conqueror, was compared to Alexander, but he was likened to other well-known figures as well. The contemporary John Strecche referred to Henry as a Julius in talent, a Hector in valor, an Achilles in might, an Augustus in character, a Paris in looks, and a second Solomon (Wylie

1.191). In more modern times, his circulating among his men before battle has been compared to Germanicus (Bullough 410) and Agamemnon (Taylor 53) while, in his warlike approach, he has been compared to Tamburlaine by a number of critics, including John Dover Wilson (xxvi). Also, with the Renaissance emphasis on neo-classicism, it is certainly not surprising that a medieval hero should be compared to a classical one. J. H. Walter quotes Sir Walter Raleigh who demonstrates by his wording, a perceived connection between Henry and Alexander in his statement, "None of them went to worke like a Conquerour: saue onely King Henrie the fift" (xxiii); Walter also comments on the Renaissance opinion of Alexander and the linking of him with Henry by saying, "Calvary apart there could be no greater praise" (xxiii). It should be noted that the Alexander phenomenon was not limited to common people; even Queen Elizabeth "loved to be compared to Alexander" (Simpson 381). It seems clear that, given the temper of the times and the audience's perception of Alexander as hero, Shakespeare was not setting up the allusion to blacken Henry's character by a comparison with Alexander.

Berman has suggested that it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare would have been ignorant of the actual events in Alexander's life, "for the onmipresence of the Alexander legend in the Renaissance defies citation" (532). Furthermore, E. K. Chambers (in agreement with a large number of other critics) asserts that Shakespeare's source for Julius Caesar (first performed in the same year as Henry V) was North's translation of Plutarch's Lives (1.401). If Chamber's assumption is true, and since the section on Alexander is adjacent to that of Julius

Caesar, it is nearly impossible that Shakespeare would not have been aware of Plutarch's, on the whole, rather laudatory portrait of Alexander. For although Plutarch did not hesitate to point out Alexander's occasional cruelty, his arrogance, and his encouragement of sycophancy, he also said, "he was as noble a prince and gracious to wait upon, and as pleasant as any king that ever was" (1277), while throughout Alexander's history runs continual mention of his virtues: his noble mind, his mercy, his courage, his honor and magnanimity.

Plutarch is generally accepted as one of the two most reliable and unbiased classical sources regarding Alexander; the other is Arrian who, again, while reporting aspects of Alexander's life which may have been unfortunate, does so in a non-judgmental manner: "I have, admittedly, found fault with some of the things which Alexander did, but of the man himself I am not ashamed to express ungrudging admiration" (398). Curtius Rufus judged Alexander more harshly than either Plutarch and Arrian, referring to the "abominable murder" and saying that Alexander "had usurped the detestable function of an executioner" (2.247). Although this account is among those most critical of Alexander, Curtius Rufus also states that Alexander's problems of temper and wine "were intensified by his youth, greater age might have moderated them" (2.525).

In Henry V, Shakespeare refers to Alexander on two other occasions besides his employment of the comparison in Act IV. It may be useful to examine these references in their context to see if a clue to Shakespeare's perception of Alexander can possibly be gained in this

manner. Shakespeare had given an early hint of the coming comparison in a sentence, uttered in Act I, by the Archbishop of Cantebury as he discoursed on Henry's admirable and statesmanlike qualities:

> Turn him to any cause of policy,
> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter (1.1.45-47).

This allusion, of course, refers to Alexander's renowned exploit at Gordius. A chariot was found there, bound with a band of bark; prophecy held that whoever could undo the band would rule the world. Plutarch reports two versions of Alexander's successful attempt to loose the band. In the first, seeing that there were no ends to undo (as the ends were folded and woven together), Alexander quickly drew his sword and cut the knot in the middle. The second version stated that Alexander untied the knot by removing a bolt which held the beam and body of the chariot together (1268). In any event, the deed was accounted a great feat, whether it served to justify Alexander's ambition, or whether it merely converted the tribes in the area to recognition of Alexander's destiny.

J. A. R. Thomson states that the story especially "struck the Renaissance imagination, and the 'Gordian knot' became proverbial" (104). In referring to this incident, Shakespeare serves notice early in the play that great accomplishments will be expected from the young king. One may suspect that the prelate is exaggerating Henry's capabilities at this point, employing a little overstatement, perhaps, in asserting that the most difficult tasks will be as nothing for his

new sovereign. But it is important to note that there is no apparent irony in the Archbishop's statement or attitude, both of which merely express admiration and an optimism for the country's future under this paragon, combined with gentle surprise at Henry's sudden reformation, which he apparently acquired along with the crown. A number of critics, including Mitchell and Traversi, have commented (and not without reason) on the character of the prelates, whose support of the French campaign appears to contain a strong element of self-interest. This construction can easily be placed upon the scene but as the words, which would be construed as extreme flattery if uttered in the presence of the king, are only exchanged between Ely and Cantebury, it would seem that the prelate's admiration does not necessarily contain a hidden motive.

Alexander is mentioned again in the first scene of Act II, as Henry urges his troops to action at Harfleur:

> On, on, you [noblest] English,
> Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
> Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
> Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
> And sheath'd their swords for lack of argument.
> Dishonor not your mothers; now attest
> That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you
> (3.1.17-23).

This simile does not, of course, compare Henry to Alexander, but it may be useful to note how Henry invokes the name of the conqueror. It is in connection with the "noblest English." They are the ones who have

soldiers as fathers, fathers who could fight all day in their desire to gain honor and conquer; Henry's men must now prove their lineage (their connection or sonship to these "Alexanders," the brave men of a generation ago) by their worth in today's battle. Courage, valor, and military prowess are evidently being called for here; the comparison can only be a favorable one to which the soldiers will respond with the intensity required for the present task, which, in this case, is the subjugation of Harfleur. These additional references to Alexander in the play, therefore, are not negative in nature, but bring to mind the enviable qualities of cleverness, mental acuity, courage, valor, and effective rule through united action.

Any aspect of Shakespeare's time which could assist in the correct understanding of the play should be examined; in the case of Henry V, it is certainly possible that England's political situation at the time had a bearing on the play, from the point of view of the playwright, as well as that of the audience. Henry V was first performed in 1599. At that time, Elizabeth I had been on the throne for over forty years and, in the main, they had been good years. The Renaissance was in full flower; the new humanistic philosophy was expressed in many aspects of culture; it was a time referred to by some as a "Golden Age." Like most other golden ages, however, this one had its drawbacks, as well. Although internal politics were calmer than they had been for a number of years, England had essentially been at war continuously since 1585. Spain was the antagonist, and a large share of the fighting took place in the Netherlands as Spain endeavored to retain its satellite, while England

maintained garrisons and forces there to assist the Dutch in throwing off Spanish rule. The English navy triumphed over the Spanish Armada in a decisive victory in 1588, but a substantial raid the following year gained nothing for the British. In 1595, an expedition against Cadiz secured that Spanish city temporarily; it also prodded Philip into a planned invasion of Ireland. Eventually, this came to nothing, but the threat was responsible for a certain amount of panic and caused the government to consider more seriously the military problems which beset English rule in Ireland.

Control over even a part of Ireland had always been tenuous at best and during the 1590s, when Tyrone was finally somewhat successful in uniting the warring Irish tribes (successful enough to form an army), British fortunes shifted dangerously. After long delays (due to political considerations), Elizabeth delegated Essex to lead the force which was to subdue Ireland and bring order to that unmanageable island. Essex went to Ireland in April 1599 and it is felt by many critics, including Walter, Campbell, Thomas Parrott, and Wilson that the appearance of Shakespeare's Henry V at this time was not accidental, that although it was certainly more than a political pamphlet, it was still perhaps, at least partially, designed to remind the British people of a time when England, against overwhelming odds, seized victory from her foes. It had happened then, it would happen now (although, in point of fact, Essex slunk back in disgrace and order was not brought to Ireland for a few more years). The perceived connection between the past and present campaigns can only be strengthened by these lines from

the prologue to Act V:

> Were now the general of our gracious Empress,
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit,
> To welcome him! (5.prologue.30-34).

In order to completely understand the Alexandrian allusion, it is necessary, as well, to look at the character of the speaker, Fluellen, who with his cohort, Gower, has appeared periodically throughout the play. The two captains are hardworking, simple worthies who exhibit bravery, discipline, and common sense; they appear to be true soldiers, that is, devoted to both king and country, as opposed to Pistol and his associates who make no pretension of going to war for any other reason than that of the plunder and booty they will obtain (a quest which ends tragically for Bardolph who is hung for theft). Fluellen is bluff, sturdy, honest, and quick to take umbrage; he is much concerned about the disciplines of war (especially as demonstrated by the Roman wars), and is given to pompous speeches whenever the opportunity arises.

These discourses have consistently been muddled in logic and have been used along with Fluellen's erratic syntax and Welsh accent (exemplified by using the pronunciation "p" for the letter "b") for comic effect. Thus, before we have heard Fluellen discuss Alexander the "Pig" (the phrase which Merrix found disturbing), we have already heard "bridge" referred to as "pridge," "brave" as "prave," "bless" as "pless," "blue" as "plue," etc., and at the beginning of the passage in

question, "poys" for "boys" and "porn" for "born." Therefore, when Fluellen refers to Alexander as the "Pig," it is just another in a long list of mildly amusing mispronunciations by the comic little Welshman; it does not carry the weight or the detriment which it would, if it were the single example of Fluellen's misstatment. It seems apparent that the mispronunciations are used for the humorous effect which they produce instead of indicating a serious attempt by Shakespeare to alter the characterization of Henry which he has delineated in other portions of the play.

Another aspect to consider in this passage is that Fluellen reproves Gower for anticipating the "figures and comparisons" he is presenting and supposing he meant that the king had killed a friend. Of course not, Fluellen goes on to say, but he has rid himself of a friend, a man who is of so little impact that Fluellen cannot even remember his name, although he has no trouble remembering the name of "Clytus." At this point, the comparison becomes a contrast as Fluellen draws attention to the fact that, at the times of these severings, Alexander was most certainly drunk while Henry was "in his right wits and his good judgments" (4.4.47). In the last analysis, which is the regard of Henry's soldiers, his "band of brothers" (4.3.60), Falstaff has been shown to be of little moment, quite worthless, in fact. He may be missed by Shakespeare's critics, but in the play, Falstaff is only mourned by his close friends, and that only briefly, as France and its anticipated spoils are waiting and the little band departs:

like horse-leeches, my boys,

To suck, to suck, the very blood to suck!

(2.3.55-56).

Fluellen's behavior towards and attitude concerning Henry in the rest of the play should also be noted. In Act III, he rushes forward with a fervent "God pless your Majesty!" (3.6.87) when the king appears, and he has indicated earlier in the scene that he completely approves (much to Pistol's vexation) the harsh sentence of hanging which the Duke of Exeter (at the king's command) has pronounced on the thieving Bardolph; he endorses this judgment so completely, in fact, that he states he would not disagree if the recipient of the sentence were to be his own brother (3.6.54-56). Feeling so strongly on the subject of discipline, it is entirely possible that Fluellen would have lost respect for his sovereign, had Henry chosen to abrogate Bardolph's punishment. He does not, however, and the respect which both Fluellen and Gower appear to hold for Henry remains unchanged; it is their feelings for Pistol which have undergone alteration. Although Fluellen had to force Pistol into action at Harfleur (3.2.20-21), he becomes convinced of Pistol's valor later in the same act, because of his bold defense of the bridge. However, when Pistol asks Fluellen to speak in Bardolph's favor, both Gower and Fluellen recognize that this man, although in outward appearance a soldier even as themselves, does not hold the same values that they do. Gower now sees through Pistol's bombast and discerns the man who will go home after the war, bragging of his brave exploits but who, in reality, has never been and will never be more than a bawd and a rogue. Fluellen, as well, has been disabused of

the notion of Pistol's bravery: "I do perceive he is not the man that he would gladly make show to the world he is" (3.6.82-84).

Fluellen's discourses are always in earnest; he lacks, in fact, the wit to be satirical. It is not in Fluellen's nature to make sly allusions and he would not purposely injure his king. He admires Henry's "good judgments" and he brings his comparison to a close with the reiteration that "there is good men porn at Monmouth" (4.7.52-53). Seemingly, Fluellen is both loyal to his king and approving of his actions. A further bond between Henry and Fluellen is that both are Welshmen (by virtue of Henry's birthplace in Monmouth, Wales). Fluellen openly professes this relationship and adds that:

> I am your Majesty's countryman, I care not who know it. I will confess it to all the orld. I need not to be ashamed of your Majesty, praised be God, so long as your Majesty is an honest man (4.7.111-15).

Shortly afterwards, in the denouement of the episode with Williams, Fluellen again demonstrates his attachment and loyalty. Clearly he is devoted to Henry, is in fact, the "king's man" in this play, much as Kent functioned in King Lear, loyal and willing to serve in whatever capacity he is required. It may be inferred by some that Fluellen's statement, ". . . so long as your Majesty is an honest man," definitely qualifies his loyalty; it may simply be viewed, however, as a recognition that circumstances sometimes change, in which case, an individual must be able to adapt to the new situation. Looking at it in

this light, the phrase functions as a verbal form of knocking on wood or crossing one's fingers.

In turn, Fluellen is respected by his king. Henry esteems Fluellen as a disciplined soldier; evidence for this is seen when Fluellen quiets Gower the night before the battle, saying he sees no reason why the English camp should be noisy, simply because the French camp is foolishly loud. In point of fact, although not mentioned by Shakespeare, the order for silence was issued by Henry himself, and the penalties for ignoring the command were severe (Gesta 81). Henry responds to this obedient and careful attitude by saying reflectively,

> Though it appear a little out of fashion,
> There is much care and valor in this Welshman
> (4.1.83-84).

Later, he asks Fluellen's advice on the conditions which affect an oath and the keeping of it (4.7.131-43). Henry also affirms the bond that exists between countrymen, saying to Fluellen, "For I am Welsh, you know, good countryman" (4.7.105), to which Fluellen responds, "All the water in Wye cannot wash your Majesty's Welsh plood out of your pody. I can tell you that" (4.7.106-08).

Gower, throughout the play, has served chiefly as a foil, the straight man, so to speak, for the more loquacious Fluellen, who admires Gower because he is "a good captain, and is good knowledge and literatured in the wars" (4.7.149-50). But it is Gower's phrase, "O, 'tis a gallant king!" (4.7.10) which has caused conflicting impressions among readers since the action which has called forth this expression of

approval is the order from Henry to cut the prisoners' throats. Merrix feels this act even precipitates Fluellen's comparison with "the rash and bloody Alexander" (321) and, furthermore, provides evidence of the brutality of Henry's character. Merrix's insistence that the appellation "gallant" is ironic, however, cannot be accepted, as it completely omits the fact that one historical meaning of the word is courageous or bold. Read in this way, Gower is actually complimenting the king for taking an action that is both bold and decisive; one, furthermore, which may have saved the lives of Henry's soldiers, including Glower's own.

It is interesting to note that although assorted critics have savaged Henry for this order, referred to by Taylor as "morally indefensible" (33), this trend only became strongly marked in the nineteenth century (Hibbert 129); contemporary sources did not castigate Henry for an action which they perceived as not only expedient, but necessary as well. Holinshed and the Chaplain ascribe the command to fear of another attack, Holinshed stating that the command was "contrarie to his accustomed gentlenes" (Nicoll 83). Monstrelet offers no criticism and clearly explains the situation. Henry issued his order when he received the information that he was being attacked in the rear; this news came at the same time that he could see large bodies of French re-forming on his front. Apparently, the English army was about to be caught in a pincers movement and Henry gave the order to quickly put the prisoners (who by some accounts outnumbered his soldiers by more than two to one (Wylie 2.175)) to death before they could join with their countrymen in hostilities. Monstrelet asserts that the

> massacre of the french prisoners, [was]
> occasioned by the disgraceful conduct of
> Robinet de Bournouville, Ysambart d'Azincourt,
> and the others, who were afterward punished for it,
> and imprisoned a very long time (4.181).

Le Févre also speaks of these countrymen as "ceste maudicte compaignie de François"[2] (1.258). Clearly then, Fluellen was not the only one to consider this attack from the rear an "arrant piece of knavery" and "against the law of arms" (4.7.1-3). Contemporary blame was ascribed (even by their own countrymen) to the Frenchmen, whose rash and unwise action was held responsible for the slaughter.

It is a matter for conjecture why Shakespeare did not emphasize this aspect of the episode, instead of giving the account in Gower's words:

> Besides, they have burn'd and carried away
> all that was in the King's tent; wherefore
> the King, most worthily, hath caus'd every
> soldier to cut his prisoner's throat (4.7.7-10).

Related in this manner, Henry's order almost sounds like a petty retribution for the looting of his tent. Perhaps the historical fact was so commonly known that Shakespeare assumed he did not need to relate it to his audience. A more likely explanation is that Gower has absorbed, by example, Fluellen's obsfucation; although he understands

[2]This accursed company of Frenchmen.

Henry's quandary and the reasoning behind the command, he is unable to convey the information to anyone else, even Fluellen, with any degree of clarity.

In conclusion, it does not seem that the conversation between Gower and Fluellen in Act IV, the Alexandrian allusion, should be taken as a negative comment on Henry's character. Henry cannot be viewed as a reconstruction of Alexander because of the basic differences between them; with the number of possible examples of similarities between the two men which Shakespeare had available to choose from, the fact that his instances were trivial or conflicting in nature, seems to indicate that the passage was included in Henry V for some reason other than to prejudice the audience against the main character of the play, who is elsewhere treated with respect, and is referred to by Shakespeare as "the mirror of all Christian kings" (1.2.6). It is far more likely that the passage was included chiefly as a showcase for the loyal and artless Gower and Fluellen who could amuse the audience further with their bumbling and misdirected pronouncements. It may be argued that this theory would call the unity of the play into question, a concept which has previously been explored by Van Doren and Robert Pierce, who referred to the parts of the play which "exist parallel to each other but without much interaction" (226). However, while the primary purpose of the scene may be to give the audience another look at Fluellen being unintentionally comical in his pedantry, the discussion is still centered firmly on Henry.

It is important to remember that even had the comparison between

Henry and Alexander been a serious one, the picture held up to be viewed by the Elizabethan audience would not have been of a derogatory nature. On the contrary, the Renaissance was especially fascinated by the legend of Alexander which had been enhanced through the ages by popular romances, and further strengthened by inclusion of details from currently existing courtly traditions. Furthermore, the other references in the play to Alexander are not of a detrimental nature, and Gower and Fluellen, the speakers in the passage, continually demonstrate their admiration for their king.

In Henry V, Shakespeare has presented us with a character of complexity, although he was severely limited as to direction and development by the fact that Henry was an illustrious historical character who was well-known to every Englishman. Henry's exploits had brought about a new unity, a national pride, that was badly needed after the weak leadership and divisive changes in authority which had occurred prior to Henry's accession to the throne. His subjects viewed his reign, brief though it was, as a time of success, prosperity, and national unity; they looked up to him and celebrated him with poems and songs. Lydgate's words (in "Verses on the Kings of England"):

> The V Henry, of knyghthood lode starre,
> Wysse and manley playnly to termyne
> Right fortunate provyde in pes and yn warre
> (Gairdner 53),

described his exploits, while the anonymously penned lines:

> And god, kepe in þy gouernance

Oure comely kyng and saue þe crowne (Twenty-six 55), reflected the respect and concern he engendered in his subjects. In a year when England required reminders of another time of patriotism cherished and nationalism rewarded, of civil order and harmony within the kingdom, and of success and triumph without, and of another monarch who both called for and enjoyed the support of his people, Shakespeare obliged by a powerful retelling of the old "Agincourt Carol":

> Our King went forth to Normandy
> With grace and might of chivalry;
> Ther God for him wrought mervelusly;
> Wherefore England may call and cry
> 'Deo gracias' (Oxford 381).

Even while presenting the familiar story, however, Shakespeare offered the audience a character who has continued to engage the attention and fascinate. He dealt with Henry's concepts of honor, justice, and mercy; he showed how Henry was perceived by his enemies, as well as by his trusty soldiers, Gower and Fluellen. He fleshed out the hero and clothed him with reality by exploring the connection between the private man and the public king, the relationship between a king and his subjects, and by examining the tensions aroused by these personae and their relationships. But Shakespeare was writing for Elizabethans and Englishmen and, as Samuel Johnson remarked, he was always more concerned with his present audience than with his future readers (130). With this in mind, he was able, even while exploring the complexities which still make Henry an object of debate, to actualize the living man

who inspired Hall's epitaph:

> Neither fyre, rust, nor frettyng tynne shal amongest Englishmen ether appall his honoure or obliterate his glorye whiche in so fewe yeres and brief dayes achiued so high aduentures and made so great a conquest (114).

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