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### The Complex Humanity of Henry V

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The Complex Humanity of Henry V

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Departmental Honors in English

Bridgewater State University

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Henry V is a character featured in William Shakespeare's historical plays: *Henry IV part one*, *Henry IV part two* and *Henry V*. He is an incredibly complex character due to his ever-changing personas and behavior throughout these plays. Henry self-fashions so often and so rapidly that it calls into question whether or not a "Henry" even exists. This also calls into question if this man completely lacks humanity, or is simply just being who he needs to be in order to reach a means. Henry shifts and changes constantly, yet his internal behavior proves to maintain steady. There is a form of development while shifting from prince to king, but overall, he does not lack a central driving force. Henry demonstrates both directly and indirectly that he does not lack humanity. Henry is not necessarily driven by morals or malicious intent, he is driven by his passionate and ambitious nature. At the centermost part of Henry V is an ambitious man led by human emotion.

Self-fashioning is present in the *Henry* plays, and the way it is used by Henry makes his morals and humanity ambiguous to the audience. Ernst H. Kantorowicz describes self-fashioning through the use of two bodies: "The King's Two Bodies thus form one unit indivisible, each being fully contained in the other. However, doubt cannot arise concerning the superiority of the body politic over the body natural." (Kantorowicz, 9) The two bodies are united as one, yet there are differences between the two that divide them. For example, Edmund Plowden writes the body politic is ruled by Government and Policy, and is not visible or tangible. The body personal however is subject to human illness, aging, and condition. (7) This is the most basic form of a human being. It is from this body that human feeling and thoughts extend from. Henry's body is formed in an interesting way because he appears to be ruled by his body personal over his body political. He occasionally does act due to policy or government rules, but also reacts through his

own code and behavioral system. Henry acts on his passions and emotion over a code of defined rules.

Henry is rarely alone in the plays, but when he delivers soliloquys his honest thoughts and intentions are revealed. These moments allow the audience the opportunity to see the inner most part of Henry that is often cloaked in layers of personality. In these moments, he is severed from the ambiguous parts of himself, and only his central being remains. Henry's center is where his humanity is held, and through these moments it is revealed that this is his driving force. All parts of this man, while complex and at times confusing, are connected into one entity similar to the connection of the body politic and the body natural. The masks he wears are all created from his complex humanity.

When first introduced to the audience, Henry is spends time at the Eastcheap inn, where he converses with prostitutes, thieves and other disreputable figures. Henry damages his reputation while spending time in Eastcheap, but he does so for a purpose. Henry is concerned about those who he will be responsible for leading one day. He spends time at the inn with those he considers friends in order to learn their language and patterns of behavior. "Learning the language of others and rehearsing their tongues is for Hal, one of the arts of power." (Howard, 758) He has made many companions in Eastcheap, including Falstaff who is almost a father figure to the prince, and does not simply use his companions as a means for learning their ways and leaving them. They do matter to him, yet he is also benefitting personally form the knowledge they can present to him. These connections and friendships are meaningful to the prince, and they will prove to benefit him when he is king. He will one day be in charge of soldiers who come from this level of society, and this activity proves to be useful when inspiring his men.

Henry cares about his companions, and by spending time at the inn he is able to do what his father could not and understand the people he will be ruling. “That the prince seems irresistibly drawn to Eastcheap makes others, especially his father, question his fitness to rule.” (1167) Henry spends time with the people unlike his father because he understands that in order to rule effectively and maintain justice, the place to begin is with those he will be dealing with as king. Henry grasps the importance of his position not only as prince, but also later when he will become the king of England. He uses his time in a proactive way, although the way he spends his time is not necessarily honorable in the eyes of his father. Henry is driven by his need for knowledge and advancement and therefore continues to spend time at the inn learning and growing in ways that his father is unable to. This time spent is later proven to have been an effective measure on his part, and he learns much from his time here. He is not heartlessly using others, but building strong bonds he ultimately knows must be broken.

At the inn, Henry delivers his first soliloquy which directly presents to the audience the inner workings of his mind and also his intentions. No longer is he tied to the multiple personas or bodies that he presents to others. He is left only with his honest thoughts and humanity. Henry’s self-reflections are rare, but reveal a deeper look into what motivates and drives him. Through the soliloquy, Henry is revealed to be incredibly responsible and intelligent compared to how he presents himself to the public. Although he partakes in activities that damage his reputation, and enjoys spending time with his companions, he also shows an understanding that this lifestyle cannot last forever. Henry grasps the consequences of his staying at the inn, and he considers how he may go about changing his public image when he becomes king. During his first soliloquy, he lays out his plans for a shocking transformation and how this transformation will come into action.

I know you all, and will a while uphold  
The unyoked humor of your idleness.  
Yet herein I will imitate the sun,  
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds,  
To smother up his beauty from the world,  
That, when he please again to be himself,  
Being wanted he may be more wondered at  
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists  
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him//  
//And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.  
So when this loose behavior I throw off  
And pay debt I never promised,  
By how much better than my word I am,  
By so much shall I falsify mens hopes;  
And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,  
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes  
Than that which hath no foil set it off.

I'll so offend to make offense a skill,

Redeeming time when men least think I will. (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.170-  
179; 183-192)

Henry is far more calculating and responsible than he appears on the surface when interacting with other characters, and he uses this to his advantage. The prince is considering how his transformation will take shape and what he will have to do in order to gain the favor of the public. Henry does act out irresponsibly, and does not necessarily want to leave behind his closest companions at this point in time. They share meaningful bonds beyond his learning their ways for future reference. Henry is attached to his friends.

When speaking about the inn and his current situation he makes reference to “contagious clouds” covering the sun. This mirrors his allowance of himself to be smothered by loose, rebellious behavior for the moment. Henry knows that this reformation must be made suddenly, not over a long period of time, because his actions at the moment are unbecoming of a prince. He is ambitious to begin his life as a king, but also does not simply use his friends as a means through which he can transform. He is not at the inn for the sole reason of throwing away this persona to reveal his true form. This reformation is not a game to him, it is something that he wants to ensure will happen. Henry is plotting his way through transforming, and revealing that it is in his nature to plan and persuade others. Yet, he does care about those he is spending much of his time with. He does not lack feeling toward his friends or use them solely for personal gain and glory. In this moment, Henry is able to step back and consider his options for progressing forward, and the consequences of doing so.

Henry understands that while he enjoys the company of his companions, and learns many lessons from these men and women, he must one day leave them behind. They must not travel along with him because they are detrimental to his progress and image. Falstaff, Henry's closest companion, is clearly important to the young prince. However, the actions and behavior of this man are not those of someone Henry will be able to continue to keep the company of in his later years. Falstaff has faith that when the time comes Hal will not abandon him and he will benefit from the newly appointed king. He views the prince as an opportunity while Henry views him as a close friend.

During an interaction between the two, Henry reveals to his companion that when he is king, Falstaff will ultimately be banished from his life along with the others in Eastcheap. This is an instance in which Henry's internal thoughts are presented indirectly through dialogue. Henry cares deeply about his friend, yet he also understands the gravity of his position and how such a man will ruin his reputation. As much as Falstaff means to Henry, he cannot allow such corrupt behavior in his own court. Henry is not necessarily speaking to Falstaff cruelly when he denies him, but honestly. He must be responsible and follow through with his plans to become an effective king in his later life. Henry is not turning his back on his friend, but considering his role as king and what that will entail. After a lighthearted conversation between the two, in which friendly jabs were exchanged, Hal openly tells Falstaff when the time comes he will leave his friend behind.

FALSTAFF No, my good lord, banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins, but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more



valiant being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy

Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company.

Banish plump Jack and banish all the world.

PRINCE I do; I will. (1 *Henry IV* 2.4.432-438)

The answer Henry gives Falstaff is quite blunt in comparison to the earlier aspects of this conversation. This may be surprising to the audience, and it can be assumed that this answer is jarring to Falstaff as well. Henry's current lifestyle cannot be part of the life that he is actively pursuing, and his old companions will poorly affect his public image. This particular scene is also shocking because of how quickly Henry strips himself of the carefree behavior presented at the inn moments before. While Henry does care about Falstaff, he also cares about his upcoming role as king and public image. Caring about appearances is central to who Henry is as a person, and this is demonstrated through his changing approaches in how he interacts with others. Henry lives his life in the present, but is constantly thinking about his future as well.

Henry is not mechanical by any means and does not lack humanity although he comes across as cold occasionally. Those Henry spends time with are not merely pawns in his plan to be an effective king. He demonstrates many times that he does enjoy the time spent with his friends, though the activities they partake in are illegal and immoral. Henry's two bodies are fusing together into one entity at this moment, and he is thinking not only as a young man spending time with companions, but also as a potential king. He is considerate of the feelings of the others until Falstaff's betrayal in the play, *Henry IV part two*. It is at this moment Henry is harmed deeply and irreparably by a man that he considered incredibly close to him. Henry demonstrates

his humanity, which is both honorable and complicated. Perhaps the most interesting look into the humanity of this man comes after the death of his enemy, Hotspur.

The last instance in this play where Henry's humanity is revealed to the audience comes shortly after he has killed Hotspur. Hotspur is the ideal man to all even though he is a traitor to his country. Henry is not the ideal prince that he should be, and is a disappointment to his father, who believes Hotspur is the ultimate example of what a man should be. After Hotspur has died, Henry reflects on his fallen enemy's glory and also on himself. As mentioned in his soliloquy, this is the moment his transformation must begin. This is the exact time at which his reformation will have the greatest impact. He covers the face of Hotspur and begins to reflect on his fallen enemy's glory and how this will unite with him for eternity despite his betrayal.

For worms, brave Percy. Fare thee well, great heart.

Ill weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!

When that this body did contain a spirit

A kingdom for it was too small a bound,

But now two paces of the vilest earth

Is room enough. This earth that bears the dead

Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.

If thou wert sensible of courtesy

I should not make so dear a show of zeal.

But let my favors hide thy mangled face,

And even in thy behalf I'll thank myself  
For doing these fair rights of tenderness.

Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven.

Thy ignominy sleep with the in the grave

But not remembered in thy epitaph. (1 *Henry IV* 5.4. 86-100)

Henry does not deface or harm the body of Hotspur, who has rebelled against his father, but covers the face before he begins his reflection. "With no one watching, and so nobody to impress or persuade, the Prince articulates a moving tribute to his dead foe, and covers his 'mangled face.'" (Howard, 1170) Henry displays his humanity to the dead body of his enemy and is respectful to the dead. He does not desecrate or maim Hotspur, and covers the face to give the dead man dignity. Although he has killed Hotspur, he does not harm his body or speak ill to it. Instead, he is quite respectful while delivering a eulogy to Hotspur that goes into detail about his greatness and honor. These are qualities that Henry finds important even though his self-fashioning in Eastcheap proves otherwise. Henry focuses on his enemy's points of greatness because he will later present his own better parts of himself. After the death of his father, the prince states that his wild behavior will be dead and buried in the grave. This scene presents a parallel to his later intentions and plans for personal growth. He wishes that he himself could be remembered in the way he remembers Hotspur: as someone who is great and glorious, not a traitor to his people. Henry envisions his future here as he has seen Hotspur live his life until death. He admires the qualities of his enemy because he himself carries these qualities although they have not publically appeared. This is the moment that Henry has waited for to begin to

shape himself publically into who he is internally. He feels accountable for his actions and must begin to shape himself accordingly.

In the following play, *Henry IV part two*, Henry appears less frequently, but this play provides the deepest look into who this man is despite how he presents himself to be in public. Rarely does he fashion himself into anything beyond his center-most being. There are many instances in which Henry reacts to situations and other characters without changing his whole person to persuade and impress. He reacts without preplanned thought or actions when he is present. In this play, Henry simply exists in the moment, yet he does not lose his drive to become a quality ruler. Revealed to the audience is a Henry who is not motivated strictly by plans and ambitions, but by the connections he shares with other characters. It is this play in which the humanity and emotion of Henry are the foremost part of his being.

Over the course of this play, Henry's two bodies become one entity. He is thinking as a human being, and also taking into consideration his political position and what this entails. He quickly begins to shed the behavior of a rebellious prince in the eye of the public, and becomes a respectable figure. The old way of life and how he has fashioned himself must be left behind at this point in his development. Now he will begin his journey from the center of himself: his humanity.

Henry's humanity, including his emotion and feelings to various circumstances, is at the forefront of this play. He is shown multiple times, both directly and indirectly, to feel deep bonds and connections with other characters. When these connections are tested and damaged, Henry openly reverts into himself and deals with the issues as a human being, not a king to be. As the play progresses he uses both parts of himself when making choices and reacting to trying circumstances

The first time Henry appears in this play, he overhears Falstaff saying horrible things about him, and is deeply damaged by what has been said. This is a defining moment in the relationship between the two as well as inside of the prince. Henry begins to pull away from his friend due to the unforgivable hurt the insults have caused him. Falstaff was by far Henry's closest companion, and this betrayal takes a toll on the young prince who holds on to this moment until their last meeting. Henry is unable to forgive Falstaff despite his begging, and this leads to his shutting off of emotion in front of a man to whom he was before so expressive and trusting. His tone completely and permanently shifts from familiar to formal, and the damage is never repaired as Henry leaves to help his father and does not see the other man until his coronation. He shuts himself down in order to prevent showing the personal harm that has been done.

PRINCE        I shall drive you, then, to confess the willful abuse,  
and then I know how to handle you.

FALSTAFF    No abuse, Hal; o'mine honor, no abuse.

PRINCE        Not? To dispraise me, and call me pantler and  
breadchipper, and I know not what?

[...]

FALSTAFF    No abuse, Hal.

PRINCE        By heaven, Poins, I feel me much to blame  
  
So idly to profane the precious time,

When tempest of commotion, like the south,

Borne with black vapor, doth begin to melt

And drop upon our bare unarmed heads.

Give me my sword and cloak. Falstaff, goodnight. (*2 Henry*

*IV 2.4. 282-287 ;328-333)*

The tone Henry takes at the end of his conversation with Falstaff foreshadows the interaction at the coronation. Henry punishes Falstaff and the others he has spent time with, and banishes them as he said he would. Henry reacts coldly to Falstaff because of how he was spoken about in his absence. The betrayal of his closest companion is something that he carries with him even as he takes on the position he had waited years for. A grudge is being held against Falstaff due to the grief and anger Henry feels. He addresses Falstaff in a formal and cold tone when delivering punishment. This interaction reveals not only a king talking down to a subject, but a human being who has been harmed deeply and irreparably by a close friend. Henry puts forward his body political when speaking to Falstaff, though his grief and anger toward the man are concealed though not forgotten.

Falstaff's heart is broken when he is spoken to formally by Henry as if the man had never known him. This confuses and hurts him as his betrayal had harmed Henry. Falstaff and the others the king spent time with are punished, but done so fairly. The king takes his own past into consideration when he constructs the punishment of those who had betrayed and used him. None are sentenced to death or cruel punishment. They are not simply being banished or sent away either. Henry constructs a punishment that will require the others, who are looked down on in the eyes of society, to make a reformation as he has. Henry is a fair king when stating his form of

punishment. He is taking his own actions and transformation into consideration when creating the terms of the banishment. The body political is justice based, however, Henry himself is a person centered on discipline. Therefore, he creates a fitting punishment for those who harmed not only himself, but other men and women.

I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.

How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!

I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,

So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;

But, being awakened, I do despise my dream.

Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace.

Leave gormandizing. Know the grave doth gape

For the thrice wider than for other men.

Reply not to me with a fool-born jest;

Presume not that I am the thing I was,

For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,

That I have turned away my former self.

So will I those that kept me company.

When thou dost hear that I am as I have been,

Approach me and thou shalt be as thou wast,

The tutor and feeder of my riots.

Till then, I banish thee, on pain of death,

As I have done the rest of my misleaders,

Not to come within ten mile.

For competence of life I will allow you,

The lack of means enforce you not evils;

And as we hear you do reform yourselves,

We will according to your strengths and qualities,

Give you advancement. [*to LORD CHIEF JUSTICE*] Be it your  
charge, my lord,

To see performed the tenor of my word. (2 *Henry IV* 5.5. 45-69)

Henry is not fully allowing himself or his emotion to be revealed in this interaction with his old friend. The king does not allow the other man to speak to him in a familiar tone either. Henry's cold dismissal of Falstaff and the others is directly caused by Falstaff's betrayal earlier in the play. Henry is wounded by the man's words and is unable to forgive what has been said about him. A wall is put up between the two men and the king maintains a professional tone. It was understood that at one point in time the king would need to leave his old life behind, yet had he not been slandered the result would have been drastically different. Falstaff is shown time and time again to be using Henry for personal gain. Henry does benefit from spending time at the inn, but this does not cost others anything or cause harm. Falstaff claims that he will have a place in the king's court which will allow him to do whatever he so pleases. Henry is an opportunity to



Falstaff, not a genuine companion as Henry viewed him. The betrayal is the catalyst for Henry's cold but just dismissal of his companions and inability to forgive what has been done. (*2 Henry IV* 5.3. 120-126)

All old ties have been completely severed, but Henry maintains his knowledge of the behavior of his subjects. Spending time at the inn has proven to benefit the king. As he continues on his path, he will continue to speak to and inspire people of the same status to fight alongside him. The sudden cold tone taken on by the king is directly caused by Falstaff's sudden and unexpected appearance in front of him. He had not been prepared to speak to Falstaff and reacts to protect himself. Earlier, Henry V is speaking with his brothers and members of his court he remains formal, but not cold and unfeeling as he had when Falstaff appeared in front of him. He blocks himself off to his old friend preventing his human emotion and thoughts to be present thought they are existent.

Although Henry is calculating the steps he must take to become king, he is not completely void of humanity. Warwick is able to see through the personas Henry puts forward in public and who he truly is. Warwick speaks to Henry IV, stating the prince is genuine in his intentions and actions, and that he will be a great ruler though many doubt him. The prince is defended by Warwick, who states that his actions allow him to mingle with those he will oversee. Henry is being proactive by learning the ways of others so he may lead them successfully. Occasionally, the prince's behavior is destructive and unflattering, but this allows him to understand even the most corrupt levels of society. "Knowing disorderliness, the king will use his office to punish it." (Howard, 759) Henry is not merely pretending to be wild for the sake of being wild, or partaking in activities just for the sake of rebelling while he still can; he is genuinely curious about the lives of those he otherwise would not interact with, and therefore

would not understand. These bonds mean something to Henry and those he will rule over do as well. Every action Henry makes is based on his desire to lead his people well.

My gracious lord, you look beyond him quite.

The Prince but studies his companions

Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,

'Tis needful that the most immodest word

Be looked upon and learnt; which once attained,

Your highness comes to no further use

But to be known and hated. So, like gross terms,

The Prince will in the perfectness of time

Cast off his followers, and their memory

Shall as a pattern or a measure live

By which his grace must mete the lives of other,

Turning past evils to advantages. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 67-78)

Warwick recognizes that Henry is integrating himself into society, and knows exactly what the prince is planning for his future. He is the only character who has a firm understanding of the workings of Henry's mind and intentions. Henry is not present during this time, yet he is described to be concerned about his future as the king of England. While in public he presents himself as someone who is completely unsuited to be king, he does so in order to gain the language of people he would potentially never meet. He will then know how to keep order in the

kingdom. Warwick pinpoints exactly what Henry has planned for himself. The prince is spending time to learn, not to live without consequence, and he is actively thinking about becoming king. This position is meaningful to him, and he prepares himself well.

The most crucial scene that reveals the true nature of Henry is the moment at which he finds his father, who is presumably dead, and removes the crown from his bedside. Henry immediately carries the responsibility of the crown without thinking twice about it. There is a brief reflection on the crown and how it has sucked the life out of his father and other kings before him. Henry begins to think about his lineage and how the crown will continue to be passed on for generations. Henry is not thrilled about his new responsibility or the course it will take because he knows he has lost his father to gain this right. He reacts not as a political figure, but as a man.

So many English kings. Thy due from me  
 Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,  
 Which nature, love and filial tenderness  
 Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously.  
 My due from thee is this imperial crown  
 Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,  
 Derives itself to me.

*[He puts the crown on his head.]*

Lo, where it sits,

Which God shall guard; and put the world's whole strength

Into one giant arm, it shall not force

This lineal honor from me. This from thee

Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 168-178)

Henry is not unfeeling toward the death of his father or merely just considering his lineage after the crown becomes his. Although led by his ambitious nature; he is revealed to have been absolutely devastated by the loss of his father. The crown is taken out of the room with the prince, but not victoriously. Once he leaves the room, the prince is broken by the loss of his father and emotion overcomes him. He is ruled by his passion, but this does not prevent him from feeling the pain and fear of losing a parent. The crown to Henry has always been a focal point of every plan, idea, and thought that he has had, but when he finally receives it he was not prepared to lose a family member. His human feeling is his driving force through all.

Henry IV does not fully comprehend what has happened. He awakens with the belief that his son relished the opportunity to take his crown. Throughout his life, he has seen his son act irresponsibly and believes that the prince will destroy the kingdom he has built. He thinks his son was waiting for the moment of his death in order to steal the crown away. Henry has never shared a moment with his father that would lead the man to believe he is a worthy leader. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 190-208) The only moment at which the prince tells his father his real intentions come moments before the king's actual passing. Henry feels remorse for mistakenly removing his father's crown and begs for understanding.

Warwick find the princes, and reveals to the king that Henry is alone in a room weeping. Henry is not celebrating his new found victory or even showing even the smallest amount of

happiness at receiving the crown he has longed for. He is absolutely devastated by the loss of his father. Henry does not lack humanity; he thinks first about his connection with his father over the new found power he has gained. Human connection is more valuable to him than gaining power. He is not concerned at this moment about personal glory, but at the loss of a parent. Had Henry left the room only to be found rejoicing or showing no emotion this would call into question whether or not his humanity is existent. This would prove that he has no feeling toward others at all and uses others strictly for personal gain with no conscious thought involved.

My lord, I found the Prince in the next room,

Washing with kindly tears his gentle cheeks,

With such a deep demeanor, in great sorrow,

That tyranny, which never quaffed but blood,

Would, by beholding him, have washed his knife

With gentle eye-drops. He is coming hither. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 212-217)

Henry is incredibly ambitious and determined to rule successfully, and this takes over most of his thoughts. However, when the crown is in his hands he is completely shaken by the death of his father. Obtaining the crown is his absolute ultimate goal, yet when he has the opportunity to take it, he is broken by the loss of his father. When Warwick finds Henry alone, it is presumed that he has been crying long after the crown has been removed from his father's bedside. If Warwick had found Henry in any other state of emotion it could very well be determined that Henry has no consciousness and is void of humanity. If this was the circumstance in which the

prince was discovered, then his humanity would have proven to be non-existent and there would be no substance beyond the many personas he shifts into. Henry is deeply wounded by the loss of his father and is unable to collect himself so that he may prepare or plot his next moves.

Henry IV finds his son shortly after speaking with Warwick, and begins to harshly reprimand him. He does not believe his son's claims about what has actually happened until the prince pleads with him revealing the truth. Henry reveals that he had taken the crown because he had truly thought the king dead. He explains that he does not find the crown to be an exciting new conquest, but as an enemy who has killed his father in front of his own eyes. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 295-297) He reveals that even though the crown has been something he has waited and planned for, he did not anticipate the price of obtaining it. Henry's ambitious nature is outweighed in this moment by the emotion he feels at the potential loss of his father whom he has greatly disappointed.

Oh, pardon me, my liege. But for my tears,  
 The moist impediments unto my speech,  
 I had forestalled this dear and deep rebuke  
 Ere you with grief had spoke, and I had heard  
 The course of it so far. There is your crown,  
 And He that wears the crown immortally  
 Long guard it yours. If I affect it more  
 Than as your honor and as your renown,  
 Let me no more from this obedience rise,

Which my most inward true and duteous spirit  
Teacheth this prostrate and exterior bending.  
God witness with me, when I here came in  
And found no course of breath within your majesty,  
How cold it struck my heart! If I do feign,  
Oh, let me in my present wildness die,  
And never live to show th' incredulous world  
The noble change that I have purposed.  
Coming to look on you, thinking you dead,  
And dead almost, my liege, to think you were,  
I spake unto this crown as having sense,  
And have thus upbraided it: "The care on thee depending  
Hath fed upon the body of my father;  
Therefore, thou best of gold art worse than gold,  
Other, less fine in carat, more precious,  
Preserving life in med' cine potable ;  
But thou, most honored, most renowned,  
Hast ate thy bearer up." Thus, my most royal liege,

Accusing it, I put it on my head,  
To try with it as with an enemy  
That had before my face murdered my father,  
The quarrel of a true inheritor.  
But if it did infect my blood with joy,  
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride,  
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine  
Did with the least affection of a welcome  
Give entertainment to the might of it,  
Let God for ever keep it from my head,  
And make me as the poorest vassal is  
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it. (*2 Henry IV* 4.3. 268-  
306)

Henry explains to his enraged father that his intention was never to remove the crown from his dead body with pleasure. Henry is tactical and driven by his ambitions. However, Henry is able to feel emotional pain and turmoil after he thinks his father is dead. Henry is not without humanity, although his ever changing outward attitude may not always reflect this. His ability to feel grief at the perceived passing of his father, and toward the betrayal of Falstaff, demonstrates that there is a man underneath the layers of persona he presents. It is from this central most part of Henry, his human nature, which these bodies and personalities take form and grow.



The speech about the crown presents the turmoil Henry faces when he takes it from his father's bedside. This object is not merely an object, but something that holds an incredible amount of power and responsibility. The crown has not brought Henry the joy and relief he had anticipated it would. This situation presents to the reader a Henry laid bare without the many layers of persuasion or ambition that guide him. The audience is presented with a very conflicted man who is only now understanding the responsibility of a king and what this means for his future. This play reveals humanity in the center of Henry despite his collected and controlled appearance to others. Warwick is the only character who understands the depth of Henry. He knows that Henry will be an effective king because he has spent all of his time preparing, and he is not a cold entity with no capability of genuine concern. Warwick knows Henry cares for his people and wants to serve them properly.

Once the king has died, Henry begins to plan his future and his redemption in the eyes of those he failed as a prince. He first speaks to his father and has closure, then intends to fully develop into a valuable king. His father's death is the catalyst in his keeping to this promise of reformation. Henry swears to those in his court that he will take his responsibility seriously, and states that the ways of his past will be no more. Henry ties together the two bodies at this moment and becomes focused on doing justice as king. Henry is led by his passions, yet he is also calculating and is not carried away on a whim. The newly appointed king proves to be a powerful king because of his self-control and awareness. Henry will not have the worries that his father had because he knows how to interact with every level of society that he has intermingled with. Henry V swears that he will follow through with his intentions, and ultimately he does, resulting in a prosperous kingdom.

My father is gone wild into his grave,

For in his tomb lie my affections,  
And with his spirits sadly I survive  
To mock the expectation of the world,  
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out  
Rotten opinion, who hath writ me down  
After my seeming. The tide of blood in me  
Hath proudly flowed in vanity until now;  
Now doth it turn and ebb back to the sea,  
Where it shall mingle with the state of floods,  
And flow henceforth in forma majesty.  
Now call we our high court of Parliament,  
And let us choose such limbs of noble counsel  
That the great body of our state may go  
In equal rank with the best-governed nation;  
That war, or peace, or both at once, may be  
As things acquainted and familiar to us;  
[to LORD CHIEF JUSTICE] In which you, father, shall have  
Our coronation done, we will accite,

As I before remembered, all our state;

And, God consigning to my good intents,

No prince nor peer shall have just cause to say,

“God shorten Harry’s happy life one day.” (2 *Henry IV* 5.3. 122-144)

Henry fully intends to follow through with his reformation, and does not just state he will in order to please or gain the favor of others. Henry is persuasive, but in this scene he is earnest and honest about making the change from rebellious prince to respectable king. The court is at first untrustworthy toward him, because this sudden shift in attitude is shocking. Henry proves to them, and others in his kingdom, that he is taking the role seriously. He feels remorse for his past actions and how they have affected his father, and keeps the promise of change he spoke of to Hotspur’s corpse.

At the close of the play, *Henry IV part two*, Prince Hal becomes King Henry V, and the readers are exposed to his humanity and how this affects his behavior. Henry breaks himself away from his old life, and unites both his body personal and body political by his coronation. Henry does not lose himself when he is coronated, instead, he uses the skills he has learned and allows his personas to radiate from within. Henry will continue to change in the presence of others, but does not lack deeper substance. This is the last look at a Henry who openly displays emotion to the audience. In the following play, *Henry V*, there is only one instance in which he explicitly reveals any thought or feeling. Henry V has not lost his humanity, although he comes across a bit colder and more formal.

*Henry V*, which is titled after the new king, follows his rule during a time of uncertainty and turmoil. Henry has fully developed into a respectable figure in this play, yet the audience rarely sees him alone. Surrounded by war for almost the entirety of this work, there is no time for the king to self-reflect. Henry delivers one soliloquy revealing his feelings about being king and how this has caused him great stress. The audience must gain knowledge about Henry implicitly through his interactions with other characters in this play. The plays all tie together in terms of how Henry not only shifts and changes, but how despite this his humanity is constant. The audience is presented with a man who has transformed himself into a great king and represents himself through his body political. This new persona can lead the audience to believe that Henry thinks only through this mindset and has no further substance.

Henry's morals appear to be incredibly questionable, especially when threatening those opposed to him. "He is a complicated, doubting, dangerous, young professional- neither straight forwardly good nor consciously evil." (*Henry V in Performance: The RSC and Beyond*, 190) The king is driven by his ambition to take France and in order to gain what he wants, he appears frightening to his enemy, yet inspiring to his men. He knows how to talk to others in order to claim victory, but maintains and wants meaningful connection with others. The existence of Henry V's humanity becomes ambiguous, but his soliloquy, interaction with his soldiers, and the wooing of Katherine all prove it is present. It is in these moments that he shows he is not thinking solely through his ambition, but through his central being.

Henry is surrounded by war throughout the entirety of the play, and must maintain control by inspiring and motivating his soldiers. Henry's time in Eastcheap proves to have been a valuable asset. The soldiers he fights alongside are some of the same men that he would have encountered in his past. Since he had taken the time to understand the ways of the lower social

classes, he knows how to motivate his men. Henry has complete control over his men because he has learned their way of life and makes them feel they are valued. Gaining their trust in him as allows him to be victorious in France. These men will never spend time with the king outside of battle, and this is well understood, but while he does spend time with the troops they are valued.

Unlike his father, Henry goes to war and makes great advancements without the worry of being betrayed or losing the will of the men. His own will and quick-thinking are tested during the first battle in France. The men are being badly beaten by the French soldiers, and he must use persuasion and influence in order to keep from being defeated. Soldiers had been fighting for quite some time and begin to lack determination and become exhausted. Being both strong-willed and ambitious, and also knowing how to speak to keep the men fighting, Henry takes action.

At the wall of Harfleur, the king is able to regain control of the situation due to his determination to succeed, and wins this battle. Henry is not outright revealing any deeper emotion or thoughts in this scene particularly, but he does prove himself to be ambitious and well prepared in times of chaos and disorder. There never comes a moment at which the king is at a loss or unprepared because he is quick-thinking and ability to adapt. By submerging himself into a chaotic lifestyle he now reaps the benefits of knowing how to maneuver through trying circumstances.

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,

Or close up the wall with our English dead.

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man

As modest stillness and humility;

But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger:  
Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage.  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let it pry through the portage of the head  
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it  
As fearfully as doth a galled rock  
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,  
Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean.  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit  
To his full height. 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 sheathed their swords for lack of argument.  
Dishonor not your mothers; now attest

That those whom you called fathers did beget you.

Be copy now to men of grosser blood

And teach them how to war. And you, good yeoman,

Whose limbs were made in England, show us here

The mettle of your pasture; let us swear

That you are worth your breeding—which I doubt not,

For there is none of you so mean and base

That hath not noble luster in your eyes.

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,

Straining upon the start. The game's afoot.

Follow your spirit, and upon this charge

Cry, "God for Harry! England and Saint George!" (*Henry V* 3.2. 1-34)

Henry has accustomed himself with people he otherwise would not have, and knows how to inspire others. He remains in complete control during times of chaos. Henry acts as a leader when his men need him to and inspires them. His words, praise and encouragement are spoken in a way that makes the other men want to continue to fight even though they were previously being defeated. Ultimately, the king will profit the greatest, but he still puts in effort while encouraging his men. When reflecting in his later soliloquy, Henry reveals his fear of failing his

people as king. He goes into detail about his own exhaustion while trying to maintain peace and prosperity in his kingdom.

Once Henry has approached Harfleur and intends to enter, he presents himself to the governor as a violent and cruel man. He graphically describes the acts of violence that he and the others intend to do to the people if they are not granted access to the town. Henry describes his willingness to murder, rape and destroy everything in his path if he is not surrendered to. This is a tactic Henry is using in order to scare the governor into surrendering through using explicitly violent threats. All humanity seems to have escaped in this moment and is replaced by a cold unfeeling murderer. Henry knows that he must present himself in a way that will prevent the people from turning on him and attacking. He must present himself as so dangerously malicious that no one dare risks crossing him.

What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause,

If your pure maidens fall into the hand

Of hot and forcing violation?

What rein can hold licentious wickedness

When down the hill he holds his fierce career?

We may as bootless spend our vain command

Upon th'enraged soldiers in their spoil

As send precepts to the leviathan

To come ashore. Therefore, you men of Harfleur,



Take pity of your town and of your people  
Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,  
Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace  
O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds  
Of heady murder, spoil, and villainy.  
If not, why in a moment look to see  
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand  
Defile the lock of your shrill-shrieking daughters;  
Your fathers taken by the silver beards  
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls;  
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,  
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused  
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry  
As Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen.  
What say you? Will you yield and this avoid?  
Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed? (*Henry V* 3.4. 19-43)

The threat Henry delivers to the governor of Harfleur is shockingly violent compared to any of his previous behavior, including that during wartime. The king claims that his men are barely under his control, and if he were to turn his back, they are capable of doing horrifying things to

the citizens. The governor instantly believes the king because he is not aware the men are completely in Henry's control at all times. "Henry's rhetorical tactics are entirely deliberate: by describing his soldier's potential victims as members of families, he heightens the impact of their violence. His speech effectively intimidates his auditors, who give up without a fight." (Maus, 836) Henry V speaks to his men in a familiar way and they respect his leadership. Unless Henry ordered an attack on the innocent, which is clearly not his intent, then they will not act out against him.

Henry is far too organized to allow complete and utter chaos to unfold, especially due to his own orders. Henry is dedicated to justice, and tells his men that no one shall be harmed while they occupy Harfleur. He makes clear to his men that the citizens are to be protected. This law is enforced, and no one is spared consequences if it is broken. He wishes for the citizens, which he knows will potentially be his subjects, to be treated humanely. He spares their lives not only to prevent chaos, but also because he values their lives as possible subjects. Should he allow any to face violence they will turn against him. He calculates his best option and places strict rules and codes of behavior for his men to follow in the territory. Henry's old acquaintance, Bardolf, steals a crucifix from a church, and is hanged for his crimes. Henry is committed to following through with justice even though it means the death of one of his oldest friends. (*Henry V* 3.7. 35-37)

*Henry V* only provides only one direct look into the internal thoughts and struggles of Henry during this play. Being constantly surrounded by war and chaos there is no time to share openly his honest attitude toward what is happening and how this affects him. "Henry is ruthless and expedient to the point where his actions are manipulative, and morally dubious. But he is vulnerable too, and utterly honest with us the audience." (*Henry V in Performance: The RSC and Beyond*, 191)

He reveals during his only soliloquy that being king is a burden, not a glorious position as common people may believe. As the king, he is ultimately held responsible for all, and feels the weight of the crown now more than ever. Henry is no longer a young man trying to formulate his best chance at ruling his kingdom effectively. He is now a king, anxious about being successful and leading well. He is deeply concerned with the well-being of his subjects. “Shakespeare effectively shows the king’s genuine isolation from ordinary pleasures of work and play that normal people can take for granted.” (Maus, 1539) Stress and fear of failure has begun to take a toll on him as a human being, not just as a leader.

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,  
 Our debts, our careful wives,  
 Our children, and our sins, lay on the King!  
 We must bear all, Oh, hard condition,  
 Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath  
 Of every fool whose sense no more can feel  
 But his own wringing. What infinite heartsease  
 Must kings neglect that private men enjoy!//  
 What kind of god art thou, that suffer’st more  
 Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?//  
 Not all these, laid in bed majestical,  
 Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave

Who, with body filled and vacant mind,  
Gets him to rest, crammed with distressful bread;  
Never sees the horrid night, the child of hell,  
But like a lackey, from the rise to set,  
Sweats in the eye of Phoebus, and all night  
Sleeps in Elysium; next day after dawn  
Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,  
And follows to the ever-running year  
With profitable labor to his grave.  
And but for ceremony such a wretch,  
Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,  
Had the forehand and vantage of a king.  
The slave, a member of the country's peace,  
Enjoys it, but in gross brain little wots  
What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,  
Whose hours the peasant best advantages. (*Henry V* 4.2. 207-214;  
219-220; 244-261)

Henry faces the internal struggle he has felt throughout the time he has ruled over his kingdom.

While others he protects benefit from his rule he is constantly in a place of fear and tension.

Henry clearly feels the need to remain in constant control, and this is detrimental to his own mental health due to constant stress. The audience is presented with a new king who is feared, respected and does not appear to be concerned about anything that could happen next. Internally Henry is fearful of failing and losing control because he takes his responsibility to heart. If the audience was not presented with this soliloquy, it would be believable that Henry has lost his way and become numb to the connection he feels with others. Henry is not a moral man, but is always taking into consideration those whom he serves. He feels responsible to others to the point of exhaustion. Henry's people matter to him, not just his power.

The last speech Henry delivers to his men is on Saint Crispian's day. He uses his influence and persuasion to keep the men interested in his cause. His learned skill of speaking to the people allows him to reach out and encourage them. Henry tells the men that whoever wants to leave may, but none of the men end up deserting him. They share a bond with their king they have fought beside for so long. Using his persuasion, he states those who stay and fight will be remembered and honored. Henry uses this as a way to convince the men to continue fighting because he has almost reached his goal. He knows that in order to be victorious after many days of fighting the men must be convinced to carry on. "Rallying his dispirited followers before Agincourt, Henry seeks to persuade them that they too are makers of history and that their names are destined to become the "familiar... as household words." (Neill, 268) Although the soldiers are offered the chance to leave the battle, and be compensated, they stay because Henry offers them the opportunity of greatness. Henry effectively appeals to the men, calling them his brothers and convincing them to fight alongside him.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers—

For he today that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother. Be he ne'er so vile,  
 This day shall gentle his condition.  
 And gentlemen in England now abed  
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispian's day. (*Henry V* 4.3. 60-  
 67)

Henry has told the men that those who fight beside him will be his brothers, yet he does not treat the men as his brothers when the conflict is over. These men are Henry's brothers on the battlefield, and at this moment they will be treated as brotherly companions. Henry will fight beside these men and connect with them at this time. When all is done, he will not treat them in a familiar brotherly fashion. "The words are thrilling and inspiring, as they are intended to be. Yet in death on the very heels of the battle, this brotherhood is coldly enumerated by Henry not as a single fellowship but in order of rank and degree." (McEachern, xxx) He and his biological brothers will gain glory, but so will these men.

A promise is never made that the men will be treated as his own brothers will be after the war. While the men fight beside the king, he will treat and protect them as his own brothers. Henry is not cloaking his words or tricking any of the men, instead he is being straightforward. Henry is not seen to interact with groups of his men after treaties have been signed with France and an agreement is reached. He has not promised these men positions or a place beside him after the battle is won. His promise of brotherhood will be carried out by his protection of the

man and their families as king. He has not made a promise to the men that he will not keep. Henry tells the men that their bravery and willingness to fight on Crispian's day will be remembered. It can be assumed they will be remembered and honored because this is an important historical event. The men fight alongside Henry and have faith in his leadership because they too will be remembered for this day.

The final time Henry appears in front of the audience is during a meeting with princess Katherine, who has been betrothed to him as part of the agreement with France. Originally, Henry had refused to take Katherine as his wife when offered by the King of France. His ambitious nature prevented him from marrying Kate without first winning France. Had he just accepted the deal earlier on, then he would have lost the territory he was striving to obtain for so long. By accepting the terms and conditions of the agreement earlier on, he would not have ruled the territory as king, but as the husband of Katherine.

Although Kate was at first rejected by Henry, when the two meet he shows himself to be quite taken with her. It is the interaction with Katherine in which the audience once again sees Henry stripped of his two bodies and his humanity is laid bare. "It starts as a political deal and ends up as something rather beautiful." (*Henry V in Performance: The RSC and Beyond*, 194) Katherine brings out the humanity in Henry once again as he is instantly drawn to her. Henry loves Katherine only moments after meeting her and is sincere in his intentions to woo her before she accepts his hand in marriage. Katherine ultimately must accept because she has become part of a deal, but Henry allows her to believe she has a part in it. He loves Katherine, and his love for her, despite the threats and morally questionable actions that had earlier taken place, prove that he is centrally human and thrives on connection with others.

Thou hast me, if thou hast me, at the worst; and thou shalt wear me, if thou wear me, better and better. And therefore tell me, most fair Katherine, will you have me? Put off your maiden blushes, avouch the thoughts of your heart with the looks of an empress, take me by the hand and say, "Harry of England, I am thine," which word thou shalt no sooner bless mine ear withal but I will tell thee aloud, "England is thine, Ireland is thine, France is thine, and Henry Plantagenet is thine," who, though I speak it before his face, if he not be fellow with the best king, thou shalt find the best king of good fellows. Come, your answer in broken music, for thy voice is music, and thy English broken. Therefore, queen of all, Katherine, break thy mind to me in broken English: wilt thou have me? (*Henry V* 5.2. 215-228)

While wooing Katherine, Henry attempts to convince the woman to return his affections. He is speaking from his central being to Katherine, and therefore stumbles over his words, especially when speaking in French. Henry truly wants to impress her. He is accustomed to talking to groups of men and persuading many, but he wants to feel a different kind of connection with Kate. In his conversing with her, he proves himself to be not a king speaking to a future spouse, but a man speaking to a woman he loves and admires. He is not wearing a mask to impress the princess, but wholly and honestly representing himself to her in hopes that she will accept his proposal on her own terms.

Henry V is quite possibly the most complicated and complex character in Shakespeare's historical plays. Henry shifts and changes his personas so often that it is at times difficult to



determine what is real and what is strictly performance. Henry is persuasive and ambitious, yet also emotional and grounded. As this man develops and changes from rebellious prince into a respectable king, he learns the ways of the people, and spends time among them in order to be the most effective ruler he can be. Henry is genuinely concerned about those he leads and has taken his position seriously even before it is given to him. He is devoted to those that he serves and is constantly thinking about serving them.

Henry is shown to have questionable morals at times, yet he never loses sight of who he is or his connection to others. Henry values his connections with others, be they friends, family, or romantic prospects. There are various moments in which Henry appears to be a terrible man, but he also feels remorse, love and meaningful ties with others. Henry's humanity is the center through which all of his personas and behaviors flow. It is this humanity that proves that Henry does exist beyond appearances.

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