

Prince Hal

:Shakespeare's Critique of Machiavelli

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Among the features specific to the text of Henry V is its apparent property of giving rise to particularly acrimonious division of opinion has often been noted. To say that there are two camps sharply opposing each other is indeed almost a commonplace of critical literature, the one camp firmly applauding what they see as a panegyric upon, indeed a rousing celebration of, "the mirror of all Christian Kings" and most successful English monarch of all the histories; and the followers of the other camp deriding with no less conviction the exaltation of a Machiavellian conqueror in a rapacious, and, after all, senseless war.

- Gunter Walch, 'Henry V as a Working House of Ideology.'

In recent years a small but growing literature has emerged urging the serious treatment of Shakespeare as a political thinker. Despite the excellence of much of this new literature, however, the depth and importance of Shakespeare's political thought remains far from established in contemporary Anglo-American political theory.¹ This article contributes to the case for Shakespeare as a serious political thinker by drawing on his often neglected History Plays. It does so by revealing a sharp albeit implicit critique of Niccolo Machiavelli's political thought in Shakespeare's Henriad (the two *Henry IV* plays and *Henry V*), and particularly in the story of Prince Hal's maturation into Henry V. Shakespeare shows, *contra* Machiavelli, that political *virtu* can create political legitimacy only at an insupportable human cost. This realist line of critique was both original and forceful. By exposing it, this essay is first and foremost intended to contribute to the case for Shakespeare as a contributor to political thought.

There is also a second interesting domain to which this essay may be relevant. In Shakespeare scholarship there is an important ongoing debate over whether Shakespeare had actually read Machiavelli.² Although there are several direct references to Machiavelli in the plays, there is no direct evidence that Shakespeare had read a word of Machiavelli's work first hand. This essay makes a contribution to that debate by providing new reasons to think that Shakespeare was at

least familiar the main ideas of *The Prince* as well as with the general style of Machiavelli's writing.

Finally, there is a longstanding and heated debate among readers and audiences over how to read *Henry V*, and in particular how to assess its title character. Is the play a nationalist paen to "the most Christian of English kings" (as presented in Olivier's 1942 film) or a politically subversive denunciation of a Machiavellian monster (as more clearly suggested in Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film)? This article shows that both interpretations are inadequate precisely because both contain a good deal of truth but both ignore the insights of the other. The existing interpretations suffer from a tendency to sharply underestimate the ambition and complexity of Shakespeare's political thought, and to read *Henry V* in isolation from the other history plays. Once the play is placed in its dramatic context and read in relation to Machiavelli's political thought, especially *The Prince*, the central theme that emerges is the extreme difficulty of consolidating an illegitimate dynasty on the throne, regardless of the virtuosity of the prince. This reading revolves around two key claims: (first,) that Shakespeare portrays Harry as an exemplary Machiavellian prince, and (second,) that Shakespeare provides the material of a telling critique of Harry's policy and the Machiavellian thought that informs it. The second section of this essay develops the former claim and the third the latter. The first section which follows begins that analysis by locating *Henry V* within Shakespeare's historical cycle of English histories.

I. The Henriad in Shakespeare's English Histories

Nowhere does Shakespeare address politics in so intense or sustained a manner as in his histories, and particularly in the two chronological tetralogies covering the Wars of the Roses. The central

dynamic of his narrative of this fifty or so years of English history is, in Herschel Baker's words, a story of "crime and punishment," "sin and retribution."³ The sin is committed in the first play in the chronology of eight, *Richard II*, in which Henry Bullingbrook, the Duke of Herford, usurps his ineffectual (and possibly criminal) cousin Richard II.⁴ The Punishment covers the remainder of the History plays through to the eventual accession of the first Tudor King, Henry VII, at the end of *Richard III*. The narrative structure of the eight-play cycle then begins with usurpation and regicide, continues through an extended period of instability and civil war that ultimately degenerates into murderous tyranny, and culminates in the defeat of the tyrant on Bosworth Field and the re-establishment of legitimacy and order.

The structure of the overall tetralogy is closest to that of a tragedy: fall and destruction ending in a suggestion of restored order. In characteristic style, Shakespeare suggests multiple explanations for this pattern of fall and rise. As in *Macbeth*, which exhibits a similar narrative structure of regicide-disorder-punishment/restoration, there is both a traditional supernatural explanation for events, and a more realist political-psychological explanation. Every step of *Macbeth's* crime, tyranny and fall is prophesied by the witches. It is predestined by fate. It is also adequately explained by *Macbeth's* corrosive guilt over his crime, and his consequent inability to sleep, slide into paranoia and eventual madness. Similarly, in the history-cycle, Shakespeare puts a providential explanation in the narrative foreground - sin disrupts the divine order and needs to be expiated before order can be restored. In the narrative background, however, he intimates a more realistic political-psychological explanation. Rule without legitimacy cannot survive in the long term, and typically proves disastrous. Legitimacy cannot be manufactured, at least not with

tremendous personal-psychological cost to the ruler and human cost to his people, and even then it is at its best temporary.

In developing the foreground providential interpretation of the historical cycle, Shakespeare suggests a moral critique of Machiavelli's work which parallels Machiavelli's historical critics, from Innocent Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel* through Frederick II's *Anti-Machiavel*. In developing a subtler realist political-psychological explanation for the historical pattern that plays out in the histories, however, Shakespeare opens a new and fertile front of Machiavelli critique - that Machiavelli failed exactly where he himself thought he best succeeded, in providing a realistic account of human nature and the way in which it structures political possibilities.

The main analytical focus of this essay will be on the political-psychological explanation for the narrative arc of the histories, but Shakespeare's rhetorical focus is the providential explanation. However bad a King Richard II may have been, he remained, as he himself never tires of pointing out, "The deputy elected by the Lord" (III.ii.57). According to traditional divine right doctrine, as Richard himself exclaims,

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king. (III.ii.54-5)

Consequently his removal (and later murder) are "... in a Christian climate so... heinous, black, obscene a deed" (IV.i.131) that they bring the entire land, but the House of Lancaster in particular, under God's curse. Following Richard's removal, the Bishop of Carlisle foresees the terrible doom that has been called down upon England as a consequence of this unnatural act:

The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act.
Peace shall go to sleep with Turks and infidels,
And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound.
Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd
The fields of Golgotha and dead men's skulls. (IV.i.137-44)

Of course, Carlisle is basically right. The historical and dramatic scope of this punitive strife is enormous, covering the remaining seven plays of the historical cycle. Mounting civil wars convulse the Kingdom following Richard II's deposition, finally culminating in Richard III's bloody seizure of power and his brief but brutal reign.

Shakespeare re-enforces the degeneration of public order in the transition of language and dramatic structure from *Richard II* (which essentially ends with Richard's murder (V.v.)) to the following play, *Henry IV I*. *Richard II*, as has frequently been noted, is focussed entirely (with the exception of a garden scene) on the actions of the court and nobles and is composed entirely in blank verse. Right away in *Henry IV*, however, Shakespeare introduces a radical structural innovation into a history play: he divides the dramatic action of the play between the elegant verse of Henry IV's court and the crude and bawdy comic prose of the dissolute tavern world of Falstaff and the Eastcheap gang, "showing" as Northrop Frye has it, "the general slump in morale of a country whose chain of command has so many weak links."⁵

In developing his theme of crime and punishment, however, Shakespeare encounters an enormous historical problem - Henry V. Between the rebellion-filled reign of the usurper Henry (IV)

Bullingbroke, and the disastrous reign of his grandson Henry VI that "... lost France, and made his England Bleed" (Henry V, Epitaph.12), Shakespeare is confronted with the brief but undeniably glorious reign of Henry V, conqueror of France. Shakespeare has to deal with only one great king to confound Carlisle's prophecy, but he cannot escape that one.

Shakespeare's problem then is how he can fit the glorious reign of the "most Christian King" into his story of regicide and retribution. I want to suggest that Shakespeare solves the problem by presenting Hal as an embodiment of Machiavellian political virtu who is able to momentarily overcome the curse on England, and achieve unity at home through conquest abroad. Despite his glorious victory at Agincourt, however, his success (and indeed his career) proves short-lived.

Of course, Harry never explicitly invokes the image of Machiavelli, and nor does any other character in the Henriad in reference to him. But this is only a testament to the success of Harry's political performance both as Prince and King: he never appears publicly as the brutal political realist that we, the audience, are permitted to see that he is. In this way, Harry realizes one of Machiavelli's central political precepts: one must know how to be bad while always appearing good. It is through his actions and the motivations he reveals directly to the audience that we must assess Hal's character and what Shakespeare reveals through him. In the following section, I examine Hal's Machiavellian character and behaviour.

II. Hal as a Quintessential Machiavellian Prince

Machiavelli's *the Prince* is a manual on how to rule successfully dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici.

Both because it is addressed to Lorenzo, and because Machiavelli wants to confront the most

difficult cases, the book is primarily concerned with the question of how a *new* Prince, especially one whose right to rule is unclear, can consolidate his power and legitimacy. As Machiavelli summarizes, "The things written above, if followed prudently, make a new prince seem well established and render him immediately safer and more established in his state than if he had been in it for some time.... They attract men much more and bind them to him more strongly than does ancient blood."⁶ It is a manual then that speaks very directly to Hal's position, and Hal follows its precepts closely.

The central action of the Henry V is, of course, the war with France, and so it's probably the best place to begin to explore Hal's political strategy. As Shakespeare presents it, the entirety of Harry's policy on his ascension to the throne is preparation for immediate war with France. As Harry declares at the end of Act I Scene ii, 'we have no thought in us now but France.' (302) By relentlessly pursuing a war of conquest, Harry seems to be cynically fulfilling of his father's Machiavellian dying advice to him, to "busy giddy minds/With foreign quarrels." (*Henry IV, II*, IV.v.213-4) Where his father, however, was driven by his guilty conscience to talk endlessly about a crusade to the holy land, Harry sets his sights on the more practical target of France.

Harry's complete focus on a policy of war with France of course sorts well with Machiavelli's general advice to princes:

A prince, therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only profession which befits one who commands....⁷

Indeed, "Nothing causes a prince to be so much esteemed as great enterprises and giving proof of his

unusual talents."⁸ Machiavelli offers Ferdinand of Aragon as a paradigm of the virtuous, "new prince." He chooses Ferdinand because 'from being a weak ruler he became, through fame and glory, the first king of Christendom.'⁹ The key to Ferdinand's success, according to Machiavelli, was immediately attacking his neighbour (Granada) in order to consolidate his position at home:

In the beginning of his reign he attacked Granada, and that enterprise was the basis of his state.... He kept the minds of the barons of Castile busy with this, and they, concentrating on that war, did not consider reforms at home.... [he] kept the minds of his subjects in suspense and amazed and occupied with their outcome.... [thus he] would never give men enough time to be able to work calmly against him.¹⁰

Finally, Machiavelli stresses that 'he was able to maintain armies with money from the church.'¹¹ A new prince, then, especially one whose own position is problematic, should find a pretext and immediately go to war with a vulnerable neighbour (and, if possible, get the church to finance the venture).

The strategic character of Hal's policy of war with France is clearly suggested at the beginning of *Henry V*, where Shakespeare clearly calls the *cassus belli* into question.¹² Act I, Scene I opens with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely discussing a bill urged in the Commons to confiscate "the better half of [its] possessions." (I.i.8) It quickly materializes, however, that, in exchange for his support, the Archbishop has made an offer to the King "As concerning France." (I.i.79) To begin with, he has offered a substantial war chest - "a greater sum/Than ever at one time the clergy yet/Did to his predecessor part withal" (I.ii.79-81). Moreover, in the following scene, the Archbishop provides Harry a highly obscure and convoluted justification for his claims to "Some certain Dukedoms" in France (I.ii.247) Finally, when Harry cuts through all the verbiage and asks the big question, "May I with right and conscience make this claim?", Canterbury answers

pregnantly "The sin upon my head dread sovereign!" (I.ii.96-7). If the war is a sin, Canterbury serves his King (if not perhaps his spiritual office) by assuming responsibility for it (in exchange for temporal political considerations). Without any direct exercise of his power, Hal gets the church not only to finance his war, as Machiavelli recommends, but to take responsibility for it as well.

Once the validity of his claim has been confirmed by the country's highest spiritual authority, Harry gives admission to the French ambassadors, who deliver the Dauphin's Paris balls as his answer to Harry's claims. When Harry responds with cold fury to the French Embassy, his claim has expanded to "my thrown of France." (I.ii.275) After this, Hal makes no further mention of the *cassus belli* (although the question of the justice of the war continues to haunt the play, most poignantly in Michael Williams speech on the night before Agincourt (IV.i.)). By the end of the play, however, Harry openly confesses to Katherine what his intention has been all along: "... for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine." (V.ii.173-6)

All of this emphasis on Hal's duplicity, however, only reaffirms something that Shakespeare's audience, indeed any audience who has watched the previous plays, knows - Harry's claims to the French crown are obviously empty. He is not even the legitimate King of England.¹³ Even leaving aside his father's usurpation, the legitimate heir is Edmund Mortimer, or, failing that, Henry, Earl of Northumberland or Richard, the Third Duke of York.¹⁴ This knowledge gives a deep irony to Harry's proud declaration on his disembarkation from Dover, "No king of England, if not king of France." (II.ii.193)

Shakespeare went to some trouble then to cast doubt on the justness of Harry's war. Harry goes to war with France because he needs a war, preferably a successful one, and he perceives weakness in the French State. He needs a war because of his own problem of legitimacy, and because of the danger of the kind of political instability that plagued his father's reign. So he marries Machiavelli's advice to make war with an astute political opportunism in a "great enterprise" designed to showcase the military talents he has already exhibited during his father's reign (including killing Harry Hotspur in battle). (*I Henry IV*, V.iv.) Harry embarks on precisely the kind of bold but realist policy, of which Machiavelli most approves.¹⁵ Indeed, once Harry's strategy become clear, one begins to notice how carefully stage-managed the opening court scene (I.ii) is to cast Harry in the role of the offended party and to create a credible pretext for war. One notices, for example, that Harry has cannily sent his peremptory claim to the Dauphin (who is sure to send a disdainful response) rather than to King Charles who could actually decide the merit of Harry's claims. One notices Canterbury's subtle suggestion that Harry knows the content of the French embassy before formally receiving the ambassadors, and one wonders whether the whole scene is not a carefully planned performance, rather the like the one that he long before practiced with Falstaff (to deceive his father). (*I Henry*, II.iv) In this Harry is again shown to be carefully putting into practice the advice of Machiavelli, who famously remarked that "a prince who wishes to accomplish great things must learn to deceive."¹⁶

Indeed, Shakespeare consistently portrays Hal as engaged in meticulously planned performances. At the end of the very first scene in which he appears, Hal gives a soliloquy revealing an elaborate plan to deceive everyone about his character.

Prince: Yet herein will I 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 wond'ered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
.... By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,
And like bright metal on a sullen ground
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
(*Henry IV, I, I.ii. 197-215*)

In the remaining Henriad, he goes on to realize his plan spectacularly. From the beginning, however, we are shown that it is all an elaborately planned performance. Throughout the plays, however, Shakespeare continually draws the audience's attention to Harry's meticulous performances.¹⁷

There's no doubt then that Harry is a deceptive character who manipulates England into an ambitious invasion of France. In establishing the conditions of a successful campaign, Harry again closely follows Machiavelli's advice.

According to Machiavelli, the first necessity in consolidating power and preparing the nation for war is to neutralize potential threats to your rule. Above all, Machiavelli emphasizes that a new Prince of insecure title above all needs to win the support of the people, for his nobles will tend to "think themselves his equals" and he will not be able to command them effectively unless he has "popular favour" in which case he will find "no one or very few, who are not ready to obey him."¹⁸ This too is part of Harry's plan. He wins the love and trust of the people early on by demonstrating that he is one of them. His youthful dissolution and irresponsibility mainly take the form of scandalously associating openly and persistently with a notorious gang of Eastcheap thieves led by his popular

friend, "that villainous, abominable misleader of youth," Sir John Falstaff. (II.iv.462-3) Indeed, Hal is introduced to us, and almost exclusively appears in *Henry IV I*, in the tavern world of Falstaff and his cronies. By soaking himself, in Frye's words, "in every social aspect of the kingdom.... He is becoming the entire nation in individual form, which is exactly what a king is."¹⁹ Two quick examples may suffice to capture some of the depth of the people's love for him.

At the opening of the second Act of *Henry V* we have the remnants of the Eastcheap gang - Bardolph, Nym, Pistol and the Hostess (formerly Mistress Quickly, but now married to Ancient Pistol) - quarrelling and lamenting the sudden illness that has struck their friend and effective leader, Falstaff. The Hostess captures the heart of the matter: "The king has kill'd his heart." (II.i.88) They have good reason to be angry and bitter with Harry, who has cruelly abandoned Falstaff and themselves. Yet they will not blame him; a few lines later we hear,

Hostess: Ah, poor heart! He [Falstaff] is so shak'd of a burning quotidian tertian, that it is most lamentable to behold. Sweet men, come to him.

Nym: The King hath run bad humors on the knight, that's the even of it.

Pistol: Nym, thou hast spoke the right.

His heart is fracted and corroborate.

Nym: The King is a good king, but it must be as it may; he passes some humors and careers.

Pistol: Let us condole the knight, for, lambkins, we will live. (II.i.121-8)

There is no doubt who has killed Falstaff, but they cannot find it in themselves to blame him.

Again, Harry (in disguise) approaches Ancient Pistol on the night before Agincourt. Harry has seemingly led his army to certain destruction, and has just approved the hanging of their mutual old friend, Bardolph, for a minor offence. When, however, he turns the conversation to the subject of the King, Pistol declares,

The King's a bawcock, and a heart of gold,
A lad of life, an imp of fame,
Of parents good, of fist most valiant.
I kiss his dirty shoe, and from heart-string
I love the bully boy. (IV.i.44-8)

So Hal puts Machiavelli's advice to work, and successfully undertakes an elaborate performance that wins him the hearts of the people, and by consequence controls his nobles: as Westmoreland assures him in the first court scene,

Never King of England
Had nobles richer and more loyal subjects. (I.ii.126-7)

Yet, 'since men are a sorry lot,' and love can be fickle, Machiavelli emphasizes that it is prudent also to be feared. Fear is especially valuable to a prince because once established 'it will never abandon you.'²⁰ While Machiavelli admits that "it is difficult to join [fear and love] together," he nonetheless insists that a prince "should like to be both one and the other." Harry works hard to be feared as well as loved. His punishments are harsh (say, the hanging of Bardolph, or the death sentences of Cambridge, Scroop, and Gray), regardless of his personal feelings for the condemned. He always carries through on his threats (for example, the conquest of France), and some of his threats are savage indeed: at Harfleur, for example, he says

K. Henry: Therefore, you men of Harflew
Take pity of your town and of your people... [*i.e., and surrender]
If not - why, in a moment look to see
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
[Defile] the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters;
Your fathers taken by their silver beards,
And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls;
Your naked infants spitted on pikes,
While the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
Do break the clouds....

What say you? Will you yield and this avoid?
Or guilty in defense, but thus destroy'd? (III.iii. 27 - 43)

Fortunately, faced with so vivid a prospect, the town surrenders and Harry is not required to carry through this threat. Nonetheless, it is clear that he cultivates fear, both in his enemies and in his own subjects (as well as love in the latter). Cambridge affirms the success of the King in words that directly echo Machiavelli when he insists "Never was monarch better fear'd and lov'd/Than is your majesty." (II.ii.25-6)

Probably the point about which Machiavelli is most emphatic in relation to this whole question of being feared and loved is the immense benefits of the leader sacrificing one whom he loves in support of the law and/or the general welfare. Likely the single historical incident he refers to most frequently through both *the Prince* and *the Discourses* was Junius Brutus condemning his own children to death (and, in fact, executing them) when he discovered that they were plotting against the Republic and the rule of law.²¹ This is exactly what Hal does in the very moments following his coronation. Falstaff has ridden all night on hearing the news of the old Kings death to be there for the event, declaring "the laws of England are at my commandment. Blessed are they who have been my friends, and woe to my Lord Chief Justice!" (*Henry IV II*, V.iii.136-8) He bursts from the crowd at the parade following the coronation, crying "My king, my Jove! I speak to thee my heart!" The king answers,

King: I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers.
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
So surfeit swell'd, so old, and so profane;
But being awak'd, I do despise my dream....
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 turn'd away my former self,
So will I those that kept me company. (V.v.47-59)

Harry then proceeds to banish Old Sir John from ten miles of his presence - which turns out to be a death sentence (anticipating the hanging of Bardolph (*Henry V*, III.vi)). This gesture, more than anything else, persuades Prince John and the other leading nobles of the genuineness of Harry's conversion, and earns their trust. So, although Harry's gesture is more the effective execution (literal banishment) of a father figure rather than of a child, the effect is much the same. Moreover, it is an effect that Shakespeare indicates that Harry has long planned. All the way back in Act II of *Henry IV I*, Harry and Falstaff play a scene (Falstaff playing Hal and Hal the king, his father) in which he quite explicitly signals his intention (to the audience, at least):

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. (II.iv.474-81)

Having then put Machiavelli's advice to work and won the love of the people and established his fearsome authority, and thus having brought both the people and nobles under his control, Harry in a position to, as the Prologue has it, "Assume the port of Mars" (I.i.6) and initiate the war that will consolidate unity at home and legitimize his dynasty's claim to the throne. In undertaking the enterprise, however, Harry adopts several further Machiavellian suggestions which deserve note. First, he must 'ferret out' and 'extinguish' any weak links among his subjects, especially among his peers, who may conspire with the enemy against him. (80-4, 136-9, 357-74) In particular,

Machiavelli recommends that he should scrutinize "those for who he has done too many favors more than those upon whom he has inflicted too many injuries." (362) Once identified, these enemies should be "annihilated" in one swift sweep, "For injuries should be done all together, so that being less tasted, they will give less offense." (106-7) A general climate of suspicion, after all, cannot but retard his project. Further, when the prince has to make harsh decisions, particularly pursuant to his project, he "must delegate distasteful tasks to others; pleasant ones he should keep for [him]self." (139) One prominent example will be sufficient to illustrate Harry's masterful application of these principles.

Even before he leaves Southampton, Harry's active intelligence uncovers a plot on his life among some of his most favored advisors (as Exeter puts it "that was his bedfellow,/whom he hath dull'd and cloy'd with gracious favors" (II.ii.8-9)). It is discovered that Lord Scroop of Massam, Richard, Earl of Cambridge, and Sir Thomas Grey of Northumberland, have accepted bribes from the French to murder their King. Rather than simply arrest the errant knights, however, Hal plays an elaborate scene with them in which he proposes to pardon a man accused of speaking badly of the King. He elicits predictable protests from Scroop, Cambridge and Grey that he is being too merciful. He then reveals his knowledge of their plot, and when they too predictably submit themselves to his mercy, he responds

The mercy that was quick in us of late,
By your own counsel is suppress'd and kill'd.
You must not dare (for shame) to talk of mercy,
For your own reasons turn into your bossoms,
As dogs upon their masters.... (II.ii.79-83)

Harry then condemns them to immediate death. Not only does he uncover and eliminate his enemies

among his peers, but he tricks them into taking responsibility for their own merciless dispatch. In essence, he deflects responsibility for their condemnation onto the victims themselves (while he himself mercifully chooses to "enlarge that man" who spoke badly of him (II.ii.57)). Indeed, this is the same slight of hand that he employs at the siege of Harfleur, when he insists that should the city fail to surrender, they themselves will be "guilty in defense" of the awful rein of rape "murder, spoil and villainy" (III.iii.32) he threatens "in a moment" to unleash on them. "What is't to me," he asks, "when you yourselves are cause"? (III.iii.19) Again and again Harry exhibits the Machiavellian wisdom that savage and immediate punishment is necessary, but that the responsibility for it must be deflected elsewhere (in this case onto his enraged soldiers and, better yet, the victims themselves).

By persistently deflecting responsibility for his harsh decisions, Harry protects the purity of his reputation, particularly in the eyes of his own people. Even this is no easy task, for as Machiavelli teaches

a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, for in order to maintain that state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, against religion. (135)

In short, Machiavelli holds that "as long as possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands." (135) Nonetheless, in the eyes of his own people at least "he should appear, upon seeing and hearing him, to be all mercy, all faithfulness, all integrity all kindness, all religion. And there is nothing more necessary than to seem to possess this last quality [i.e., religious]." (135) It is for these reasons that the art of command, especially for a new prince, is, at least in part, an art of deception - a subtle type of performance in which Harry exceptionally excels. He is, as the Chorus notes, perceived as the "most Christian of Kings,"

dispensing justice and compassion in all he does. Indeed, no king could make more consistent or humble submissions to God. Harry humbly invokes the grace of God in every major speech, and even dedicates his entire victory at Agincourt to him. He is always very careful to appear wholly Christian, and to dedicate all he does to the glory of God.

It will come as no surprise then when it comes to the actual prosecution of the war, that Harry follows Machiavelli's dictums carefully. He relies solely on his own troops (rather than mercenaries or auxiliaries), leads them himself, refuses any special treatment by the enemy (such as establishing his ransom price) and even goes secretly among them to know their minds and keep up their morale.

Shakespeare, then, presents Harry in virtually every respect as a perfect Machiavellian prince. None of this sufficient of course to decide the vexed question of whether Shakespeare had actually read any of Machiavelli first hand, but if I am right in suggesting that his intention was to present Harry as a rarely gifted and motivated Machiavellian prince, it certainly suggests that he had an acute grasp of Machiavelli's teachings (much more accurate, for example, than the crude, demonic Machiavelli that Christopher Marlowe presents as the prologue to his *The Jew of Malta*). Two brief further points will help to consolidate this insight, one textual and one thematic.

The first point concerns an element whose role and significance in the play has long baffled critics - that is, the continual pedantic arguments among the officers, and Captain Fluellen in particular, about "the true disciplines of the war" (III.ii.72, 58, 81, 96, 129, 140), that is "the Roman wars," (III.ii.97) and the persistent discussion, and Harry in comparison with the great leaders of classical antiquity

which continue throughout the campaign.

Fluellen is persistently frustrated that Harry and his other officers are not able to attain "the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans." (III.ii.78-9) Encamped on the eve of Agincourt, for example, he characteristically complains, "If you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, no tiddle taddle nor pibble babble in Pompey's camp." (IV.i.68-71) During the battle, the following day, when it is discovered that the French have traitorously snuck into the English camp and slain the boys and stolen the luggage, Fluellen protests, "Kill the poys and the luggage! 'Tis expressly against the law of arms." (IV.vii.1-2) He then goes on in the midst of battle to, inexplicably, offer an extended discursive comparison of Harry to Alexander the Great. First, he spends about 30 lines of discussion with Captain Gower to establish that both Harry and Alexander were born in towns through which a river ran. He then elaborates a second point of comparison:

Fluellen: If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well, for there is figures in al 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.

Gower: our King is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends.

Fluellen: 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 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, 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.

Gower: Sir John Falstaff. (IV.vii.31-51)

Of course, Fluellen's comparison is neither apt nor timely (although it does remind us once again of Harry's brutal betrayal of Falstaff, that "kill'd his heart"), but it does exemplify a continual

preoccupation of the play with the imitation of the great men, particularly military leaders, of classical antiquity.

The question that is begged is what all this stuff is doing in the text. The solution to this long-standing dilemma I want to suggest is that these passages ridiculing Machiavelli's distinctive method of learning princely virtue by studying the great leaders of antiquity. It is his own lifetime study in this vein, of course, which Machiavelli believed gave value to the book he presented as his gift to Lorenzo de' Medici in hopes of winning his favour - "I have not found among my belongings anything that I might value more or prize so much as the knowledge of the deeds of great men...."

(78) In the text of that same book Machiavelli tells us "the prince must read histories and in them study the deeds of great men; he must see how they conducted themselves in wars; he must examine the reasons for their victories and for their defeats in order to avoid the latter and to imitate the former, and above all else he must do as some distinguished man before him has done." (126) Machiavelli's magnum opus is of course his *Discourses on Livy* in which he draws the appropriate lessons from the great period of Roman expansion. His final major political work is *The Art of War* in which he draws continuously on the example of generals like Alexander and Pompey.

A deliberate reference to Machiavelli then provides a powerful explanation of these many odd passages in the play, and in particular the character of Fluellen (who does not appear in the preceding histories). This reduction of Machiavelli's method to absurdity would then be a supporting theme in the more general critique that will be outlined in the next section. Such a reference, however, argues not merely a familiarity with Machiavelli's main ideas, but also with some of the specific content and

texture of his writing.

The second and last point I will make at this juncture further re-enforces the plays' concern with Machiavellian politics not so much at the level of style and method, but in terms of an astute understanding of Machiavelli's themes. If, as I have argued, Shakespeare deliberately presents Harry as an exemplary Machiavellian prince, then a strong case can be made that Shakespeare understands Machiavelli's work more acutely than either other Elizabethan dramatists, or Machiavelli's prominent critics of the time. Anthony Parel, for example, argues forcefully that other Elizabethan dramatists like Marlowe, following the dominant trend of European scholarship at the time, treat Machiavelli as a coldly amoral teacher of self-aggrandizement through whatever means necessary.²²

In short, the great end of increasing one's power justifies the employment of whatever cruel and immoral means that serve that end. As Parel, and the predominant trend of more recent scholarship have amply shown, however, this is at best a meanly truncated and partial reading of Machiavelli's intent.

Indeed, as Machiavelli makes abundantly clear in *The Prince* "as long as it is possible, he [i.e., the prince] should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands." (135) Machiavelli does not deny (amorally) that what necessity may sometimes require of the prince is, in fact, evil - and he continually emphasizes that such evil necessities should be avoided wherever possible. Indeed, he roundly condemns those who employ evil or cruel methods gratuitously or unnecessarily. In discussing Agathocles, the cruel tyrant of Syracuse, for example, he stresses that "It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow citizens, betray one's friends, be without

faith, without pity, and without religion; by these methods one may indeed gain power, but not glory." (104) "his vicious deeds and cruelty and inhumanity, along with numerous wicked deeds, do not permit us to honor him among the most excellent of men." (104)

The critical question for Machiavelli, then, is what kinds of ends or necessities do in fact justify the adoption of cruel or evil methods. As he puts it, "I think that this depends on whether cruelty be well or badly used. Well used are those cruelties that are... converted into the best possible benefits for their subjects." (106) Thus, for example, Machiavelli forgives Romulus' murder of his brother Remus because this evil act produced the great social good of allowing for the foundation, unity and stability of Rome, its successful defence against its many enemies, and eventually for its emergence as the greatest Republic that man has ever known. In short, the prince should strive to be good wherever possible, but when public needs demand it, his high office obligates him to commit evil for the good of the people.

Harry, as I hope I have shown, is thoroughly Machiavellian in his political tactics and stratagems. He is also Machiavellian, however, in the deeper sense that the deceptions, cruelties and evil that he enters into all serve public purposes. After all, his great projects of conquering France, politically unifying England, and establishing his own Lancastrian line firmly on the throne are all manifestly in the English public interest. Indeed, the brutal series of rebellions and repressions that characterized his father's reign, and the even more savage civil war that follows his reign, the War of the Roses, clearly show how necessary Harry's project of legitimation and unification is for England. In short, Harry is not only Machiavellian in his methods, but also in the purpose that justifies those methods:

he is, as Machiavelli would demand, a genuine patriot. Indeed, as Herschel Baker has acutely observed, "We see Harry at his best, in fact, when he fulfils his patriotic function." (1974b:933) Once he has become King, Harry is certainly at his most sympathetic in his role as general, leading the indomitable English against their bitter traditional enemy, inspiring the English army to make their nation proud:

On, on, you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war proof! (III.i.17-8)

He is perhaps at his most memorable facing the "fearful odds," (IV.iii.5) at Agincourt:

This story shall the good man teach his son,
And Crispin Crispian will ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world
But we in it will be remembered -
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother, be he ne'er so vile...
And gentlemen in England, now a-bed,
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon saint Crispin's day. (IV.iii.56-67)

Indeed, Harry's inspiring invocation of the pride of national posterity was echoed in our own times in one of Churchill's great speeches:

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."²³

In short then, Harry is an exemplary Machiavellian prince in both his stratagems and his goals. The question I want to turn to now is what Shakespeare shows us about Machiavellian political virtue.

III. Shakespeare's Critique of Machiavelli: How Harry is Eaten by the Crown

In this final section I want to draw attention to how Shakespeare portrays the human effect of the perfection of Machiavellian political virtu on Hal's character. In Act II, Scene IV of *Henry IV part*

2, Hal describes himself addressing his dying father's crown as follows

... The care of thee depending
Hath fed upon the body of my father;
Therefore thou best of gold are worst of gold.
... thou... Hast eat thy bearer up. (158-164)

What I will argue in this chapter is that Hal is not only perceptive about his father's fate, but effectively anticipates his own. He will be eaten up by his own crown, and with his death all his project will collapse and come to nought, or worse: as the Chorus tells in the Epilogue:

Small time, but in small time most greatly lived
This star of England. Fortune made his sword,
By which the world's best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son Imperial Lord.
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd King
Of France and England, did this King succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing,
That they lost France, and made his England bleed;
Which oft our stage hath shown.... (Epilogue, 5-13)

In short, the *Henriad* and *Henry V* in particular is dominated by two principal themes in continual tension with one another. The first is the story of Hal's process of maturation into a great King - his adept accumulation of power and his ambitious project to heal the deep wound in the spirit of the Kingdom wrought by Richard's usurpation and murder (by his father) through the conquest of France. In this growth into power and in pursuit of this project, Harry is, as the poet W.B. Yeats observed, "as remorseless and undistinguished as some natural force." Here Yeats echoes Exeter's warning to the French court, "in fierce tempest is he coming,/In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove/That if requiring fail, he will compel." (II.iv.99-101) Watching Harry's careful plan unfold has something of the feeling of watching a tidal wave slowly but unstoppably building up size and power, and then sweeping away everything in its path.

Yeats follows his insight, however, with the following remark that points to the second and countervailing element of the play: "and the finest thing in his play is the way his old companions fall out of it brokenhearted or on their way to the gallows." In other words, in contrast with the spectacular pageantry of political and military greatness, Shakespeare quietly but persistently points to the terrible personal cost of Harry's kind of political virtu - the supple policy of the Machiavellian prince, the endless tightrope performance of Christian Warrior-King. Shakespeare allows us fewer and fewer glimpses into Harry's inner life as the series proceeds, but what we do see, and what we can infer from his actions and behaviour, reveal a man with a heart that is as "fracted and corroborate" (II.i.124) as Falstaff's is on his deathbed.

The relationship between these two aspects of Harry's character can be more precisely described in the language of medieval and renaissance political theology - specifically, the two bodies of the King.²⁴ As E.H. Kantorowicz memorably reminded us, the king at the time was held not only to have the same individual body or persona as all other persons, but also a second symbolic or ceremonial body encompassing the entire nation in an individual form. This is the sense in which European monarchs (such as those in Shakespeare's histories) refer to themselves with plural pronouns and to one another by the names of their countries. A king, in short, is both a unique individual person, and at the same time all of his countrymen, or at least their interests, roled into one. What Harry means when he charges his father's crown with having consumed him is that his ceremonial body or role, symbolized by the crown, has demanded more than his individual, personal body could supply, and has ultimately left it a spent husk. It has consumed all his energy

and talent and left him with nothing but stress and doubt. At the end, as Frye summarizes, King Henry (Harry's father) is "perpetually exhausted and he can't sleep."²⁵ His bodily strength has been emptied and Harry can see that his father's end is near. He laments that his father's ceremonial body, the crown, has eaten his father, the King's individual or personal body.

Harry's hope for his own reign seems to be two-fold. In the first place, having merely succeeded to an usurper's crown, rather than like his father being at least complicit in regicide, his own legitimacy may be easier to maintain than that of his father, and by consequence the crown may weigh a little less heavy on him than it did on his father. Second, he hopes to succeed in that project that his father could never quite get off the ground (distracted as he was by endless rebellions) - a major foreign war that will distract attention from his illegitimacy, unify the nation around him, and through victorious conquest to establish for himself and his heirs a real and unquestionable legitimacy. To this task, he bends all of his extraordinary political virtu, carefully following each of Machiavelli's dictums. In the end, however, his hopes are forlorn, and despite all his political virtuosity, and even his remarkable military victory, we watch the same process of the gradual erosion of individual persona and the exhaustion of personal resources, although more subtly than in his father's case. Finally, we hear that Harry soon succumbs to disease on campaign, and his Kingdom quickly collapses into civil war and rapidly loses all it had conquered. Moreover, as Shakespeare stage "oft showed," his son, butchered in the civil wars, will be the last of the Lancastrian line to sit on the throne.

How then does Shakespeare go about subtly showing us the signs of Harry's consumption by the

crown? Unfortunately, in assessing Harry's inner life, however, we must rely a great deal on inference, for as we move through the Henry plays, he becomes more and more reluctant to speak directly to the audience. In *Henry IV, Part I*, Hal immediately makes the audience co-conspirators by informing them confidentially of his plans, and later his various practical jokes on Falstaff (complete with ironic asides). In *Henry V*, however, Hal gives only one soliloquy, in the fourth act (IV.i), and that takes the form of a private prayer to God on the eve of battle. In short, Hal becomes, in Harold Bloom's words, increasingly "veiled": In *Henry V*, "Shakespeare does not let us locate Hal/Henry V's true self."²⁶ Indeed, something more may be being suggested here: that Harry has less and less individual voice with which to speak; he is, in short, becoming continually more deeply subsumed in his ceremonial role, until there is no real Harry left to speak, only the voice of the crown.

The first and probably the most important blow to his individual identity has been struck even before *Henry V* opens, although we get ample references back to it, and extensions of it: the rejection of Falstaff. Although Shakespeare fails to fulfil the promise he makes in the Epilogue of *Henry IV, Part II*, to "continue the story, with Sir John in it" in *Henry V* (Epilogue 27-8), he nonetheless reminds the audience continually (and Henry himself occasionally) of the betrayal of his erstwhile friends. The tavern sub-plot is concerned through the end of the second act with Falstaff's off-stage death, culminating in the Hostess' affecting report of his last minutes (II.iii.9-26). The King's responsibility is continually emphasized (and echoed in the Hostess' (and Pistol's) own bad faith with Corporal Nym (II.i.18-9, 96)). We notice in particular that Shakespeare carefully juxtaposes the scene of Harry's own betrayal by his close confidant Lord

Scroop, and Harry's towering rage at this infidelity (II.i), with the final report of Falstaff's death (II.ii). We cannot help but suspect that Harry's long, impassioned denunciation of this "ingrateful, savage and inhuman creature" is prompted in part by his own troubled conscience which cannot quite forget he himself has done something quite similar to Falstaff. Indeed, even Fluellen, who worships the King, will remind us in the midst of battle, that Harry, like Alexander, has murdered his best friend (albeit where Alexander was drunk, Harry was "in his right wits and his good judgments" (IV.vii.46-7)). Bardolph's hanging (which the King approves (III.vi.106-9)), very tangibly echoes Falstaff's earlier betrayal. Shakespeare never allows his audience to entirely forget, even in the flights of patriotic rhetoric, that Harry's plan has from the beginning been premised on the murderous betrayal of his friends, and despite his iron resolve, this is a fact Harry himself never seems entirely able to escape. We see indications that it oppresses his conscience.

For starters, then, we know that Harry is guilty of serious betrayals of the trust of those he loves best (if Harry can be said to love anyone), and that he begins, as he commits these betrayals, to hide his inner self and to keep his thoughts to himself. Much the same can be said of Harry's relations with those around him - he transforms from the madcap prince, so surprisingly open and at ease with his friends at the tavern that he winds up charming everyone, to a King who, when he wants to consult his conscience, "would no other company." (IV.i.29-30) Although generally well liked, none of his lords seem very close to Harry, nor he to them: each of them seems as in the dark about the worries of his inner mind, and the details and specifics of his plans, as are we the audience.

No doubt, some of Harry's reticence is motivated by the volatile knowledge that is at the center of

his plans and hopes: the war with France is an unjust one that really has very little to do with the French at all (beyond their vulnerability), and far more to do with his need to promote unity and to establish a foundation for the legitimacy of his dynasty. His one policy then, while perhaps deeply patriotic, is also deeply wrong, deeply sinful. The point is made in rather terrifying terms when Harry walks in disguise among his troops on the eve of Agincourt, trying to boost their morale.

A soldier, William, questions the justness of the war:

But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs, and arms, and heads, chopp'd off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all, "we died at such a place" - some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left.... Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the King that led them to it...." (IV.i.134-45)

Harry of course disagrees, but he does not for a moment challenge the premise of the unjustness of the war. He rather tries, rather feebly, to deny responsibility for the deaths of his soldiers even if the cause be wrong. He suggests that this is like charging a father with wickedness if a son he sends on a merchant voyage "sinfully miscarries" at sea. Beyond the painful ambiguity of the sinful miscarriage provision, the cases are obviously not at all parallel in the relevant sense because in the father/son case the sin and loss is imputed to the son, whereas in Harry's king/soldier case it is the King who initiated an unjust, sinful war and caused the soldiers death.

Where we get a real glimpse into the King is in his one long, briefly interrupted soliloquy in Henry V, on the eve of Agincourt. Hopelessly cut off and outnumbered, his army exhausted and sick with plague, he finally takes a moment to escape from his continual performance of the role of King. He tells Erpingham, "I and my bosom must debate awhile/And then I would have no other

company." (IV.i.31-2) He needs a moment to be himself. Even in his distress, however, Harry cannot forget his obligations, and he first spends a few minutes talking (in disguise) to his men, assessing the degree of their desperation, and then tries valiantly, albeit with mixed success, to raise their spirits. Finally, he separates himself. This is the only time in the play we see Harry alone.

So what then does Harry tell us in this moment of intimacy? He speaks with intense and lengthy passion about the draining weight of the *ceremonial* role virtuously performed, its soulless emptiness, and he reveals that he is suffering from his father's illness at the end - he cannot sleep:

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children, and our sins lay upon the King!
We must bear all. O 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 heart's ease
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!
And what have kings, that privates have not too,
Save ceremony, save general ceremony?
And what art thou, thou idle Ceremony?...
[he condemns the emptiness of ceremony for some twenty lines]
No, thou proud dream, that play'st so subtilly with a king's repose.
I am a king that find thee; and I know...
[he dismisses the symbols of his ceremonial office for six lines]
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
Not all these, laid in bed majestic,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave;
[he praises the restorative power of sleep for sixteen lines] (IV.i.268-84)

The glimpse into Harry's soul confirms what the remainder of the play already suggests - that Harry is under enormous physical and emotional strain precipitated by the relentless demands of his project of self-legitimation. He is exhausted, but he cannot sleep. He feels his life being

reduced to an ultimately empty ceremonial role. He yearns for the "heart's ease" he knew briefly with the common life of the Eastcheap gang before he became king and was compelled to destroy it. At bottom, he knows that he himself is responsible for (and in other cases) complicit in, the crimes that have demolished the quality of his life, as he goes on to indicate.

After a brief interruption by Erpingham, he resumes his soliloquy, now in the form of a prayer.

O God of battles, steel my soldier's hearts,
Possess them not with fear!
Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not today, O lord think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears,
Than from it issued forced drops of blood.
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do;
Though all I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon. (IV.ii.289-305)

As he prays for help in his moment of desperation his mind is drawn inevitably back to the unsettled crime which underlies his whole regime and project, and which has given rise to his whole long history of deception and personal betrayals - Richard II's usurpation and murder. This is the first time in all the three plays in which Harry is a (perhaps the) central character, this is the first time he speaks of the crime. At first, he appeals rather feebly to the care he has shown Richard's remains, but mourners and chantries can hardly do justice to the crime, and he knows it. He is trying to buy forgiveness without real repentance, which would entail at very least public

recognition of the crime, if not renunciation of his ill-gotten position. Otherwise, he is just "imploping pardon," not repenting. His prayers are therefore "nothing worth."

Of course, were he simply to acknowledge his father's crime in compassing the crown he might very well set-off the same cycle of rebellions that plagued his father's reign and made England bleed during his son's. In-so-far as he adopts the duties of regency, Harry could plausibly argue that he has a patriotic duty not to acknowledge the crime and endanger the kingdom. This duty goes with the ceremonial role of King. That is certainly Machiavelli's line on the subject.

The Machiavellian rationale of patriotic ends does not, however, relieve Harry's spirit. It may wash the crime and all that follows it out of the ceremonial body, but it cannot lift it from the man; it cannot give him "heart's ease." The explanation may justify, but it cannot ensure forgiveness. So, like Macbeth, he cannot sleep.

He is far too accomplished an actor not to recognize the hollowness of his own pretence that pardon could be won by chauntries or appeals to the exigencies of state. Harry's long, yearning ode to the common life makes clear enough what he would like to do. But what he would like to do means in a real sense betraying his country. He must be either true to his regency and country or to himself. He admits this to himself and then he proceeds to prosecute his war to the end, leading his tiny, bedraggled army against the vast French army. Harry wins a miraculous victory, but framed by his soliloquy and the Epilogue's report of the ultimate failure of his project of establishing the Lancastrian line, it quickly becomes clear that the victory does not free Harry, but

drives the last nail into his coffin.

The final act of the play illustrates the complete consumption of Harry's personal identity by his regal role. The central action of the Act is Harry's courting of the French Princess Katherine. Of course, Katherine has already been won by right of conquest, as Harry reminds everyone in attendance:

Yet leave our cousin Katherine here with us;
She is our capital demand, compris'd
Within the fore-rank of our articles. (95-7)

As soon as they are alone (except for Katherine's maid Alice), Harry peremptorily declares his love, and asks for hers in return. Language quickly emerges as a barrier, however, for the Princess speaks no English, and her maid precious little. Harry is almost immediately driven to impatience:

"Give me your answer, i' faith, do, and so clap hands at a bargain. How say you lady?"

(V.ii.129-30) The lady, however, is confused and afraid. Harry tries to calm the situation by explaining that he has no skill at romance: "I speak to thee plain soldier." (149) This vocation, however, is not without its merits. He reminds her pointedly, for example, that he is the conqueror of France, so that in marrying him she would become its queen (and England's into the bargain) - and at any rate, that she has little choice. She is the conqueror's capital demand. Through her he will combine their realms formally into one and bequeath them to his heirs. Their marriage - their love - is a political necessity. He tries again:

King Henry: But, Kate, dost thou understand thus much English? Canst thou love me?
Kate: I cannot tell.
King Henry: Can any of they neighbours tell, Kate? I'll ask them. Come, I know thou lovest me.... (192-7)

In the following outburst Harry explains that he has already won her by force, and that she best prepare to be a "good soldier-breeder." (206) Finally, the lady relents, and accepts that if it will "please" her father, it will "also content me." (247, 250) There is no love offered here and none given.

What is shown in the play's peroration is exactly the hollow ceremony against which Harry rages during his soliloquy. His long loneliness of command is rewarded by a wife who cannot love, nor even understand him. His love is reduced to an empty show, to his final sacrifice for the unification of his Kingdom and the establishment of his line. The one thing which, if genuine, might actually render his tormented isolation bearable is denied to him, and transformed into that which he most hates, "idle ceremony," and a rather brusque and unconvincing one at that.

The play then ends with a final pregnant juxtaposition. Harry prays that their marriage and realms "prosp'rous be," (374) and is immediately followed by the Epilogue who reminds us that they will most emphatically not be. Harry lived but "small time," and their infant son, crowned Henry VI, "Lost France, and made his England bleed." (12) Shakespeare does not explicitly connect the dots for us, but he lays them out neatly enough, and even more clearly for his historical audience, who knew well that Henry collapsed and died on campaign, "prematurely aged,"²⁷ mere months after his victory at Agincourt, still trying to pacify France. In short, Harry, like his Machiavellian father, drove himself to exhaustion and death in pursuit of legitimacy, consumed by the demands of the crown he wore.

So, through Harry's life and performance, Shakespeare provides a particularly compelling critique of Machiavelli's political thought. He is not satisfied, in the fashion of other critics of the day, in condemning Machiavelli's immorality. Instead he offers not so much an argument, but a historical illustration that the sustained political virtu Machiavelli demands - here the continuous performance that replaces a genuine life, the subordination of friendship and love to the burdens of state, the inability to recognize and redress the crimes of the past, the insatiable demands of a statecraft of war bent of self-legitimation - are in the end too much even for the ideal Machiavellian prince to sustain. No man can live without a life of his own. Machiavellian virtu consumes life, and reduces it to idle ceremony. Shakespeare illustrates, in short, that Machiavelli's *Prince* is a psychological impossibility.

The critique of Machiavelli that Shakespeare then offers is not only advanced for his day, but remains a serious challenge today. Indeed, in critical respects Shakespeare's critique has only gained strength over the ages. The modern science of psychology, for example, today stresses the damage to ego integrity produced by continual performance of adopted social roles. The individual needs at least some refuge simply to be itself in common with others. It requires recognition from, and exchange with, others. This basic human need stands as an important contemporary justification liberal-constitutional politics which carve out a protected space for the private individual and his/her relationships through the provision of guaranteed civil rights. If, however, Shakespeare was setting the foundations of this argument over four hundred years ago in the course of showing that Machiavelli, that famed political realist, was not realist enough, it becomes difficult indeed to deny him a rightful place in the history of political thought. On the

other hand, it becomes very easy to make the case that the political ideas developed in his plays warrant more rigorous and sustained attention.

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¹ See, for example, Allan Bloom (ed.), *Shakespeare's Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), John Alvis (ed.), *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker* (Washington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2000), Leon Harold Craig, *of Philosophers and Kings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Tim Spiekerman, *Shakespeare's Political Realism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Joseph Alulis and Vickie Sullivan, *Shakespeare's Political Pageant* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996); John Alvis and Thomas West, eds., *Shakespeare as Political Thinker* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1981).

² There is no direct evidence that Shakespeare read a word of Machiavelli, but it is certainly clear from direct references that Shakespeare knew of Machiavelli. Scholars have, however, been arguing for centuries on the basis of indirect evidence whether (1) Shakespeare had a direct familiarity with Machiavelli's work, or an acquaintance through on Machiavelli's critics, or only a general impression based on Machiavelli's popular reputation in Elizabethan England; and (2) whether Shakespeare's world was deeply influenced by Machiavellian ideas. For a good summary of the former debate, see Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli and Montaigne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 41 - 6, especially note 44. For a summary of the second debate, see Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Histories* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 40 - 6.

³ Herschel Baker, (1974b:801)

⁴ Northrup Frye, "The Bolingbroke Plays" in Robert Sandler (ed.) *Northrup Frye on Shakespeare* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whitehead, 1986),

⁵ Northrup Frye, "The Bolingbroke Plays" in Robert Sandler (ed.) *Northrup Frye on Shakespeare* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whitehead, 1986), p. 54.

⁶ Nicollo Machiavelli, *The Prince* in Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa trans. And ed., *The Portable Machiavelli* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1979), p. 157.

⁷ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 124.

⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 150.

⁹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 150.

¹⁰ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p.150 - 1.

¹¹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 151.

¹² In the following discussion I use the standard Folio version of the play. Annabel Patterson has cast doubt on a cynical reading of Harry's actions by pointing out that some of the elements I will refer to are left out of the earlier published Quarto text. (1989). The opening scene of the two Bishops, for example, is gone. Nonetheless, many of the points I raise still apply to the Quarto text. Moreover, even if we accept that Quarto text represents a complete early version of the play, this only draws attention to Shakespeare's intention in adding scenes which explicitly draw attention to Harry's duplicity.

¹³ Indeed, Canterburys long rebuttal of the Salic Law (barring inheritance through daughters) with which the Dauphin tries to bar Harry's claim to France is thick with irony, for Harry's own claim to the English throne would have to rely precisely on such a Salic Law (barring inheritance through Edward III's daughters).

¹⁴ See G. Blakemore Evans. The Riverside Shakespeare. New York: The Houghton Mifflin

Company, 1974, p. 594-5.

¹⁵ m (94/160-2).

¹⁶ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* in Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa trans. And ed., *The Portable Machiavelli* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1979) p. 315.

¹⁷ When he next appears (II.ii), Harry is involved in the practical joke on Falstaff at Gadshill, wherein he actually robs his own friends while in disguise. In his next scene (II.iv), he plays a stupid practical joke, deceiving the tapster Francis (whose only sin is to idolize Harry), and then he and Poins proceed to deceive Falstaff into forswearing himself over the events at Gadshill, and at the end of this scene, Harry rehearses different strategies for deceiving his father the king (and steals a private paper out of Falstaff's pocket), who he then goes about deceiving in his next scene (III.ii). In the scene following his deception of his father, he deceives Falstaff into forswearing himself over the missing private paper (III.iii). This pattern continues throughout the Henry IV plays, and into Henry V, which may be characterized in its entirety as an exercise in deception, as it is clear, as we've seen, (even to his own troops) that the war with France itself is not just. Harry even teaches his own soldiers the art of deception, for example, when he shows his soldiers how to produce the appearance of ferocity in his pep talk at Harfleur (III.i.6-17). On the night before Agincourt, he prays to God specifically to deceive his soldiers regarding the number of the enemy. (IV.i.289-92). In the disguise of a common soldier, Harry even argues that the King (himself) should be deceived by his soldiers about morale in order to keep up his spirits. (IV.i.109-112).

¹⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 107 - 8, 136 - 8, 158 and *Discourses on Livy*, p. 376.

¹⁹ Northrop Frye, p. 78.

²⁰ Machicvelli, *The Prince*, p. 131.

²¹ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 219, 221, 353 and 356. (in Prince?)

²² Anthony Parel provides a very helpful list of points of contrast between the Machiavelli of *The Prince* and the Machiavelli of Marlowe. ("Machiavelli's Method and His Interpreters," in *The Political Calculus: Essay on Machiavelli's Philosophy* (Toronto: the University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 22.

²³ by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on June 18, 1940, at the House of Commons

²⁴ See E.H. Kantorowicz, *The Two Bodies of the King*

²⁵ Northrop Frye, p. 80.

²⁶ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. 323.

²⁷ <http://www.britannia.com/history/monarchs/mon35.html>