"The Courses of His Youth Promised It Not:" *Henry V* and The Play of Memory

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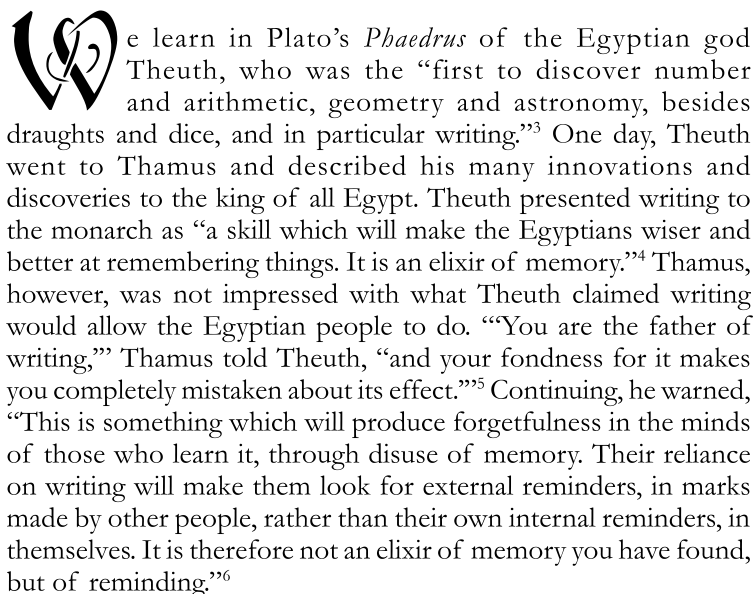
> For the distinction between the historian and the poet is not whether they give their accounts in verse or prose . . . the [real] difference is this: that the one [i.e. the historian] tells what happened, the other [i.e. the poet] [tells] the sort of things that *can* happen.[1]

> Memory is the raw material of history.[2]



We learn in Plato's *Phaedrus* of the Egyptian god Theuth, who was the "first to discover number and arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, besides draughts and dice, and in particular writing."[3] One day, Theuth went to Thamus and described his many innovations and discoveries to the king of all Egypt. Theuth presented writing to the monarch as "a skill which will make the Egyptians wiser and better at remembering things. It is an elixir of memory."[4] Thamus, however, was not impressed with what Theuth claimed writing would allow the Egyptian people to do. "'You are the father of writing,'" Thamus told Theuth, "and your fondness for it makes you completely mistaken about its effect.'"[5] Continuing, he warned, "This is something which will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn it, through disuse of memory. Their reliance on writing will make them look for external reminders, in marks made by other people, rather than their own internal reminders, in themselves. It is therefore not an elixir of memory you have found, but of reminding."[6]

Despite what might be termed the provinciality of his argument against writing as an elixir of memory, Thamus could not have foreseen how vast and complicated the world, nor how complex and intricate the lived experiences of the myriad people in that

world, would become as time marched ever onward beyond his own era. Remembering everything that happened to oneself and others in such a world would be for most, if not all, a complete impossibility. Too much would be forgotten and lost with memory as the only tool available for remembrance. Had Thamus, as Theuth asked him to do, actually considered the potentiality that writing, rather than making people forgetful and entirely dependent on their fellows, could be a powerful helpmeet to individual and collective memory, he might not have reacted as negatively as he did to its invention by Theuth. Such is Egyptian mytho-history as presented to posterity through the "voice" of Socrates by one of the greatest of the Greek philosophers. It can, however, be said that without writing, the concept—indeed, the very possibility—of memory as we understand it today would be something very different from what it is.

Though composed some two thousand years ago, the concerns with human remembrance that *Phaedrus* raises have not faded; if anything, in fact, they have intensified, and perhaps no more so than in the present moment. The function of memory in relation to works of literature, for instance, has been of particular interest to academic critics for much of the latter half of the twentieth century, and curiosity about this intriguing field continues rampant into the twenty-first. Where studies of Shakespeare are concerned, two recent scholarly books call attention to some of the current specificities of this area of inquiry. These are Peter Holland's edited collection of essays entitled, *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, published in 2006, and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr.'s *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster*, which appeared in 2005.[7] In the spirit of these and other similar critical works, I direct attention in this essay to the role memory plays in Shakespeare's much-celebrated historical drama, *Henry V*, one of the works that seemingly confirms Jonas Barish's notion that Shakespeare is "nothing if not deeply preoccupied with memory and its pitfalls."[8] My overarching proposition is that memory serves as one of the most significant tropes in *Henry V*, in turn affecting our understanding of nearly every aspect of the play that concludes the second tetralogy.

Immediately following its justly famous Prologue in which the Chorus sets the scene in a feat of metatheatrical brilliance, Shakespeare's *Henry V* proper begins with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely formulating a strategy so that they can save the Church's extensive—and valuable—holdings in England from being seized by the Crown at the urging of some

members of the House of Commons. Before long, Canterbury's and Ely's ruminations turn to the king himself, Henry V, whom they consider to be "full of grace and fair regard," and a "true lover of the holy church" (1.1.23-24).[9] For Canterbury and Ely, the king has blossomed into the kind of man they esteem quite highly and, furthermore, think can be of use to them in their cause. Neither expected this to happen given that the "courses of his [Henry's] youth promised it not" (1.1.25). Indeed, the things Henry indulged in during his younger years suggested a far different outcome for the sometime prince and now recently crowned king. So notorious was Henry for his behavior growing up that Canterbury likens him to Adam, who so offended God that he and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden as punishment for their disobedience to His laws. A perusal of *1 Henry IV* reveals that what Canterbury and Ely are remembering about the king is his earlier penchant for iniquities, including drinking, gaming, thievery, deceit, carousing, the keeping of ill company with the likes of the dissipated Falstaff, the patronage of low-class taverns in Eastcheap, and an utterly reprehensible disregard for his status in the court of his father, King Henry IV, as both prince and heir to the throne. Hal, according to Canterbury, would not free himself from his ignominious lifestyle of choice, nor did anyone of note expect him to ever do so, least of all his father, although they more than likely longed for his eventual transformation to respectability.

Now, however, Henry V reasons "in divinity" so well that he should be "made a prelate," discusses "commonwealth affairs" as if he has been a dedicated student of them his entire life, and renders "fearful battle" into nothing less than beautiful music when discoursing about war (1.1.39-45). In fact, according to John Julius Norwich, unruly Henry's "early life may have been—stories about it were already in circulation during his lifetime—but those who knew him only after his accession found those stories hard to believe."[10] At his coronation in April of 1413, "he appeared solemn and unsmiling, and was observed to eat virtually nothing at the banquet which followed the ceremony. For ever afterwards he was known for his piety, which was exceptional even by the standards of the time and which more than once laid him open to charges of sanctimoniousness."[11] Even so, in Shakespeare's history play *Henry V*, given the king's dramatic metamorphosis from reprobate sinner to pious and upright leader of the realm, which finds precedent in history and memory, it proves most interesting to consider why Canterbury and Ely, who knew him before and know

him after his ascension to the throne, recall Henry's dissolute youth in the first place. The obvious reason for this is so that they can celebrate and rejoice in the kind of person Henry has become as the king versus the kind of person he was in the years immediately prior to his ascension. In what seems like true and dramatic Christian fashion, Henry has succeeded in reforming himself from very nearly the worst sort of human being into someone with grace and fair regard, who also exhibits an exemplary love for his church. He has, in other words, lifted himself up and out of the gutter and placed himself on a pedestal for all, high and low, to marvel at and learn from. As prominent religious figures, small wonder attaches itself to Canterbury and Ely's exaltation of Henry's conversion.

However, reconsidering the uncertain predicament the archbishop and the bishop find themselves in as regards the status of the wealth of the Church in England, the intriguing possibility that Canterbury and Ely remember Henry's youthful exploits in order to use those memories as bargaining chips in their dealings with the king on the matter of the Church's fortune begins to emerge. Canterbury has already approached Henry about "his true titles to some certain dukedoms, / And generally to the crown and seat of France" (1.1.88-89) in what can be considered nothing less than an attempt to turn the king's attention away from domestic and toward international affairs. Further concealing the true desire to protect the riches of the Church from seizure, Canterbury has promised Henry that he and Ely will see to it that the coffers of the king's exchequer are filled with funds substantial enough to finance any kind of military campaign the king wishes to pursue in France. Presumably such a sum would make but a paltry dent in the Church's wealth, whereas confiscation by the Crown, at the behest of the Commons, of the entirety of the Church's holdings in England would be beyond disastrous for Canterbury, Ely, and the Church. That Canterbury and Ely would put the lives of thousands of English and French soldiers and civilians at risk in their quest to protect the Church and its holdings in England leaves little doubt that they would not scruple to use their memories of King Henry's riotous past to, in effect, blackmail him and force him to agree to engage in the massive, complicated, and distracting undertaking an invasion of France would be. Also, Canterbury and Ely well know that Henry's leading his troops in France means he would be unable to provide the full power of his backing to the Commons' suit for the appropriation of the Church's assets in England. Thus the measure will die as it did before and without being enacted into law.

It is learned as the play continues that Canterbury and Ely are not the only characters who remember Henry V's sordid past and are just as willing to use those memories against the king in the defense of their own interests. After he has been called into the presence of the king, the Dauphin's ambassador enters with an attendant bearing a chest containing a gift for his highness, and proceeds to address Henry with the following words:

> Your highness lately sending into France
> Did claim some certain dukedoms . . .
> . . . .
> In answer of which claim, the Prince our master
> Says that you savour too much of your youth,
> And bids you be advised, there's naught in France
> That can be with a nimble galliard won:
> He therefore sends you, meeter for your spirit,
> This tun of treasure, and in lieu of this
> Desires you let the dukedoms that you claim
> Hear no more of you. This the Dauphin speaks. (1.2.246-57)

Before responding to the ambassador's greeting from the Dauphin, Henry asks what the nature is of the treasure he has received from France. "Tennis balls," his Uncle Exeter tells him after opening the barrel and glancing at its contents (1.2.259). Here, the Dauphin, via his messenger, uses remembrances of what have to be reported accounts to describe Henry as no more than a child still caught up in the wild and errant throes of his minority. He also points out that there is no possible way Henry could ever take into his possession anything in France by dancing the nimble galliards he is reputed to be so skilled at performing in the disreputable taverns of London. Therefore, since they are far more suited to his childish disposition and personality, Henry should merely play games with the tennis balls the Dauphin has generously condescended to send him, and leave France to the French.

The Dauphin, in effect, is telling Henry through his emissary that a dissolute young man like him can neither claim—nor hardly deserves—any dukedom in France, much less the rule over the entire country. And, as evidenced by his response to the ambassador, Henry is very aware of the utter disdain and contempt with which France holds him:

> And we understand him well,
> How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,
> Not measuring what use we made of them.
> We never valued this poor seat of England,

> And therefore, living hence, did give ourself
> To barbarous license. (1.2.265-71)

With his explicit reference to his wilder days, it becomes clear that Henry also realizes that the French have no compunction about using the memory of his past to castigate him in their attempt to prevent him from taking action against their country, its nobility, and its ordinary citizens. This proves to be an ill-conceived strategy on the part of the Dauphin. While the French are by no means misremembering Henry's adolescent exploits, they are deliberately forgetting to what ends those indiscreet capers are being put by Henry in the present and now that he is the king of England. And, Henry promises, a significant price will be paid for this mistake:

> Tell the pleasant Prince this mock of his
> Hath turned his balls to gunstones, and his soul
> Shall stand sore chargèd for the wasteful vengeance
> That shall fly from them—for many a thousand widows
> Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands,
> Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down;
> Ay, some are yet ungotten and unborn
> That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn. (1.2.281-88)

Henry prophesies here that countless French widows and mothers who have lost their beloved husbands and sons, along with babes not yet thought of who have lost their fathers in battle with the English forces, will have more than sufficient reason to remember the Dauphin's mockery of Henry and his ambitions as regards France. The memories of the loved ones of these women and children will always be tainted by the fact that their loss did not have to be but for the French prince's fatal underestimation of King Henry.

Despite the ferocity of King Henry's response to the none-too-subtle admonishment and the gift of the tennis balls he received from the French, the Dauphin continues to misremember Henry as *Henry V* continues. With the English army bearing down on them, and their defenses not as adequately prepared as they could be, the French king Charles VI orders that appropriate measures be taken immediately to secure the country as far as possible. The Dauphin agrees that he and his fellow nobles ought to be visible out in the state itself at this time of crisis, but not in a show of fear. Rather, they should betray on their individual and collective countenances nothing but strength and resolve. They should present themselves as if they have heard

> that England
> Were busied with a Whitsun morris dance.
> For . . . she is so idly kinged,
> Her sceptre so fantastically borne
> By a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth,
> That fear attends her not. (2.4.24-29)

England, in slightly different terms, is by no means a threat to France because her king is but a foolish child unworthy of serious concern. The English are not to be dreaded because their king is partial to vanity, giddiness, shallowness, and humorousness; he is not a fit figure for French apprehension. But, once again, the Dauphin is remembering the Henry who once was and is not thinking of the Henry who is now within the time scheme of the play. From this perspective, the prince is not only underestimating Henry, he is misremembering the English king on the eve of a potentially devastating series of battles. For his lack of judgment on this matter, the Dauphin is chastised by the Constable of France who warns him that he is "too much mistaken in this king" (2.4.30). Delabret adds that the prince will find Henry's

> vanities forespent
> Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
> Covering discretion with a coat of folly,
> As gardeners do with ordure hide those roots
> That shall first spring and be most delicate. (2.4.36-40)

The constable thinks that Henry's wildness of youth, like that of Rome's great Brutus, was merely a pretense, a cover for his true, kingly self that he is only now beginning to reveal to France and the world. Henry can harvest his determination and might now precisely because he cultivated them with excess of vanity and folly earlier in his life. To understand otherwise is to completely mistake Henry. Before long King Charles VI, whom Robert C. Jones describes as "the only French leader with enough sense to fear him,"[12] speaks out in contradiction of his son's perception, and in support of the constable's view of the English monarch: "Think we King Harry strong" (2.4.48). Hence, between Delabret and Charles, we find two prominent Frenchmen who are remembering Henry correctly, as a man who has turned his past devotion to sinful pursuits into a formidable inner and outer power that they must reckon with or risk almost certain peril.

Focusing on the courses of Henry V's youth as in the above paragraphs allows us to see how persistent memories of the king's less-than-admirable behavior during his adolescence and early

adulthood affect him personally in the present. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely seem willing to use Henry's past against him should he refuse to pursue his claim to France, while the French Dauphin evinces nothing but disrespect and scorn for Henry because of the king's sometime entertainments and associates. Henry, however, remembers his former self not as a negative, but as a deliberate prelude to his current, far more glorious and virtuous self. But regardless of to whom they belong, it is important to realize that personal memories of Henry's younger incarnation also both chafe against and significantly influence events in the realm of national and international affairs within the scope of *Henry V*.

In the play, memory and national affairs come to the fore first when Henry holds off the French ambassadors so that he can hear in full what Canterbury has to say as regards the king's possible future dealings in and with France. Canterbury's response to his sovereign's inquiry begins with the assertion that "no bar" exists that would prevent Henry from making a claim to the throne of France except for the injunction, "No woman shall succeed in Salic land" (1.2.35-36, 39). Michio Tokumi writes that this Salic law "prescribes that descendants from a king's daughter cannot have a right to the succession. That is, according to the law, women should be entirely excluded from the royal succession. French nobles [also] used this ancient law to refuse successive English kings' requests for the French crown."[13] The French, Canterbury reveals in *Henry V*, insist that this caveat was devised by their legendary King Pharamond, but, he argues, they "unjustly gloss" where the Salic land is located (1.2.40). For the French, the Salic area is in France itself, yet, as Canterbury points out, even the official French chroniclers publish the fact that the Salic region is in Germany, somewhere between the Saale and the Elbe rivers. However, despite the import of the Salic law—and regardless of the Salic's actual location in either France or Germany—King Pepin, Hugh Capet, and King Louis IX, among others, all claimed their right to the throne from the female side of their respective lineages. As such, in what Tokumi describes as an "arbitrary and strained interpretation of the law,"[14] many of the kings of France took and held the throne because of their matrilineal connections, which was expressly against the terms of the Salic statute. Despite the muddled nature of these circumstances, Anthony B. Dawson asserts that "one thing is clear: Henry is as much French as he is English (or Welsh)."[15] This being the case, the French can have no cause to contest Henry's far stronger claim to the throne of their

country because Henry's suit rests on his indisputable link with his great-great-grandmother, Isabella of France, and Queen to England's Edward II.

Jonathan Bardo states that Canterbury's "colloquy gives the impression of ecclesiastical memory channeled into national directions . . . This scene [also] establishes the partnership between official memory and forgetting."[16] On the latter assertion, Bardo explains that Henry will "conveniently forget the proposed law that would cause so much of the Church's wealth to be forfeit to the crown if, in addition to a healthy contribution to the war effort, the archbishop turns in a convincing exercise in historical memory that will discredit the Salic Law and thereby legitimate Henry's claim to France."[17] Thus Canterbury skillfully constructs his argument by using Henry's personal and familial memories, in tandem with his interpretation of French law and history, in the service of a semi-concealed, though no less specific, agenda: that of justifying an imperial enterprise that will likely demand England's invasion of a nation that has done nothing to provoke such an action on the part of its northern neighbor—to ensure that Henry will be distracted from throwing the full weight of his support behind the bill in the House of Commons that would, if approved, strip the Church of much, if not all, of its accumulated wealth in England.

With Canterbury's next words, history and memory merge into a form that is at once personal, familial, and imperial for Henry V:

> Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag;
> Look back into your mighty ancestors.
> Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,
> From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,
> And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince,
> Who on the French ground played a tragedy,
> Making defeat on the full power of France,
> Whiles his most mighty father on a hill
> Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp
> Forage in the blood of French nobility. (1.2.101-10)

The words "stand for your own" gesture in a number of important directions. Here, Canterbury is telling the king to take his rightful place among his illustrious and accomplished relations, such as the fierce and warlike Edward III and his warrior-son Edward the Black Prince. In addition to standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the memories of this pair of Edwards, Henry needs also to understand himself as being in their stead, given that he is of a generation or so beyond them in time. Henry's flag will be bloody when he unfurls it because Edward III and the Black Prince's flags

were bloody, symbolizing the blood running in their veins that binds all three men together, and the collective blood of the French dead at their several hands. After all, Henry's forefathers apparently enjoyed decimating both the noblemen and commoners of France in their campaigns on French soil and against the full power of the French forces defending their monarch, their lands, and their persons from the English onslaught. Furthermore, Canterbury's words in the passage above are meant to encourage Henry to make his own mark on England and France, a mark that will equal or surpass those made by Edward III and the Black Prince.

To help him manifest the necessary frame-of-mind and level of resolve to engage the French on his own terms and in his unique way, Canterbury instructs Henry to go to his great-grandfather's grave—something human beings (and their literary counterparts) do, not only to pay their respects to the dead, but to remember the dead, as well—in order to recall the past in a general sense, but also to evoke an entire history he has a personal and a familial connection to in the realm of collective, if not actual, memory. Henry will then be able to tap into and make use of the warlike spirits of Edward III, Edward the Black Prince and, perhaps, Henry IV. In effect, Canterbury implies that, so armed with explicit and specific knowledge of his predecessors' deeds and triumphs, King Henry will be able to create his own tragedy on French ground while the spirits of his father, great-uncle, and great-grandfather watch with approval from wherever death has taken them. As Jones writes, instead of the "invidious comparison between then and now, old and new, we find here an absolute identification of the present with the past, whose heroes are not lost but will live again through their 'ripe' young heir."[18] There is probably no way for a king like Henry, eager both to prove and to make a name for himself, to remain unaffected by Canterbury's masterful use of a rhetoric of memory. And the persuasion of the English monarch continues with the Bishop of Ely's brief speech to Henry:

> Awake remembrance of those valiant dead,
> And with your puissant arm renew their feats.
> You are their heir, you sit upon their throne,
> The blood and courage that renownèd them
> Runs in your veins—and my thrice-puissant liege
> Is in the very May-morn of his youth,
> Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises. (1.2.115-21)

Ely charges Henry with the task of remembering his near-immediate male ancestors and in a specific way: as warriors

unparalleled. Henry is not only their descendant; he is their legacy to England, France, and the rest of the world. With his combined strength and courage, which derive from and through the blood of Edward III and the Black Prince, Henry will be able to re-memorialize the incomparable military successes of his great-grandfather and great-uncle as he attempts his own similar accomplishments on the battlefield. Such triumphs and countless others are very nearly assured him, given Henry's patriarchal lineage and comparatively young age. He is, to put it baldly, the perfect king to lead a new venture of aggression against France in order to gain that country's crown.

Guilt and responsibility enter the mix of persuasion being worked on King Henry when his uncle Exeter tells him, "Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth / Do all expect that you should rouse yourself / As did the former lions of your blood" (1.2.122-24). Westmoreland adds to Exeter's words the following: "They know your grace hath cause; and means and might / So hath your highness" (1.2.125-26). As scholar Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., notes in *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama*, these various appeals to remember seek "to mobilize the subject to comport himself or herself in a particular way. Remembering is about praxis; it entails the arrangement of one's utterances and/or actions, even one's body as a whole, in relation to the imperatives expressed in the appeal[s]."[19] Remembering, he adds, is "action taken in response to a call to behave in a certain (more or less precisely defined) fashion."[20] In this case, Henry must take up arms in order to win France for himself and England or he will disappoint his fellow rulers as well as his royal ancestors, all of whom are in accord with the notion that Henry has not only the right, but the obligation to claim the French crown. Henry's only choice is act for himself and England, for the living and the dead, for what is remembered at the present time, and for what will be remembered in the future.

Of course, Henry and his council members are not the only parties mindful of history and memory—and their combined influence on present events—at the national and international levels. So is King Charles VI of France. After proclaiming Henry of England stronger than the Dauphin derisively makes him out to be, Charles recalls how

> The kindred of him hath been fleshed upon us,
> And he is bred out of that bloody strain
> That haunted us in our familiar paths.
> Witness our too-much-memorable shame

> When Crécy battle fatally was struck,
> And all our princes captived by the hand
> Of that black name, Edward, Black Prince of Wales,
> Whiles that his mountant sire, on mountain standing,
> Up in the air, crowned with the golden sun,
> Saw his heroical seed and smiled to see him
> Mangle the work of nature and deface
> The patterns that by God and by French fathers
> Had twenty years been made. This is a stem
> Of that victorious stock, and let us fear
> The native mightiness and fate of him. (2.4.50-64)

Here, as he does so brilliantly in this and many of his other plays, Shakespeare presents an example of the rhetorical technique known as *prosopopeia*, this time in the form of a substantial dramatic monologue in which, effectively, an Englishman (the playwright Shakespeare) puts words into the mouth of the character of the French monarch. Charles VI recognizes the real, or the more true, Henry V through his memories of Henry's relatives, King Edward III and Edward the Black Prince, both of whom wrought significant military havoc upon France in the, for him, not so distant past—so much havoc, in fact, that the French were brought to a "too-much-memorable shame" by this pair of English foes. By remembering them in this manner, Charles cannot forget the defeat and destruction they put his people to: the troops sent to their deaths on the battlefield; the many princes captured and held by the Black Prince while his father, Edward III, beamed with pride and joy down at his son from his mountain perch atop a horse. Henry, Charles realizes, given the force of this collection of remembrances, is a direct descendant of Edward III and the Black Prince. Henry is not merely, or only, the dissolute youth of the recent past; he is a formidable enemy to be reckoned with on the basis of his genealogy alone.

In due course, we learn that the rhetoric of memory that Canterbury, Ely, Essex, and Westmoreland have used to persuade the king to accept their respective points of view has been a successful stratagem when Henry, while waiting briefly for the appearance of the ambassadors from France, lets it be known that

> Now are we well resolved, and by God's help
> And yours, the noble sinews of our power,
> France being ours we'll bend it to our awe,
> Or break it all to pieces. (1.2.222-25)

Tokumi suggests that, though resolute, Henry's posture, along with his desire, indeed, his willingness, to be convinced as he is by those

in his inner circle, "hints that his authority as a king is very weak because his nobles and subjects all know his father usurped the throne of Richard II."[21] His decision to attack France is, therefore, an assertion of his power as the true king of England and a bid to control the memories of his father's deeds his advisors and people continue to harbor. If Henry fails to bend France to his awe, or to break it all to pieces, he vows that his bones will be put

> in an unworthy urn,
> Tombless, with no remembrance over them.
> Either our history shall with full mouth
> Speak freely of our acts, or else our grave,
> Like Turkish mute, shall have a tongueless mouth,
> Not worshipped with a waxen epitaph. (1.2.228-33)

Henry has been convinced by his closest spiritual, political, and military advisers to take decisive action against France in order to claim that country's crown as his own. He also calls on God's help in bringing France to submission under his rule or to destroy it and its people, whichever proves necessary in the circumstances. The invocation of the Christian deity serves as a reminder to one and all of Henry's stunning transformation from reprobate to righteous leader of England, as well as a reminder of the divine right of kings, or the notion that God has invested Henry, like many other English monarchs who reigned before him, with His faith and power as His half-divine, half-human representative on Earth. Perhaps even more astonishing is what Henry insists must happen should his quest to gain France prove less than successful: he wants his remains to be placed in an urn of no value and disposed of accordingly. There will be no construction of a monument to him in the form of a tomb. The only way Henry will be remembered is as a victor triumphant over France, or he will be forgotten by one and all. Such is his prophecy.

Henry has used prophetic memory before, and will do so again at two other significant points in *Henry V*. The first of these points occurs in act 3, when the English are besieging the small French town of Harfleur. To inspire his troops to further feats in battle, Henry delivers the following words:

> 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.
> Dishonour 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. (3.1.17-25)

Regardless of their actual birth or social status, Henry wants his soldiers to know that they are among the most noble and elevated of the English people because they are fighting in his name and for his cause. They stand taller than tall, as well, because the red-hot blood that flows in their veins comes from their fathers, all of whom proved themselves on the battlefields of France by fighting from dawn until dusk without cease and, indeed, stopped fighting only when no more French enemies were left to confront them. It is in this sense that Henry wants his men to recall their specifically male ancestors and, in so doing, to remember themselves as being endowed by blood with the exact same martial resolve and determination to prevail over their opponents. Henry takes this rhetoric of memory one step further when he exhorts his troops to think about how they want to be thought of—to be remembered—by both their mothers and fathers once the hostilities between England and France have ceased. At the very least, Henry makes clear, the men would not want to disgrace themselves in either of their parents' eyes by performing their duties less than valiantly as they try to subdue Harfleur and its citizens to the English will. Doing so would surely only blacken their parents', friends', and other loved ones' memories of them as sons, brothers, husbands, lovers, kinsmen, comrades, and soldiers, perhaps irrevocably. Prophetic memory, in other words, will not be at all kind to them in the scenario Henry describes should Harfleur not surrender or be taken.

The night before the climactic Battle of Agincourt, Henry wrestles with the idea of whose responsibility it is if any of his men die in the fighting they will do on his behalf. He rationalizes his own culpability on this point by noting that he did not seek the death of his soldiers when he took them into his service; therefore, each individual troop is accountable to himself and to God no matter the outcome of his fate. Nevertheless, Henry begins to pray that his men will be strong and fearless when they meet the French the next day on the battlefield. His prayer soon becomes both familial and personal when Henry recalls two specific and related events from the past and considers them in relation to the present moment:

Not today, O Lord,
O not today, think not upon the fault

> My father made in compassing the crown.
> I Richard's body have interrèd new,
> And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
> Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood.
> Five hundred poor have I in yearly pay
> Who twice a day their withered 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 that I can do is nothing worth,
> Since that my penitence comes after ill,
> Imploring pardon. (4.1.274-84)

After begging God to fill his soldiers with resolute courage, Henry implores the Lord to forget—to not remember—the errors his father, Henry IV, committed in usurping the crown from his, at the time, sovereign, Richard II, and later indirectly having Richard put to death at Pomfret Castle where the former king was being held under what amounted to house arrest. Nigel Saul, one of Richard II's recent biographers, speculates that it was Henry Bolingbroke's sense of "self-preservation rather than vaulting ambition that was the main spur to his" seeking to wrest the throne of England away from his cousin given Richard's "vengeful and untrustworthy" reputation.[22] Richard had, after all, banished Henry rather than effect peace between Henry and Hotspur, and Richard was still the true and lawful king of England.

Nevertheless, Richard's abdication came about at the end of September 1399, and only at the last of three meetings over a two-day period between Richard and Bolingbroke's delegation that, on this occasion, included Bolingbroke himself rather than a representative. Bolingbroke demanded that Richard resign the crown immediately and unconditionally. This time, a defeated Richard "finally gave in. Under pressure he read out the schedule which had been prepared for him and asked only for one favour: that he retain the lands he had acquired in order to endow an anniversary for his soul in Westminster Abbey; this request was conceded" by Bolingbroke.[23] Saul notes that, following his accession, Henry IV "had to decide what to do with the person of his predecessor. The issue was a difficult one. Richard was young, and there was every expectation that he would live for some time. He could easily become the focus for disaffected elements" in the kingdom.[24] After some debate, Richard was moved from the Tower in London "to the mighty Lancastrian fortress at Pontefract" where, Henry hoped, Richard "would be quietly forgotten: that with the

passage of time the memory of his rule would fade and affection for his person weaken."[25] This did not happen as Henry wished. In fact, several earls of the realm banded together in a plot against Henry so that they could secure Richard's release and place him back on the throne. The plan was discovered and quickly and brutally suppressed, but the traitorous actions of the earls "brought home to Henry the vulnerability of his regime so long as Richard lived."[26] This being the case, Henry's plight as regards Richard was discussed by the king's council in early February of 1400. Saul explains that the "minute made of the meeting was strangely portentous: if Richard was alive, it said, he should be kept in safe-keeping; but, if he were dead, he should be shown openly to the people, so that they would be aware of the fact. The implication of the minute . . . was clear: Richard was to be disposed of. Whether or not a direct order to this effect was sent to Pontefract there is no way of knowing. But certainly in mid-to-late February Richard met his end."[27] Even so, as Shakespeare demonstrates so powerfully in his history plays, the memory of Richard II lingered so palpably and so tenaciously after his death that Henry IV never felt totally secure on the throne.

What follows in Shakespeare's *Henry V* is an accounting of the new King Henry's efforts to atone for the sins of his father that seems to be in full accord with Catholic tradition. In this tradition, the dead spent an unspecified amount of time in a place called Purgatory suffering various torturous punishments so that their souls could be purified and eventually allowed to ascend into Heaven and reunion with God. According to Stephen Greenblatt, the retributions of Purgatory were the same as those inflicted on souls in Hell and, therefore, just as stratified for particular kinds of sinners. As such, we find in Purgatory "thieves hung over flames; the envious plunged first into vats of ice and then into boiling water; the angry stoned by raging demons; the proud stretched on rotating wheels, and so forth."[28] Greenblatt, later citing the account of a medieval monk who claimed to have visited there during a significant health crisis, allows Purgatory to be understood also as featuring a "nightmarish landscape of fire, snow, and stinking water" in which souls were subjected to even more horrific and extensive tortures than those just mentioned.[29] Presumably, what made Purgatory and its painful chastisements bearable for the dead (as well as for the living who remembered them while simultaneously thinking about their own fate in death and how they might be remembered and, thus, helped by others to shorten their time in Purgatory) was the possibility of their eventually rising

and entering the bliss of Paradise once their souls were sufficiently cleansed so as not to be abhorrent to God.[30] Henry V implies that Richard II's soul may well be enduring the torments of Purgatory and, therefore, stands in need of intervention in the form of active and specific forms of remembrance.

Catholic doctrine allowed for the idea that the living could help to shorten the amount of time the dead were required to spend in Purgatory by using prayer as a petition on behalf of their souls. Sullivan explains that to "remember the dead was to enact a series of social performances—from funeral processions and feasts to requiem masses to daily prayer to the production of monuments for the deceased—that served both as an ongoing engagement with the dead . . . and as intercessionary acts designed to help hasten their passage to heaven. To forget the dead," on the other hand, "was to extend their stay in purgatory."[31] In this regard, Henry has put five-hundred poor persons to work who, twice every day, pray to God for Richard II's soul, and he has had two chapels built in which the priests sing continuous Masses for the dead monarch. Given their obvious expense, only royalty and other noble or aristocratic individuals and families of fortune could afford to endow such ongoing memorial rites and projects. Henry has also had Richard II's body reinterred—presumably in a tomb far more fitting to what he was in life: a king of England—and has shed more heartfelt tears for Richard II than ever drops of blood fell from Richard's body in the throes of death. On these points, Saul informs us that Shakespeare's representation accords with historical memory. Following Richard II's death at Pontrefact, the coffin bearing his body was taken to London where not one, but two masses were celebrated in Richard's honor. After the observance of this pair of "ceremonies the body was taken to the Dominican friary at King's Langley, where it was laid to rest. The body arrived at the house in the dead of night, and the ceremony of interment took place on the following morning" and was attended by only a few, comparatively unimportant individuals.[32] Richard's bones remained at King's Langley for the rest of Henry IV's lifetime. On Henry V's "accession it was exhumed and reburied in its intended resting place at Westminster."[33] Saul goes on to note that the

> ceremony of reinterment was a grandiose if sombre one. A special hearse was commissioned and fixed up with lights for the service, and the banners used only a few months previously for Henry IV's funeral were borrowed for the occasion from Canterbury. Richard's body was stripped of its leaden lap and laid in a new elm coffin. A large

> congregation of bishops, abbots, lords and knights followed the procession to the abbey, and 100 marks were distributed as largesse along the route. The service of reinterment was attended by Henry himself.[34]

After Richard was laid to rest again in Westminster Abbey, Henry "ordered that four large tapers were to burn continually at the tomb; at the same time a dirge and a requiem mass were to be sung and 6s 8d to be given to the poor each week, along with £20 in pennies at each yearly anniversary."[35] Singly and in tandem then, in history, memory, and in drama, these measures signal the fact that Richard II has not been forgotten by the descendants of the one who usurped his throne and sent him to an ignoble end. The memory of Richard II lives on in the mind of Henry V as much as it ever lived in the mind of his father, Henry IV. It is this memory that Henry V asks God to overlook as the English engage the French in battle at Agincourt on Henry V's behalf.

Prophetic memory returns and forms the core of Henry's renowned St. Crispin's Day, or Band of Brothers, speech in act 4 that, once again to inspire his men in feats of arms, he delivers to them immediately prior to the beginning of the Battle of Agincourt. Indeed, Jones remarks that "when Henry does look ahead to his 'story' as it will be remembered in the future, he does so with the consciousness that it may be shaped both in the making and in the remembering (or telling)."[36] Furthermore, Henry "foresees the celebration of his memory in precisely the spirit that we are to experience it at this moment in the play."[37] As such, those that live to see this and future days through, Henry prophesies,

> Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours
> And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
> Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars
> And say, "These wounds I had in Crispin's day."
> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember, with advantages,
> What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words—
> Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—
> Be in their flowing cups remembered.
> This story shall the good man teach his son,
> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
> From this day to the ending of the world
> But we in it shall be rememberèd. (4.3.45-59)

As with Henry's Harfleur address, how the men who fight at Agincourt will be remembered in the future for their deeds is the paramount rhetorical motivator. It is, as Dawson writes, the acts of remembrance "that will confer that sense of continuing brotherhood" on these soldiers.[38] They will stand not only proud, but revered among their fellows, and they will revel in uncovering their arms and showing their battle scars to those assembled with them on every feast of St. Crispin's Day henceforward. Their names will become household knowledge alongside those of King Henry and his nobles. Furthermore, these soldiers will teach their sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons about their accomplishments at Agincourt, meaning that they will remember these undertakings through their memories of them that, in turn, will be passed from generation to generation without cease. No St. Crispin's day celebration will pass in the future without Henry and his Band of Brothers being remembered by one and all in perpetuity and until the world itself comes to its inevitable end.

Hyperbole aside, the English do go on to devastate utterly the French forces: according to the logic of *Henry V*, in excess of some ten thousand French men die in the battle, versus the loss of barely thirty of England's men. And while his men may well have been inspired by his speech to triumph decisively over the French, it seems as if God heard and granted Henry's request for God to forget the circumstances in which Richard II died. In any case, Henry remembers at this point that he is a Christian king as well as God's instrument and representative on Earth, and therefore attributes the English victory to Him above and to none other. Certainly the mirror of all Christian kings could do no less.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. and with a commentary by George Whalley, ed. John Baxter and Patrick Atherton (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 81.

2. Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xi.

3. Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Symposium and Phaedrus*, Everyman's Library 194, trans. Tom Griffith (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2000), 171.

4. Ibid., 172.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. See Peter Holland, ed., *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

8. Jonas Barish, "Remembering and Forgetting in Shakespeare," in *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, ed. R. B. Parker and S. P.

Zitner (Newark: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1996), 218.

9. All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, 2nd ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katherine Eisaman Maus (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

10. John Julius Norwich, *Shakespeare's Kings: The Great Plays and the History of England in the Middle Ages: 1337-1485* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999 and 2001), 174.

11. Ibid.

12. Robert C. Jones, *These Valiant Dead: Renewing the Past in Shakespeare's Histories* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 127.

13. Michio Tokumi, "The Salic Law in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Studies* 37 (1999): 48.

14. Ibid., 51.

15. Anthony B. Dawson, "The Arithmetic of Memory: Shakespeare's Theatre and the National Past," *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production* 52 (1999): 56.

16. Jonathan Bardo, "Wars of Memory in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, No. 2 (Summer 1996): 156.

17. Ibid., 156-57.

18. Jones, *These Valiant Dead*, 126.

19. Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting*, 9.

20. Ibid.

21. Tokumi, "Wars of Memory in *Henry V*," 52.

22. Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 418.

23. Ibid., 421.

24. Ibid., 424.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 425.

27. Ibid.

28. Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 52-53.

29. Ibid., 64-65.

30. Greenblatt points out that, in artistic and verbal renderings of souls enduring chastisement in Purgatory, the presence or mention of angels as rescuers capable of delivering purified souls up and into the warm and peaceful light of God "is perhaps the most brilliant solution to the representational problem posed by Purgatory, since it gets at a crucial way of differentiating the suffering endured for eternity by souls in Hell from that endured by souls whose term of punishment is limited" (59). One piece of art (of many) that exemplifies this point for Greenblatt is Hieronymus Bosch's dramatic painting, "Vision of the Otherworld." See *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Color Plate 4.

31. Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama*, 4.

32. Saul, *Richard II*, 428.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Jones, *These Valiant Dead*, 130.

37. Ibid., 132.

38.Dawson, "The Arithmetic of Memory," 56.