

‘[R]EMEMBER, WITH ADVANTAGES’: CREATING MEMORY IN SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRY V*

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In three sections, this essay will explore how one of Shakespeare’s best known history plays, *Henry V*, works to create rites of memory principally via language, which through both form and semantics constructs the memory it endeavours to transmit. My first section will briefly consider the play’s reputation as a whole and how it has been remembered and understood in literary studies, and argues that the play’s attempts to create memory have often been misconceived by critics to date. My second section considers Henry’s St. Crispin’s day speech at Agincourt and argues that he endeavours to create the enduring memory of himself and those around him on that day, before considering how successful he is in doing so. My third section discusses how the Chorus engages with memory, arguing that the Chorus seems to provide the audience with the means of creating their own memories of the play within set parameters, but that at the same time the Chorus’ own language constrains it from doing this. This reveals the way memories inhere as much in the style and structure of the play as in its characters or events.

1. ‘The warlike Harry’: The problem of how we remember Henry

In this section I want briefly to consider the record of the play’s reception, which is important because it affects how history has remembered the play and its protagonist. *Henry V* is one of the best regarded of the history plays, but as a character Henry has not fared well. Though we cannot concretely know how he was portrayed in the 1600s, his depiction when the play returned to the stage in the 1730s (having missed out on early revivals immediately after the Restoration) was decided by the nation’s frequent wars with France over that period, and presented Henry as a heroic warrior King. But this representation was much hurt by the advent of World War I, after which he, his army, and his war were open to a divided interpretation. On the one hand the play was viewed as ironic and expository of the folly of combat (for example Gould 1919, Van Doren 1939); and on the other it was appropriated for almost propagandistic purposes (as witnessed by critics such as

Stoll 1930, Williams 1936, and Walter 1954, and indeed by the film version by Olivier). Is Henry, as the Prologue claims, 'warlike' (Prologue 5), or is he a 'King ... of grace and fair regard' (1.1.22)?¹ More recently it has been suggested that both of these versions of Henry exist, but they can only be seen one at a time (for example, Rabkin 1981: 33-62).

By looking at the exploits of Henry's famous speech at Agincourt and the Chorus in two further sections below, I hope to do something to free the play from the memory of the criticism that too easily obscures it. Part of the reason for this colourful reception history is the critics' failure to perceive and analyse the attempts of the play to create its own memory. It is not a coincidence that, as Gary Taylor notes, the word 'memorable' is 'used by Shakespeare only four times, all in this play' (1998: 149). *Henry V*'s endeavour to create memory is palpable, but most critics seemed to have missed it; only Jonathan Baldo has written at some length on the way memory works in *Henry V* (1996: 132-159), but there is more to be done in this area.

Throughout the play Shakespeare allows characters to generate rites of memory for others with them on stage and for the unseen audience offstage, not only through what they say but in how they say it. This unseen audience were Shakespeare's contemporaries, who, despite living hundreds of years after the events portrayed by the play, were still susceptible to the power of the characters, the events, and the language that Shakespeare used which tries to work to transmit memory – as are we.

2. Agincourt: 'This story shall the good man teach his son' (4.3.56)

The St. Crispin's day speech in 4.3 is a prime example of memory in *Henry V*. In this section my analysis of it focuses not only on the actual words used but also on how Henry says them, because it is both Henry's wording and his rhetoric that shows his creation of memory through the language he uses. The St. Crispin's day speech is a good example of the creation of memory through language as it provides us with an extended and undisturbed address from the King to his listeners, onstage and off. Though the speech is famous, well-known, and oft-quoted, when considered with memory in mind it repays a careful and close reading with wider implications about how language can work to create memory. I have reproduced the speech in full below, indicating line numbers and the number of syllables per line, and pointing out the significant pauses in the speech with '[BREAK]', as these provide both particular spaces where memory can seep into the gaps, and appropriate points at which to discuss the speech in more detail.

This day is called the feast of Crispian . [BREAK]	40	10	epistrophe
He that outlives this day and comes safe home		10	anaphora
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named		10	anaphora

And rouse him at the name of Crispian . [BREAK]	10	symproce
He that shall see this day and live old age	10	anaphora
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,	45	11 anaphora
And say 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian .' [BREAK]	10	symproce
Then shall he strip his sleeves and show his scars,	10	
And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin 's day.' [BREAK]	10	symproce
Old men forget ; yet all shall be forgot	10	proce
But he'll remember , with advantages,	50	10
What feats he did that day. [BREAK] Then shall our names	10	
Familiar in his mouth as household words,	10	
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,	10	
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,	10	
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered . [BREAK]	55	11 epistrophe
This story shall the good man teach his son,	10	
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by	10	proce
From this day to the ending of the world	10	
But <i>we</i> in it shall be rememberèd ,	10	epistrophe
<i>We</i> few, <i>we</i> happy few, <i>we</i> band of brothers . [BREAK]	60	11 epanalepsis
For he today that sheds his blood with me	10	
Shall be my brother ; be he ne'er so vile,	10	anaphora
This day shall gentle his condition. [BREAK]	10	
And gentlemen in England now abed	10	anaphora
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,	65	10 anaphora
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks	10	anaphora
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin 's day. [BREAK]	10	

Immediately the reader or hearer gets the feel of the speech as a masterful piece of rhetoric. Though I have pointed out the main device of each line there are of course others at play, often within the same line. The immediately obvious repetition of 'forget' and 'remember' points out its task of instructing the soldiers with Henry how they are to conceive what they are experiencing. I want now to break the speech into its constituent parts and see how it effects this creation of memory. The speech begins thus:

This day is called the feast of **Crispian**. [BREAK] (4.3.40)

While the feast of the brothers Saints Crispin and Crispinian (not, as Shakespeare has it, Crispian, which suits his blank verse better) on the 25th October was celebrated in Catholic Henry's era, it was not celebrated in Protestant Elizabethan England. The brothers, who were possibly twins, are the patron saints of cobblers and tanners. Legend has it that they were born to a noble family in Rome, but went as missionaries to preach Christianity to the Gauls in Soissons, making shoes by night to fund their activities and help the poor. They were tortured and then beheaded by the governor in 285 or 286 A.D., during the reign of Diocletian. It has

been argued that by engaging so thoroughly with the feast of 'Crispian' in this speech, Henry attempts to 'displace or appropriate a religious holiday with a secular one in a bid to substantiate national identity' (Chapman 2001: 1467). Indeed, as Henry imagines his soldiers remembering this day there is no mention of religious celebration of any sort:

He that outlives this day and comes safe home
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
And rouse him at the name of **Crispian**. [BREAK] (4.3.41-3)

The break at the end of this triplet, and indeed at the end of every passage of this speech, has, to my mind, three potential effects. Firstly, these breaks could be a place where memory seeps away in order that there can be a change or move, possibly into something new. Secondly, and conversely, they could be a place that forges and achieves consistency, memory moving into the space provided to support or uphold what is already conceived. Thirdly, they could act as a 'nothingness', an ellipsis or lacuna encroaching on the speech and thus on Henry and his audience also.

Which of these three is happening in this speech? I think that here it is a space where anticipated memory is allowed to creep in, a pause wherein Henry's audience (both on stage and off) can envisage the promised time, can picture the scene, the coming safe home and the tip-toe stance. These gaps or breaks stand in, then, for the time that has elapsed between Agincourt and the present performance, an elapsed time that continues into the next quotation:

He that shall see this day and live old age
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'Tomorrow is Saint **Crispian**.' [BREAK] (4.3.44-6)

Using the same sequence of initial words (anaphora) - 'he', 'will' and 'and' - and the same final word in the clause (epistrophe) - 'Crispian' - as in the previous triplet, Shakespeare here enables Henry to stack up his tower of anticipated reminiscences. The preservation of the form enacts the continuation of memory expressed here. By using the same words, remembered from the preceding three lines, Henry further refines the memory he is trying to create: this time we see old age, a fantastic feast surrounded by friends, and a proud recollection of Saint Crispian. The feminine hendecasyllabic penultimate line hints at the overabundance of the feast and makes it sound more real; it fleshes out the feast in the imagination. Indeed, the working of the imagination is one of Henry's strongest tools in evoking memory, as the following lines show:

Then shall he strip his sleeves and show his scars,

And say, 'These wounds I had on **Crispin's** day.' [BREAK]
(4.3.47-8)

The repetition of the 'And' (lines 43, 46 and 48) links this passage to the two previous triplets, but in being a distich rather than a triplet this passage does reflect a slight change of pace for the speech. Its shortness may be to do with its subject matter: this sentence is one of only two in the entire speech which indicates the pain and bloodshed to follow (the other is line 61, 'he that sheds his blood with me'). However, by speaking of displaying scars got from battle wounds, Henry modifies the prophecy or prediction of 'legs and arms and heads chopped off in battle' voiced by Williams (4.1.135-6) and turns it into a transitory hardship which can be overcome and then transformed into a longer-lasting, enduring pride. Pistol shows that this triplet will not be fulfilled, at least by him, when he tells us he will go back to England and swear that his 'cudgelled scars' (5.1.89) from Fluellen were got in generic 'Gallia wars' (l. 90), not at Agincourt specifically. This is in contrast to Henry's boast that the soldier will 'show his scars, | And say, "these wounds I had on Crispin's day."' Thus Henry's prediction or promise is revealed as vulnerable to the lies of others. Pistol refuses Henry's contract of memory, and not because of the reason Henry automatically ascribes to forgetfulness - age:

Old men **forget**; yet all shall be **forgot**
But he'll **remember**, with advantages,
What feats he did that day. [BREAK] x x x x (4.3.49-51)

Here the speech has returned to the triplet form but employed a completely new repeated word, 'forget', which forms a plocé. At this point the speech confesses its preoccupation with memory by repeating words already in themselves associated with memory. However, despite emphasising the words 'forget' and 'remember', connected as they are with memories of the past, the speech also acts of course as a prophecy and a promise of memory to come in the future. And the line which forms part of the title of this essay - 'remember, with advantages' - reveals the stories or embellishments that make up memories, revealing them as partly fiction, not unadorned fact. The near-identical caesurae of the first two lines of this passage are both syntactic and deictic, making the passage into a caesura-to-caesura line with the feel of rocking lineation, as we hear the rhythmic counterpoints to the actual verse lines (Cuddon and Preston 1998: 105). It is this rocking lineation which prepares us for the litany which follows:

x x x x x 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 freshly **remembered**. [BREAK]
(4.3.51-55)

This passage, the longest so far, involves a sort of release of memory. It modifies the preceding triplet by sharing (finishing) the line. The focus moves from 'what feats he [the common soldier] did that day' to 'our [the nobility's] names' – and it is the nobility's names that have the important final position on the line. We glimpse Henry attempting to forge an actual 'band of brothers' through the creation of the illusion or the memory of one through language. Although we may have forgotten them now, this litany of great Dukedoms takes on the character of a memorial service where a list of names is repeated. This has a powerful effect, particularly for the contemporary audience who may have been familiar with the characters mentioned as the chief protagonists of the first tetralogy – after all, 'Warwick and Talbot are not otherwise mentioned in this play' (Gurr 2005: 175). In this way, Henry foresees a future time when these names will be important, which in fact already exists at the time of performance. The names are not just ironic; they are representative, symbolic, standing in for more than what they are. Later, York's death embrace with Suffolk (4.6.7-32) gives their names a pathos and significance which makes up for their not being mentioned in the Agincourt speech. Yet the mention of 'flowing cups' reminds us that, as demonstrated elsewhere in the second tetralogy by the likes of Falstaff, some things are more likely to lead to forgetting than remembering.

In 'he' (the common soldier) and 'our' (the king and his nobles) sharing a line, a correlation between the two is effected, which means Henry can be as much Harry Le Roy (the soldier) as Henry V (the King). Meanwhile, the epistrophe in the final line again works to remember the previous triplet, and we also witness in this line the second use in this speech of the feminine hendecasyllable to aid the process of remembering, and enact the 'flowing' of the cups. Henry continues to think about the actual men who will fight his battle in the next passage:

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**,
We few, *we* happy few, *we* band of **brothers**. [BREAK] (4.3.56-60)

The semi-fictional or created status of the battle revealed by 'remember, with advantages' is again admitted in 'this *story* shall the good man teach his son', and the inclusion of the word 'good' works simultaneously to congratulate those who engage with Henry in remembering, and condemn as 'bad' those who will not. In this way, story-telling in this context becomes a corporate activity and one which repeats the original act of war. Henry knows that memory evaporates if not

refreshed from time to time; it needs to be actively passed on down the generations if it is to survive in popular memory and not just in written chronicles. Indeed, the heroic battle told to the third generation becomes almost a fairytale or legend, a story so old one cannot be sure whether it is true. By writing *Henry V* to be performed on stage Shakespeare involves himself in the task of telling the 'story' to later generations.

In the next line Henry combines the two saints and rolls them into one, 'Crispin Crispian', effecting a plocé that tries to impress the names of the saints into the minds of his audience so that they will be remembered, allowing the remembering of 'this day to the ending of the world.' The epistrophe of 'remembered' with the 'remembered' four lines previously also works to this end. But while Agincourt itself 'burned in the national memory as having ascended the brightest heaven of invention of English martial pride and continental achievement' (Fitter 1991: 259), St. Crispian's Day was not remembered for the victory at Agincourt in the Elizabethan era (RSC 1997). So Henry's promise that 'Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by | From this day to the ending of the world | But we in it shall be remembered', is somewhat exaggerated. Yet we are talking about it now, we know when it was and why it was significant for those men, and as long as Shakespeare's play is read and discussed it will remain in memory. The idea that 'this day', its events and people, shall be remembered 'to the ending of the world' is a great and stirring thought, but it is still one largely achieved by this speech and the play of which it is a part.

In the repetition of 'we' in this passage Henry again tries to combine together the 'he' (the common soldier) and the 'our' (the nobility) of the previous passage, effecting the 'happy' 'band of brothers' that his previous passage began to hint at. In this final line of the passage we also find the third instance in the speech of a hendecasyllabic line, which here acts to swell the 'few', the happiness overflowing to the 'brothers'. But this happiness is bought at a price – bloodshed:

For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my **brother**; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition. [BREAK] (4.3.61-63)

Finally Henry shows how he will effect the comradeship he speaks of – by raising up soldiers to his level. The 'royal fellowship' (4.8.102) of blood, shed together, effects a brotherhood that ennobles the common soldier. Henry continues the work of the last passage, trying to unite all those who shed their blood, be they 'vile' or 'gentle'. There is a concentrating procedure at work here which is familiar to us from the compression of 'Crispin Crispian'. But the promise that fighting at Agincourt with Henry 'shall gentle' the condition of the common soldiers is not borne out by what follows: on receiving the roll of the dead after the battle has finished, Henry names 'Edward Duke of York; the Earl of Suffolk; | Sir Richard Keighly; Davy Gam, esquire; | None else of name ...' (4.8.104-6). Phyllis Rackin

points out that 'the play ultimately erases the memory of the plebeian men that fought and died on Henry's behalf' (1990: 227). And it is the 'gentlemen', not the commoners, that Henry continues to comment upon:

And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint **Crispin's** day. [BREAK]
(4.3.64-67)

The 'Shall' of the previous passage links with this final passage and the anaphora effected by the repetition of 'and' and 'shall' reminds us of the beginning of the speech, as does the final use of 'Crispin', the word on which the speech opened. We have begun to see how throughout this entire speech Henry has made his language work to effect the vision of the battle that he wants, both in the present (at the moment of giving the speech), in the near future (when it will occur), and in the distant future (in the way it will be remembered as a past event). Henry is attempting to create 'new templates for experiencing time' (Chapman, 2001: 1467) as well as, at the same time, invigorating himself and his soldiers by reinventing himself as one of them; or, rather, re-inventing them as one of him. He does this by a means of memorial projection – explaining to them who they will have been, when they look back on this day from the future. His own identity and those of his soldiers are tied closely to the way Agincourt is remembered.

Baldo says that Henry must do this, that the speech is necessitated by the need to keep the keys to collective memory, because it is critical to his power: 'control over how a nation remembers a momentous event like a war is almost as significant as the outcome of the war itself' (1996: 133). While it is true that '[m]ost of the battles in the play are over memory' (1996: 132) I prefer to see 'battles' not only in Baldo's sense, as a forceful grab for the power that inheres in memory as the means to realise and consolidate national history and identity, but also as an urgent fight to accommodate side-by-side the differing versions of events that exist within the memories of the characters and the audience, because however much they differ, as memories they are equally valid. In this fight it is not necessary to reconcile the heroic with the cynical, something my reading has attempted to show by demonstrating how the speech's active creation of memory can be read both positively and negatively at the same time; heroic possibilities exist next to the possibility of more ironic readings of the speech. My reading can accommodate a wide range of views which are not mutually exclusive, 'one at a time' like Rabkin, but simultaneously co-existent. An entirely cynical reading of the Agincourt oration such as Baldo's excludes the visceral dynamics of this speech. These dynamics have been picked up on by Olivier, Branagh and others who portray the heroic side of Henry, as well as by generations of spectators who have come away

from the play feeling invigorated. I hope I have shown how it is not only in what is said but in how it is said that the speech works to create memory, the rhetorical strength exerting its power on Henry's audience, onstage and off.

In *Henry V* the creation of memory is the play's work. This does make it somewhat more serious than its predecessors in the second tetralogy, not least because of the inclusion of elements such as the choruses and this speech at Agincourt, which initiate a headlong momentum which the play does not really seem to need. After all, it is not a tragedy leading to the multiple deaths of its principal characters, but a history which shows only one slice of a larger action and is even less 'wrapped up' at the end than the comedies. The play's sense of location on a time line (with the rest of the second tetralogy before it, and the first tetralogy after it) demonstrates the location of the play in time, but the memories the play creates in some way escape this time line by being simultaneously of the future (of Henry's onstage audience), of the past (of Henry's offstage audience) and of the present (remembered by us now).

It is Henry who wins the battle at Agincourt and therefore Henry who has the honour of naming it. On asking, '[w]hat is this castle that stands hard by?' (4.7.87), and on being told its name, he declares, then 'call we this the field of Agincourt' (l. 89). Henry has confirmed for himself and his troops the memorialising power of the association between 'Agincourt' and a great English victory. As with the 'Jerusalem' chamber in *2 Henry IV*, we see here that 'memory attaches itself to sites' (Nora 1989: 22); memory inheres in places as well as in names like 'Crispin', and a location can literally 'place' memory, the word 'Agincourt' itself evoking the location, both event and site heavy with memory.

At the close of the battle the army begins to commemorate the dead. From a Catholic perspective, commemoration of the dead redeems the remembered through the mechanism of the Requiem Mass, whose principle object was prayer for the repose of the souls of the departed. The dead were saved from 'the terrifying prospect of purgatorial torment' (Greenblatt 2002: 22) by prayer and specifically by the sacrifice of the Mass, often paid for out of their estate. Though this was of course no longer available to most Elizabethans, excised as it was from the Protestant mourning rites available to the bereaved, yet it is something that Henry explicitly remembers (as would, perhaps, those in his offstage audience) when he requests '[d]o we all holy rites. | Let there be sung *Non Nobis* and *Te Deum*, | The dead with charity enclosed in clay' (4.8.123-5). In saying so, Henry shows how important memory is, not only for the dead, but for also the living, in mourning those gone but also in getting on with life, in lending it a sense of purpose and continuity. Despite the deaths incurred the Chorus takes us 'to Calais, and to England then, | Where ne'er from France arrived more happy men' (ll. 126-7), which leads us to think about what role the Chorus has in the creation of memory in the play.

3. The Chorus: 'myself have played | The interim, by remembering you 'tis past' (5.0.43-4)

In this section I wish to consider how the Chorus creates memory in the play and whether those memories complement or contrast with those of Henry's making, which I have just discussed above. In the opening moments of the play we are presented with the Prologue. Further appearances of the Chorus, cropping up at the start of every act to frame it for the audience, are one of the things which mark *Henry V* out from amongst the other plays in the second tetralogy. On a simple level the *Henry V* choruses act to show the passage of time. The Chorus glosses over in a few lines the intervening period between the scene which precedes its appearance and the scene which succeeds it, standing in and for the natural pauses between the acts of the play. The instruction 'brook abridgement and your eyes advance | After your thoughts straight back again to France' (5.0.45-6) is one example of this, the Chorus acting both as 'bridge' and 'abridgement'. The Chorus operates on a simple level to remind us of what has happened between the acts.

But the Chorus also seems to operate in a more complicated way which allows us to create our own memories of the play. It has often been noted that

one of the most peculiar features of [the Chorus's] appearance is how frequently and consistently he whips up enthusiasm for his *misrepresentation* of what follows. ... In varying degrees the events of each act belie the claims made by the Chorus that introduces it. (Gurr 2005: 7)

Sometimes, the Chorus indeed says one thing and the drama another. For example, the Chorus tells us that

[t]he French, advised by good intelligence
Of this most dreadful preparation,
Shake in their fear, and with pale policy
Seek to divert the English purpose' (2.0.12-15)

when in fact, when we do finally see the French, quite the opposite is true, as 'with men of courage' they bravely prepare to face the English (2.4.1-14). And not only does the Chorus contradict the action of the play but in at least one place he even contradicts himself. At one point it is the English who are powerful (as above); at others, the English are 'low-rated', 'poor condemned', a 'war worn', 'ruined band' (4.0.19, 22, 26, 29). What is happening here is that the Chorus is changing his perspective to suit the sympathies of the characters in the following scene.

Or perhaps it is that the Chorus is manipulating our sympathies? The Chorus asks us to 'suppose', to 'divide', to 'think' all these things into being: the horses, the men, the castles (Prologue 19, 24, 26). And not only the theatre audience but even

generations of critics have done as the Chorus has asked – ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings’ (Prologue 28). The Chorus is an unreliable narrator, but he is also an interface between the text and the spectators, courteously soliciting audience participation. In acting as an interface the Chorus raises the question of the location of the edge of theatre: he bursts through its membrane or ‘fourth wall’, performing an intriguingly liminal action by stepping out of the play only to invite us into it. This is particularly evident on the thrust stage space of the Renaissance, as opposed to our more modern proscenium arch, as the Chorus can come amongst the crowd, rather than addressing it from afar. But in explicitly asking us to do the work that Shakespeare’s writing and the company’s acting should do – to suppose, for example, that we have really ‘seen | The well-appointed King at Hampton pier’, ‘the hempen tackle ship-boys climbing’, ‘the threaden sails’, ‘the furrowed sea’ (3.0.3-4, 8, 10, 12) - the Chorus gives us the opportunity to make our own memories of the play. These are manufactured or confected memories, not experiences, because we have not actually seen, felt, or heard what the Chorus describes, except through our imagination of its pastness. Just as we cannot have a true experience of a time we have not lived through, but can entertain and participate in historical memories of that time, so the Chorus allows us to create memories of events we have never experienced. The Chorus facilitates this by helping us see in our own ‘mind’s eye’, to use a Shakespearean coinage from *Hamlet* (1.1.115), what is apparently (though actually not) being portrayed on stage. Tiffany Stern says that:

Often Shakespeare utilises the spectators so that they become, unwittingly, part-actors in the plays that they are observing. They can supply the massed army that the *Henry V* prologue could not come up with. When Henry ends his ‘once more unto the breach, | Dear friends’ speech with a three-part expression designed to elicit applause, he urges the audience to cry out and swell the multitude: ‘cry God for Harry, England and Saint George!’ *We become complicit*. (2004: 28)

‘We become complicit’; ‘the chorus in *Henry V* insists ... on our complicity with the play to the extent that we continue reading or watching at all’ (Ferne 2006: 106). But it is not a given that we are *unwilling* actors in the plays that we are observing, because more than passively reading and watching, we actively conjure up the images that the Chorus evokes. We do as the Chorus asks, and therefore the great scenes presented to us by productions of the play make sense even when the strictly dramatic action does not agree with what the Chorus has said. ‘[T]he Chorus is responsible for Olivier’s and Branagh’s cinematic images of epic battles scenes that are not in the play’ (Gurr 2005: 9). To repeat, upon reading the play or upon hearing it, we have in our ‘mind’s eye’ what the Chorus has stated, and have often done so purposefully.

While our power to act, to effect change in a play, is crucially minimalised by our being spectators, and while in this role of spectator we invest the Chorus and the actors with the power to act on our behalf, we nevertheless retain the power to *remember* a play, promised by the Chorus, that has not even been performed. In the normal way, for as long as we are present in the theatre we give an ethical and political imperative to the actors, because we allow them to act while we watch relatively passively. In sitting and watching we receive what they transmit, for better or for worse. Normally this imperative for action returns to us when the play ends, the characters evaporate, and the actors depart the stage, leaving us with our memories of the play and the capacity to be more active – to act – if we should so desire (see Cavell 1997). But in *Henry V* that ethical and political imperative is given to us *during* the play as we make our memories of the interim times even while the play is being performed; and the play cannot continue, does not make sense, without this interaction of ours, which is one of the things, I want to suggest, that makes *Henry V* so extraordinary a play in terms of its creation of memory.

The Chorus is a rhetorical spectacular, like a statue larger than life, but is also characterised, not only because he is ordinarily played by a human being rather than by a dismembered voice, but also because of his shifting point of view mentioned above. '[T]hat the Chorus varies his perspective according to the course of events gives the audience the impression of his active participation in the events' (Weiss 2000: 19). The Chorus betrays human emotions such as, to name but a few, longing (Prologue 1), embarrassment (Prologue 8, 15), pride (2.0.16-19) and scorn (2.0.26). The Chorus is not just a dramatic mechanism in the play, but exists as a character in a different ontological space, a zone elsewhere to the scene presented. And it is this part-personalised character who gives us the opportunity to make our own memories of the play, which are absolutely inimitable and unique to us as individuals, even if those memories are restricted by the parameters of the descriptions the Choruses give us. It seems that unlike that of Henry, who aims at a shared or collective memory of Agincourt, the subjectivity of the Chorus accepts that the corporate memory he creates will be various and splintered.

The Chorus's language is heavily rhetorical and embellished with devices of all descriptions, including syllepsis and antanacsis, which makes it quite distinctive.² But it is also, at times, 'very close to Henry's own' language (Gurr 2005: 14). For example, when Henry says,

Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls,
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
Whilst the mad mothers with their howls confused
(3.3.36-39)

we are reminded of the Chorus's England 'Guarded with grandsires, babies and old women' (3.0.20), of which we have heard just before. So in his lexis, the Chorus shares in some of Henry's powerful attempts to create memories. It is this similarity of language which first hints to us that the Chorus's creation of memory is not as far from Henry's as it may first appear.

Once one has accepted that we are given at least a partial power to make our own memories of the play, that realisation is further modified by an auxiliary recognition of the way the Chorus works. I want to argue that the Chorus also seems to act in a more sophisticated way to actively create our memories of the play, in a way similar to that of Henry, whose speech also actively worked to create memory. If we allow that (as I explained above) 'breaks' in the action can create a space for memory to enter into and inhabit, it is significant that it is the Chorus that should fill the gaps between acts in this play.

Moreover, Shakespeare effects a prolongation of time by carefully manipulating his scenic divisions: '[t]he periods of time which are assumed to have elapsed between the scenes leading up to the battle of Agincourt are short, and hence time seems to drag slowly' (Wilders 1978: 11), where elsewhere time flies by as the Chorus wafts us over oceans: 'Heave him away upon your winged thoughts| Athwart the sea' (5.0.8-9). The Chorus thus performs not only as a messenger, but as an agent of time: 'myself have play'd | The interim, by remembering you 'tis past' (5.0.43-4). It is possible to read *1* and *2 Henry IV* as an extended Prologue which is really leading up to -- or an interim time before -- *Henry V*. The problem with this is that it denies the *Henry IV* plays their existence as discrete art works. But if we do accept them as a kind of 'waiting room' for *Henry V*, we could almost hear Henry saying with Hamlet that 'the interim is mine' (*Hamlet*, 5.2.73). Yet when the Chorus says that he himself has 'play'd | The interim,' he inevitably shares or even appropriates some of Henry's power to effect the 'remembering' of what is past. In the word 'playing' we must hear not only 'acting' but also 'toying'; the Chorus acts the interim time but also plays with it. And so we come to the realisation that, like Henry, the Chorus tries to hold on to his control of memory through his very language.

The difference between Henry and the Chorus is that the Chorus's language actually seems to reinforce the real time his words are attempting to leap over. Because of the time it takes to read or say the actual words of the text, the line fails to over-leap the time it is trying to pass in its meaning. The text thus 'produces' time by its very nature, continually reminding us through its form of the ineluctably present moment. Consideration of how many of the Chorus's lines are extrametrical betrays a figure who attempts to run ahead of himself: a cursory count of syllables in the lines of the Chorus at 3.0 suggests long lines at 6, 8, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, and 33. This is forty per cent of the Chorus's lines, a not insignificant minority. And the same thing is true of the Chorus's speech elsewhere. The Chorus's verse narrations repeatedly attempt to fast-forward time,

using prolepsis to instil in the audience's minds memories of events they have not witnessed, such as the huge armies, Henry's appearing to his troops as himself the night before Agincourt, or his triumphant homecoming after victory has been won. The Chorus's speeches want to create memory by projecting eidetic images of events both past (as is the case with Chorus 5, speaking of Henry's triumphant return to England) and present (as is the case with Chorus 3 at Harfleur). But there is a disconnection between the mission of his speech (to create memories) and his language, which, being in iambic pentameters, beats out the present time like a metronome, the course of accented and unaccented syllables marking time's steady flow. So, the Chorus's use of verse admits the staging of memories, because it is in the verse that we hear the steady tick-tock rhythm like a clock that 'tells' the time, revealing the fact that the memories the Chorus creates are actually present now, not 'memories' at all. The reason that this is not the case with Henry's speech (despite his being largely in pentameters, too), is that Henry is not trying to jump over the present moment of speech in the way the Chorus is. The Chorus has perhaps forty or fifty lines between each act to show the passage of a great expanse of time, whereas Henry's speech is very much in the present moment, even if it is thinking about the future.

The Chorus also always ends with a rhymed couplet; 'pray-play' (Prologue 33-4), 'may-play' (2.0.39-40), 'then-scene' (2.0.41-2), 'kind-mind' (3.0.34-5), 'see-be' (4.0.52-3), 'advance-France' (5.0.45-6), and 'sake-take' (Epilogue 13-4). Ivic says that '[r]hyme – it goes almost without saying – is supposed to reinforce memory' (2004: 83), but I would go even further, and suggest that rhyming couplets are in themselves memories, recalling the ending of the previous line in order to match it. Here, rhyme works both forwards and backwards, the first part of the couplet anticipating the latter and the latter part of the couplet remembering the former. It is this that makes the Chorus's rhyme another chime of memory in the play, aurally collapsing the movement between supposed past and present that the Chorus's speech works to portray. The events the Chorus spuriously 'remembers' are actually entirely present, present in their apparent re-telling which is, for us, actually only a 'telling', a first-time view, and not a remembering at all.

This argument seems to be (even more) complicated if we know the story from another source, since then we might well remember what we know of Henry's campaign in France, and equate that memory with what the Chorus tells us, perhaps noting where the discrepancies are. Obviously, this would compromise the Chorus' ability to make our memories of the events of the play. The Chorus does break from its sources in places, for example when he does not mention the stakes in front of English lines used to kill the horses of the charging French (found in Shakespeare's major source, Holinshed), but it must be said that these are less likely to be noticed in performance than upon reading and studying the play. When the Chorus says, 'Vouchsafe to those that have not read the story, | That I may prompt them' (5.0.1-2), he acts also to 'prompt' those who *have* 'read the story' by

giving his own version of events. This is a version which has almost become definitive, as a result of Shakespeare having become the pinnacle of Western culture and thus arbiter of its literature, historic or otherwise (Bloom 1995).

These few paragraphs have attempted to show just how complex the working of the Chorus is. He seems on the surface to be quite unlike Henry, providing us with the avenue to create our own memories of the play, but at the same time he edges closer to Henry by attempting to create those memories for us within set parameters (indeed, pentameters), pentameters which in turn belie the pastness of memory by being entirely present. The Chorus tries to 'jump o'er time' (Prologue 29), but at the same time its own language seems to constrain it from doing this, and this reveals the way memories inhere as much in the style and structure of the play as in its characters or events. The Chorus says that in interpreting the play we must do what it cannot, 'jumping o'er times | Turning th'accomplishment of many years | Into an hour glass' (Prologue 29-31) – with the codicil that in doing this, we '[a]dmit [him] Chorus to this history' (Prologue 32). Ostensibly, '[t]urning th'accomplishment of many years | Into an hour glass' refers to the fact that Henry's historical campaign of six years (1414-20) is condensed into the two-hour's traffic of the stage, or one 'turn' of the hour glass (Craik 2005: 121). But we can also hear a caveat against the too easy vulgarising or reduction of memory.³ The chorus releases within us the fragile potential to forge our own memories of the play, a potential which, while vulnerable to conditions, remains.

Conclusion: 'of famous memory' (4.7.91)

Through this play, and particularly through Henry's pivotal speech at Agincourt, Shakespeare has shown how language can work to create and transmit a memory, both for characters on stage and for the audience off stage. The Chorus too wants to work to create memory for those listening on stage and off, but shows quite clearly how problematic the construction of memory can be because language can constrain as well as release time. Like the dead on both sides, Henry's campaign in France finally exists only *in memoriam*, and, whatever we think of that memory, whether we see it as a force for good or for bad, it is very powerful. Part of the power of this memory comes from language, and also from its being embedded in this seminal play, which has rendered Agincourt 'of famous memory' (4.7.91) even now. And that is perhaps enough for Henry – and for us.⁴

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NOTES

¹ My default text for the play is T. W. Craik's Third Series Arden edition (2005), which is based on the Folio text. All of the Chorus's quotations are missing from the Quarto text of *Henry V* and thus are 'Folio only'.

² Syllepsis is 'a figure by which a word... is made to refer to two or more other words in the same sentence'; antanacosis is 'a figure of speech, when the same word is repeated in a different, if not in a contrary signification' (OED).

³ I was reminded more than once in thinking about the Chorus of Macbeth's speech in his play at 1.3.150-156. The Chorus solicits the audience's 'favour', and his own brain, 'wrought with things forgotten', also asks that those 'things forgotten' be remembered. He implores the 'kind gentlemen' of hearers or readers who 'turn | The leaf' to read the play of memory, and in the play he himself reads their historical activities. He ostensibly requests the audience to 'turn towards the king', and to 'think upon what hath chanced' in the play and in history. While playing the 'interim' between the acts he also acknowledges that the 'interim' provides a space where 'what hath chanced' can be 'weigh'd'.

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