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COMMON SOLDIER

Middle Tennessee State University

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"A Place in the Story": The Perspective
of Shakespeare's Common Soldier

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for the degree Doctor of Arts

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"A Place in the Story": The Perspective
of Shakespeare's Common Soldier

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Abstract

"A Place in the Story": The Perspective of Shakespeare's Common Soldier

By Stephen Kay Clark

Critics who address Shakespeare's depiction of military events tend to view the common soldier as a coward engaging in pillage and rebellion. These critics dismiss as anomalous a scene in Henry V that involves three conscripts questioning the disguised Henry about a king's obligation to pursue justified warfare. The scene affords the common soldier dignity and a dimension of intelligence, while asserting his right to expect just cause for a war he must fight. Hardly exceptional, the scene reflects a pattern of military performance based on leadership--a pattern begun in Shakespeare's first tetralogy. When provided exemplary leadership and just cause, the common soldier proves courageous; conversely, he responds negatively to ineffective leadership, which frequently accompanies an unjust cause.

Chapters One and Two analyze the operation of leadership and performance in the two tetralogies. Throughout the early histories, the common soldier responds positively to proper leadership, such as that offered by Talbot and

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Richmond, while the soldier who suffers under poor leadership becomes a symbol of waste. The second tetralogy points to Shakespeare's growing interest in exposing the recklessness of zealous militarists, for example Hotspur. Falstaff's actions epitomize callous disregard for the conscript's welfare. The pattern reaches its maximum realization through the full disclosure of the commoner's perspective when conscripts argue with King Henry V.

Chapters Three and Four analyze leadership and performance and the waste surrounding martialism in Shakespeare's tragedies. Enobarbus' plight dramatizes the dilemma of all who must follow faulty leaders in fallen causes. Indeed, agony over Antony's declining leadership contributes to Enobarbus' death. The soldier-as-waste emerges powerfully in the suffering imposed by the supreme militarist, Coriolanus. By endorsing the military model for revenge, Hamlet assures his own demise and the unintended deaths of many others. Similarly, Othello reverts to the martial code of duty in murdering Desdemona. In moving from history to tragedy, Shakespeare reminds us that both uncommon and common soldiers can, like Enobarbus, "earn a place in the story"--a story whose shape and outcome are deeply influenced by those who lead and those who follow.

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Basic Patterns

Involving the Common Soldier:

The First Tetralogy

In Act IV of Henry V, William Shakespeare presents what is perhaps the only non-comic individualization of the common soldier in Elizabethan drama. The scene represents the eve of the Battle of Agincourt; and Henry, disguised as a gentleman of an infantry company, mingles with the troops. Among those he encounters are three common soldiers: John Bates, Alexander Court, and Michael Williams. When the King questions the three concerning the mission, each expresses reservations about the war. Williams engages Henry in a dialectic regarding the King's responsibility to commit troops only in just causes. Eventually Williams asserts that if the cause is not just, "the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make. . . ." ¹

The dimension of intelligence exhibited by the soldiers and the insight provided into the infantryman's

¹ William Shakespeare, Henry V, in The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1961), p. 757 (IV.1.141). Subsequent references to Shakespeare's plays throughout this study are from this edition and are cited within the text.

reservations about the impending battle afford the common soldier dignity. Scholars who have attended to military subjects in Shakespeare generally, however, dismiss the scene as an anomaly, something unseen in the remainder of the Shakespearean canon. Usually the military commentators are influenced by the historical evidence of the ineptness of conscripts in Elizabeth's army.² They believe, therefore, that Shakespeare reflects exclusively the miserable side of common soldiers--with the exception, of course, of the aforementioned scene in Henry V. For instance, Paul Jorgensen, the most prolific writer on military subjects in Shakespeare, concedes that the individualization of the infantrymen in Henry V shows Shakespeare's recognition "that all soldiers were not clowns and rogues."³ Yet a clearer indication of Jorgensen's views on the matter is capsuled in the following:

On the whole, however, whatever insights Shakespeare achieves into the mentalities of his common soldiers are focused upon their less admirable traits: their reluctance to be drafted, their ridiculous poverty, their

² Extensive historical accounts on the quality of Elizabethan soldiers are available in the following: Paul A. Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1956), pp. 120-68; and C. G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth's Army, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966).

³ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 168.

fear in battle, their pursuit of booty rather than honor, and their grumbling and insubordination.⁴

Other critics of the military in Shakespeare echo Jorgensen's opinion. G. Geoffrey Langsam, a commentator on military matters in the whole realm of English Renaissance drama, tries to demonstrate that various plays correlate the lessons from the military books of the time, including "the justification of right war, despite its horrors, and stress on the urgency of unity and preparedness in England."⁵ For Langsam, then, Henry's justification to Williams on a king's freedom from responsibility for common soldiers' actions in war, based on an analogy to the inability of a merchant to control the behavior of his sons responsible for a ship at sea, is acceptable:

Williams' error lies in placing the responsibility for the fates of the souls of the individual soldiers on the shoulders of the King. The soldier was admonished again and again to keep himself pure in body and spirit so that, like a rich man, he would be ready at all times to face his Maker.⁶

Frederick Boas in a 1940 lecture also believes Henry's words to the conscripts are reasonable. He places the entire

⁴ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 123.

⁵ Martial Books and Tudor Verse (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951), p. 115.

⁶ Langsam, p. 114.

milieu in a patriotic context, stating that Henry's final pronouncement on the king's responsibility to dying soldiers "has lost nothing of its force in our own day."⁷ Brents Stirling in his The Populace in Shakespeare finds the soldiers of Henry V to be part of a pattern Shakespeare often uses, "a quality he shares with almost all dramatists of his day, a tendency to use the lowly as a medium for whimsical, pertinent, and often intelligent commentary."⁸ Stirling chooses to ignore Williams' reappearance following the battle and his steadfast refusal of money from Henry. All of these critics, then, downplay the role of Williams, as well as Bates and Court. With the exception of Jorgensen, these critics do not give an extended consideration of the common soldier per se in Shakespeare.

As a subject of interest in Shakespearean study, the depiction of the common soldier does not rate highly. Jorgensen devotes a chapter of his Shakespeare's Military World to an examination of the common soldier. The tenor of his opinion is to view the soldier negatively, as the excerpt noted above indicates. Some commentators are interested

⁷ "The Soldier in Elizabethan and Later English Drama," in Essays By Divers Hands: Being the Transaction of the Royal Society of Literature in the United Kingdom, XIX, new ser. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1942), 125.

⁸ The Populace in Shakespeare (1949; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 57.

in the subject of the common soldier as it pertains to revealing the breadth of Shakespeare's military knowledge.⁹ I have found, however, through closely analyzing the role of the common soldier in Shakespeare's history plays and his Roman tragedies Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus (plays most directly interrelated to military concerns), that the matter is more complex than previous criticism admits. In the plays mentioned, the texts indicate, in my opinion, that the performance of the common soldier is directly tied to the quality of leadership. Furthermore, I submit that the common soldier often symbolizes the waste inherent in war, particularly civil war.

The formula of effective leadership eliciting admirable performance in the common soldier is very clear. Allusions to the common soldier and incidents involving him are prolific in Shakespeare, and a pattern emerges that shows the common soldier to be a courageous fighter when inspired by proper leadership and an ineffective fighter when confronted by weak or insincere leadership. Ultimately the pattern points to another enactment of Shakespeare's ubiquitous theme, the necessity of order. Order exists when the upper levels of the hierarchy present the proper example; disorder

⁹ See Duff Cooper, Sergeant Shakespeare (London: Hart-Davis, 1941); and J. W. Fortescue, "The Army: Military Service and Equipment," in Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), I, 112-26.

exists when corruption or weakness emanates from the top. The military caste, which includes both effective and inept leaders, offers an excellent microcosm of the concept of order. In Shakespeare a profusion of military leaders is presented; their degrees of quality run the gamut. Hence, when the lower levels--the common soldiers--respond appropriately to the quality of a particular leader, Shakespeare's most pervasive theme is again enacted.

The effect of my interpretation linking the performance of the common soldier to leadership is to thrust responsibility for a state of affairs upon the governing hierarchy, whether it be a general in the field, a liege lord, or the monarch himself. The concept of order dependent upon the upper echelon is, of course, reflective of the Renaissance concept of caste degrees with each element assigned a particular role. E. M. W. Tillyard's The Elizabethan World Picture is perhaps the richest summary of information on the sixteenth century idea of order. One of the most valuable aspects of the book is Tillyard's selection of writings from the period to illustrate the Elizabethan view of social order. A good example is an excerpt from Thomas Starkey's Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset:

He or they which have authority upon the whole state right well may be resembled to the heart. For like as all wit reason and sense, feeling life and all other natural power, springeth out

of the heart, so from the princes and rulers of the state cometh all laws order and policy, all justice virtue and honesty to the rest of this politic body. To the head, with the eyes ears and other senses therein, resembled may be right well the under officers by princes appointed, for as much as they should ever observe and diligently wait for the weal of the rest of this body. To the arms are resembled both craftsmen and warriors which defend the rest of the body from injury of enemies outward and work and make things necessary to the same; to the feet the ploughmen and tillers of the ground, because they by their labour sustain and support the rest of the body.¹⁰

The responsibility of those who govern is explicit in Starkey's analogy of the state to the human body. Important too is the assertion of the lowest part's value: the feet (farmers) are the foundation for the rest of the body (state). All classes have their roles, and as Tillyard adds: "Beauty in the body politic consists in the proper proportion to one another of these different classes."¹¹ The concept itself receives eloquent treatment from Shakespeare in numerous places, but two significant passages are Ulysses' speech on order in Troilus and Cressida and a similar statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Henry V.

Ulysses' appeal for the reestablishment of order and discipline in the Greek army reflects perfectly the necessity of exemplary leadership. The Greeks, mired in a

¹⁰ Thomas Starkey, as quoted in E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (1943; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), p. 98.

¹¹ Tillyard, Elizabethan World Picture, p. 98.

seven-year war with the Trojans, have all but fallen apart militarily. Particularly damaging is the disaffection of the Greeks' most prominent warrior, Achilles. Ulysses asserts that, given such example, the lower ranks cannot be expected to show much enthusiasm for battle:

And, look, how many Grecian tents do stand
Hollow upon this plain, so many hollow factions.
When that the general is not like the hive
To whom the foragers shall all repair,
What honey is expected? (I.iii.79-83)

Ulysses then couches his argument in the classic Renaissance analogy of societal order to the cosmological order of the sun and planets. If disorder occurs in the cosmos, the disturbance is manifested on earth through storms and earthquakes. Upheaval rules. Therefore,

when degree is shaken,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?
(I.iii.101-08)

Ulysses, addressing Agamemnon, then returns the analogy to the military realm, outlining the martial consequences:

The general's disdain'd
By him one step below, he by the next,
That next by him beneath; so every step,
Exempl'd by the first pace that is sick
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever

Of pale and bloodless emulation:
 And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,
 Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,
 Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength.
 (I.iii.129-37)

The thrust, then, of Ulysses' assertion is that the strength of an army depends on the effectiveness of its leaders.

As mentioned, the necessity of degree and order in society also receives expression in Henry V through the Archbishop of Canterbury. Although not directly concerned with military implications, the Archbishop's comparison of society to a beehive contains a military analogy that reinforces the notion of exemplary leadership. Enumerating the various duties of the bees, the Archbishop states:

Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
 Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,
 Which pillage they with merry march bring home
 To the tent-royal of their emperor. . . .
 (I.ii.193-96)

In the ideal setting, therefore, soldiers may plunder but will freely surrender the fortunes of war to the king, whose correct fulfillment of his role inspires the soldiers to work for the good of the state.

The previous passages are reminders of the importance of the realm of order in Renaissance thought. That Shakespeare adheres to the philosophy of order is unquestioned. The great tragedies are directly concerned with the consequences of breaking the chain of order, and several history

plays chronicle the disaster of civil war incited by the dissolution of order. It is within the realm of order, then, that I propose to analyze the role of the common soldier in Shakespeare. Basically the purport of my argument is that the common soldier is a more significant subject than hitherto admitted. If indeed the performance of the common soldier is directly linked to the quality of leadership, then, as I have previously implied, a study of this behavior provides an avenue for comprehending the whole of Shakespearean drama; that is, the didactic thrust of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies is the urgency of maintaining degree and order. Chaos results when order is violated. Ultimately my contention regarding the common soldier is a part of the larger issue of Shakespeare's depiction of the populace; linking the soldier's performance to the type of leadership thrusts responsibility on the higher echelon. The didactic aim is thus directed to the nobility.

Beyond the pattern of leadership and military performance, a secondary issue regarding the common soldier is Shakespeare's frequent use of the conscript as a symbol of the waste inherent in war. This depiction occurs most often in the plays dramatizing civil war and is accomplished largely through the mentioning of numbers lost or employed in battles. Yet in 3 Henry VI the aura of waste is intensified by a scene enacting the grief of conscripts and through Falstaff's callous disregard in both parts of

Henry IV for draftees under his command. Waste of humanity figures significantly too in the treatment that the common soldier receives at the hands of military enthusiasts like Hotspur and Coriolanus.

The theme of leadership and the behavior of the soldier's performance is present, however, in the complete spectrum of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies. The validity of the pattern increases when we consider the plays chronologically. The formula emerges initially in the early history plays and continues to develop in the second tetralogy of histories, culminating in the previously cited scenes in Henry V. In the mature tragedies the pattern is most profoundly evident in Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus. The maximum fulfillment of the pattern occurs in the character of Enobarbus, who, although not a conscript, is a common soldier advanced through the ranks. The pattern receives final reinforcement through the negative example presented by Coriolanus. In this study, therefore, I shall analyze Shakespeare's depiction of the common soldier through a chronological examination of the plays. The remainder of this chapter concerns the rudimentary operation of the leadership pattern evident in the early histories and also points to the emergence of the common soldier as a symbol of the waste of war. Chapter II will treat the increasing presence of the formula in Richard II, in the two parts of Henry IV, and in Henry V. Chapter III presents the

culmination of the pattern in Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus. Chapter IV will indicate the presence of the pattern in plays less militarily oriented and will synthesize the study. Although I shall refer to criticism variously in this study, the major impetus for my consideration is the texts of the plays; therefore, the conclusions reached in this study rely on close readings of the plays.

The early history plays are significant in pointing to the initial indications of the leadership/performance design. No individualized characterization of common soldiers exists in these plays, but numerous scenes involving conscripts occur. Noteworthy is the fact that in these early histories, we observe Shakespeare the novice practicing his craft. The pattern involving the common soldier thus anticipates the fuller characterizations in Henry V and Antony and Cleopatra.

The three parts of Henry VI involve extensive military accounts. The first segment concerns the English defeats in France, and the sequels record civil strife in England. The importance of leadership is prominent in each of these plays. The plight of Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1 Henry VI posits precisely the theme of exemplary leadership.

The first scene of 1 Henry VI enacts Henry V's funeral, and reports reach the mourners of losses in France. According to the messenger, the English, led by Lord Talbot, were

engaged in a fierce battle and were outnumbered 23,000 to 6,000. The messenger relates that Talbot was relentless in battle as he

Enacted wonders with his sword and lance:
 Hundreds he sent to hell, and none durst stand
 him;
 Here, there, and every where, enraged he flew.
(I.i.122-24)

The result of his fierceness was a valiant response by his troops:

His soldiers spying his undaunted spirit
 A Talbot! A Talbot! cried out amain and
 Rush'd into the bowels of battle. (I.i.127-29)

The English were not victorious, however, due to the cowardice of Sir John Fastolfe, who fled the field and did not follow the first thrust. In the first report of military action in a Shakespearean history, it is not the commoners who can be blamed for defeat; quite the contrary, the soldiers were valorous in battle.

Talbot is taken prisoner, which leaves the Earl of Salisbury as the main commander. Before the action shifts to France in Scene ii, the messenger reports more news, namely, that the English soldiers are "weak and faint" (I.i.158) and are short on supplies. Consequently, the Earl "hardly keeps his men from mutiny / Since they, so few, watch such a multitude" (I.i.160-61). Because the threat of mutiny carries negative connotations, Jorgensen

questions "why Shakespeare did not make more prominent use of a type of military disorder so prevalent in Renaissance warfare and so clearly indicated by the type of men he shows being conscripted for service."¹² He answers his question as follows:

The explanation is obviously not Shakespeare's reluctance to show common soldiers in a bad light--he seldom shows them in a light of any other kind. More likely the explanation is just the reverse: a full representation of mutinies, with their causes, would have given the soldiers a more₁₃ favorable case than he cared or dared to make.

Jorgensen suggests, of course, that Shakespeare could not afford to stir up a revolt among the lower classes, especially in a period of frequent military preparedness.¹⁴ Such an action would be treasonous.

The texts of the plays, nevertheless, contradict Jorgensen's reasoning. In Scene ii, immediately following the report of the debilitated condition of the soldiers, the battle of Orleans is enacted. The "weak and faint" perform admirably. The Duke of Alencon cannot believe what he has seen:

¹² Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 145.

¹³ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 145.

¹⁴ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 145.

One to ten!
Lean raw-boned rascals! who would e'er suppose
They had such courage and audacity? (I.ii.34-36)

Reignier is equally shocked:

I think, by some odd gimmors or device
Their arms are set like clocks, still to strike
on;
Else ne'er could they hold out as they do.
By my consent we'll even let them alone.
(I.ii.41-44)

Undoubtedly Shakespeare is portraying a patriotic scene here, but if he despised the common soldier as much as has been indicated, he surely would have gone to some pains to diminish the implications of the common soldiers' valor. "One to ten," however exaggerated this may have been in actuality, clearly indicates the odds against the English troops, and still they win the fight. The juxtaposition of this battle scene early in Scene ii to the rumored possible mutiny at the end of Scene i is also important in highlighting the performance of the common soldier. We assume the excellent quality of Salisbury's leadership, since he does keep the men from revolting and evidently stirs them to fight to their limits.

Concerning leadership, another point arises in this scene. Shakespeare contrasts the two leaders. Reignier refers to Salisbury as "a desperate homicide; / He fighteth as one weary of his life" (I.iii.25-26). Obviously he is

in the midst of the battle. The Dauphin, however, can only relate:

Whoever saw the like? what men have I!
Dogs! cowards! dastards! I would ne'er have fled
But they left me 'midst my enemies. (I.ii.22-24)

The scene relates the essential contrast between Salisbury and the Dauphin. As Shakespeare often does, he juxtaposes two characters as foils, and here the evident purpose is to highlight the differences in capabilities of leadership presented by Salisbury and the Dauphin. Salisbury's example of leading the fight inspires his troops to fierce combat. The Dauphin accuses his soldiers of cowardice, but clearly the difference in battle is due to his lacking the kind of leadership that Salisbury provides. The Dauphin's accusation is nothing more than an excuse for his ineffectiveness.

In the subsequent English loss of French holdings, the subject of the remainder of 1 Henry VI, Talbot's valor continues to be an example of proper leadership. The English defeat occurs as a result of the feud between York and Somerset. Neither lord commits his troops to aid Talbot, who eventually is surrounded at Bourdeaux. The effect of this noncommittal is illustrated poignantly in two scenes in Act IV. These scenes are inserted between two others that dramatize Talbot's valor, an arrangement that permits the audience to comprehend the effect of strength and weakness.

In Scene ii of Act IV, Talbot parleys with a French general who warns him that his outnumbered troops are indeed surrounded and that "These eyes, that see thee now well coloured, / Shall see thee wither'd, bloody, pale and dead" (IV.ii.37-38). As the General leaves, Talbot responds:

How are we park'd and bounded in a pale,
 A little herd of England's timorous deer,
 Mazed with a yelping kennel of French curs!
 If we be English deer, be then in blood;
 Not rascal-like, to fall down with a pinch,
 But rather, moody-mad and desperate stags,
 Turn on the bloody hounds with heads of steel
 And make the cowards stand aloof at bay:
 Sell every man his life as dear as mine,
 And they shall find dear deer of us, my friends,
 God and Saint George, Talbot and England's right,
 Prosper our colours in this dangerous fight!
 (IV.ii.45-56)

Perhaps the most important aspect of this response is Talbot's willingness to die, the same as any soldier under his command. The same spirit observed in the earlier victory emerges here.

Scenes iii and iv, however, present a radically different example. Sir William Lucy confronts York with the news of Talbot's plight. Lucy assumes the immediate response of haste; instead, York launches into an attack on Somerset, accusing him of delaying a promised supply of cavalrymen. Finally, York concludes by deciding not to act at all, still condemning Somerset:

Lucy, farewell: no more my fortune can,
 But curse the cause I cannot aid the man.

Maine, Blois, Poitiers, and Tours are won away,
 'Long all of Somerset and his delay.
 (IV.iii.43-46)

Scene iv presents Lucy in a similar mission to Somerset whose initial reaction is, "York set him on; York should have sent him aid" (IV.iv.23). Somerset finally agrees to attempt a rescue of Talbot and his army, but Lucy advises him that it is probably too late already and concludes by chastizing Somerset: "His fame lives in the world, his shame in you" (IV.iv.46). These scenes clearly illustrate the result of ineffective leadership, as York and Somerset allow their personal feud to lead to an English defeat.

Of note too in these scenes is that York and Somerset's wrangling is permitted because of Henry VI's weakness. Having given the command to Somerset to commit the horsemen to York for use in aiding Talbot, the King departed for England. Such inept action by Henry anticipates the later civil strife between the houses of Lancaster and York, the initial spark being the feud between the Dukes of Somerset and York.

Scenes v and vi return the play to the field of battle where Talbot duplicates his earlier performance. Even though the English are surrounded and outnumbered heavily, Talbot is in the thick of the fight and urges his troops on: "Saint George and victory! fight, soldiers, fight" (IV.vi.1). Talbot's exemplary leadership and heroic

struggle are undoubtedly impressed upon the audience through Shakespeare's adept placement of two scenes illustrating ideal military performance in the characterization of Talbot around two others depicting the negative effects of selfish leadership displayed through the actions of York and Somerset. Combined with the earlier scenes relating Talbot's leadership and the positive response instilled in the troops, these scenes reiterate the rudimentary operation of the leadership formula in 1 Henry VI.

The remaining two parts of Henry VI concern the civil unrest in England occasioned by the result of Henry's ineffective rule. Shakespeare's portrayal of the King captures the complexity of his character--incompetent yet, in Hardin Craig's words, "a saint on earth"¹⁵--still it is his ineffectiveness as supreme ruler that allows the vying factions to wreak havoc. The effect on the audience viewing the second and third parts of Henry VI is to be left with a sense of utter waste. The third sequence is pervaded by the depiction of numerous battle scenes, and in this play the common soldier's performance again reflects the quality of leadership. As disorder increases and loyalties shift, the common soldier's reaction is predictably negative.

¹⁵ Hardin Craig, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1961), p. 209.

Indeed, in 3 Henry VI the soldier emerges as a powerful symbol of the waste and carnage wrought by civil war. Rather than farming the land in a productive enterprise, the common man is dragged into battle and suffers because of the warring nobility. To analyze the performance of the common soldier in 3 Henry VI is thus to view again the operation of leadership but through the symbol of the soldier as an aspect of war's waste.

The opening lines of 3 Henry VI allude to the previously established design of leadership. Shakespeare distorts time so that it appears this play begins immediately following the Battle of St. Albans, the last action in 2 Henry VI. York reports that Henry, prior to battle, "slily stole away and left his men" (1.i.3). One must, of course, account for the speaker's prejudice, but the subsequent report by York of Northumberland's assuming leadership of the King's army clearly reinforces the formula of leadership/performance:

the great Lord of Northumberland,
Whose warlike ears could never brook retreat,
Cheer'd up the drooping army; and himself,
Lord Clifford and Lord Stafford, all abreast,
Charged our main battle's front, and breaking in
Were by the swords of common soldiers slain.
(I.i.4-9)

Northumberland's actions and that of Clifford and Stafford recall Talbot's example in 1 Henry VI. The three lead their troops into the midst of the battle and are killed them-

selves. Rather than remain on the periphery of the fight, they join their men in the action. The King, however, as York has indicated, departs prior to the fight.

Vestiges of Northumberland's type of leadership occur in 3 Henry VI, but the results yielded are largely negative. Troops on both sides of the Lancaster-York struggle are depicted as both ineffective and unenthusiastic. Various leaders of both houses recall somewhat the earlier fierce performance of Talbot. Why then the ineffectiveness of the armies? Various reports from the two camps allude to a weariness of war elicited by a confusion of the cause. Unlike the scene of 1 Henry VI in which Talbot's troops fight for England, the action of 3 Henry VI depicts civil war. Northumberland's example in 2 Henry VI represents civil conflict too, of course, but in 3 Henry VI the effects of prolonging the war are prominent. Apparently the troops become unconvinced of the justice of the causes for which they fight. In Act II, for example, Warwick's troops appear confused about warring against the sovereign king.

The exposition of 3 Henry VI reveals why the battle continues. Although Henry accedes to York in disavowing the right of Lancastrian succession to the throne, Richard persuades his father to press for the crown himself, which renews the warfare. Plantagenet, buoyed by his son's urging, boasts that he can defeat the Lancasters, despite the mustering of a large force by Queen Margaret. In fact,

the Queen's troops outnumber York by twenty thousand to five thousand. Nevertheless York asserts:

Five men to twenty! though the odds be great,
I doubt not . . . of our victory.
Many a battle have I won in France,
When as the enemy hath been ten to one:
Why should I not now have the like success?
(I.ii.71-75)

Scene ii ends with York's rhetorical question. The answer not directly provided by the playwright but inferred by the audience is that the imminent battle is a civil conflict. Regardless of loyalty to York, his soldiers are not on foreign soil and, as noted, are vastly outnumbered. Thus Scene iv begins with York's lamenting:

The army of the queen hath got the field:
My uncles both are slain in rescuing me;
And all my followers to the eager foe
Turn back and fly, like ships before the wind
Or lambs pursued by hunger-starved wolves.
(I.iv.1-5)

York reasons that his sons have fought fiercely, but their example is futile. The sheer numbers of York's enemies overwhelm any possible turning of the tide, a condition indicated in the following report by York concerning a final fervent attack by Richard:

With this, we charged again: but, out, alas!
We bodged again; as I have seen a swan
With bootless labor swim against the tide
And spend her strength with over-matching waves.
(I.iv.18-21)

Although the type of inspiration noted in Talbot's example is ostensibly displayed by York and his sons, the effect is minimal. Talbot's troops, greatly outnumbered, nevertheless fought fiercely before eventually falling to the inevitable superiority of numbers; but York's troops falter. Again the difference in circumstances must be accounted for. The audience recognizes that the references to battle concern civil war, revealing that the soldiers who mass York's army are unconvinced of the cause. The common infantryman is uninspired.

Logically, the obverse should be the case with Queen Margaret's army; that is, Shakespeare would provide imbued inspiration into the victorious forces. But such is not the case. Neither Margaret nor Clifford refers to the troops at all. The success of the Queen's army perhaps is attributed to the vast superiority in numbers. No reference occurs concerning especially animated fighting among the ranks. York's metaphor of the swan against the endless waves is the best clue to the tide of battle.

The further effect of an inadequate cause on the ranks can be found early in Act II. In this instance, the effect is not subtly presented but is overtly stated by the Earl of Warwick, a Yorkist. Following Henry's accession to York of granting the monarchy to the Duke's heirs, Warwick becomes the "keeper of the king" (II.i.111). Hearing news of York's

subsequent attempt to take the throne immediately and of the ensuing battle at Wakefield, Warwick musters soldiers in London to war against Margaret. Warwick's explanation about the ineffective performance of the soldiers points directly to confusion among the ranks as to whom they should defend. Supposedly as defenders of the King, the soldiers perceive they fight for him. Yet they are led into battle against Queen Margaret. The obvious interruption of the proper realm of order bewilders the troops; hence Warwick reports to Richard:

But whether 'twas the coldness of the king,
 Who look'd full gently on his warlike queen,
 That robb'd my soldiers of their heated spleen;
 Or whether 'twas report of her success;
 Or more than common fear of Clifford's rigour,
 Who thunders to his captives blood and death,
 I cannot judge: but, to conclude with truth,
 Their weapons like to lightning came and went;
 Our soldiers', like the night owl's lazy flight,
 Or like an idle thresher with a flail,
 Fell gently down, as if they struck their friends.
 I cheer'd them up with justice of our cause,
 With promise of high pay and great rewards:
 But all in vain; they had no heart to fight,
 And we in them no hope to win the day;
 So that we fled (II.i.122-37)

Warwick's statement directly anticipates Ulysses' speech in Troilus and Cressida on the necessity of order, the necessity of the higher echelon's presenting the proper example to the lower. The soldier's proper allegiance, as is any citizen's, is to the ultimate liege, the King. Yet, as mentioned, the soldiers find themselves in the

awkward position of warring against the Queen, an extreme disruption of order. Warwick seems bewildered that the material tantalization offered his troops does not lure them to fight; he fails to see that no substitute exists for genuine example and genuine perception of justice in the cause. With such disarray in the hierarchy, the common soldier merely behaves as circumstances dictate, as is the case in the later Troilus and Cressida.

Beyond the soldier's type of response to leadership in 3 Henry VI, Shakespeare is concerned too with the suffering of the common soldier. This third part of the series relentlessly confronts the audience with the ravages of civil war. The progressive succession of killings and battles deeply impresses the audience with the waste of war. Certainly the decimation of the nobility is clear, but Shakespeare also includes a poignant scene that posits the commoner as a symbol of war's waste. In Act II Henry encounters a son who has killed his father and a father who has killed his son. The two survivors and the two dead are undoubtedly feudal conscripts. The confrontation occurs following Henry's soliloquy, pronounced on a molehill, in which he yearns for the simple life of a shepherd who is free from worldly cares. Then to jolt him into reality--the shepherds have been forced to trade their staffs for swords--the son enters:

From London by the king was I press'd forth;
 My father, being the Earl of Warwick's man,
 Came on the part of York, press'd by his
 master. . . . (II.v.64-66)

The son has just recognized his father as the man he killed, and he exits with the body to mourn. Henry is profoundly moved, as he realizes the destructiveness of the civil war on the common people:

O piteous spectacle! O bloody times!
 While lions war and battle for their dens,
 Poor harmless lambs abide their enmity.
 (II.v.73-75)

Henry's brief escape into an idyllic Elysium is thus shattered by the harshness of war. Shakespeare's dramatization of common soldiers' private grief is to equalize such presentations among the nobility and to recognize the common people are in Abraham Zamichow's phrase, "an accountable entity in the body politic."¹⁶ Henry's metaphor of comparing the nobility to warring lions and the common people to lambs effectively captures the dilemma of the common citizenry.

Henry's grief--and the audience's--is compounded by Shakespeare's immediately juxtaposing an identical scene

¹⁶ "Shakespeare's Political Voice: The People as an Accountable Entity in the Body Politic," Diss. St. John's 1979, p. 1.

with reversed roles. A father, recognizing his son as his dead enemy, declares:

O, pity, God, this miserable age!
 What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly,
 Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural,
 This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!
 O boy, thy father gave thee life too soon,
 And hath bereft thee of thy life too late!
 (II.v.88-93)

This scene depicting the grievousness of the commons' suffering mirrors the slaughter among the nobility and further indicates Shakespeare's understanding of the common soldier's place in the realm of order. As referred to previously, Paul Jorgensen believes the individualization of the conscripts in Henry V to be the only reputable presentation of the common soldier in Shakespeare. Yet here, through a momentary lull in the battle scene, Shakespeare effectively presents two common soldiers grieving; their grief for the kindred they have slain effectively presents the commoner as a symbol of war's destruction.

There is an additional item of note in the previous scene that is relevant to the common soldier's connection with the wastefulness and anarchy of civil war. The winners in the hand-to-hand combat discover the identities of their victims while pillaging the bodies for money. Jorgensen is correct in pointing out that pillaging was one of the most serious offenses of the common soldier. In relation to Shakespeare, he states: "In dealing with pillage . . . the

dramatist is almost consistently harsh or scornful. There is no ambiguity of feeling, no suggestion of a fuller case that could be made."¹⁷ This scene is more complex, however, than Jorgensen's generalization permits. Each man has a reason for searching the body. The son states:

Ill blows the wind that profits nobody.
This man, whom hand to hand I slew in fight,
May be possessed with some store of crowns;
And I, that haply take them from him now,
May yet ere night yield both my life and them
To some man else, as this dead man doth me.
(II.v.55-60)

The father:

Thou that so stoutly has resisted me,
Give me thy gold, if thou hast any gold:
For I have bought it with an hundred blows.
(II.v.79-81)

These soldiers react respectively to the uncertainty of war and to the lack of reward for fighting it. Their actions are certainly no more opprobrious than the nobles who selfishly vie for power. This aspect of the scene unequivocally returns to the notion of leadership. If the common man were not dragged into war, he would not be in such positions as depicted; if his leaders would abide peacefully, he would be farming the land rather than looting corpses.

¹⁷ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 149.

In the remaining depiction of civil war in 3 Henry VI, the common soldier's role is noted only through the allusions to numbers of troops involved in the various campaigns. The thousands mentioned on both sides again figure the soldier as a symbol of the waste of war, an observation validated by the recklessness with which the vying leaders view the manpower at their disposal. For instance, the French King asserts to the Yorkist defector Warwick:

Thou and Oxford, with five thousand men,
Shall cross the seas, and bid false Edward battle;
And, as occasion serves, this noble queen
And price shall follow with a fresh supply.
(III.iii.234-37)

"Fresh supply" connotes a commodity, almost a food supply, as it were--indeed an image that anticipates Falstaff's depiction of his soldiers in 1 Henry IV as "food for powder." Edward, on hearing about the imminent French invasion, states, "Go levy men, and make prepare for war" (IV.i.131), and later Henry asserts to Warwick concerning Edward's advances: "Let's levy men, and beat him back again" (IV.viii.6). Thus, in the latter acts of 3 Henry VI, Shakespeare infuses the role of the common soldier as objects of levy or as mere numbers wasted in war. The audience, however, comprehends the destruction of human potential represented in the allusions to numbers of troops committed to battle.

One final note on 3 Henry VI is required. As mentioned in the preliminary discussion of this play, the character of the King is a complex depiction. Throughout the play Henry emerges as a generous, kind man but also as an individual unsuited to deal with the vicious realities of the monarchy. Unfortunately, the burden of civil dissolution rests with him. Again the consequences of disorder ultimately lie with the top, in the Renaissance concept of order. Clifford summarizes in a soliloquy in Act II the consequences of Henry's weakness:

And Henry, hadst thou sway'd as kings should do,
Or as thy father and his father did,
Giving no ground unto the House of York,
They never then had sprung like summer flies;
I and the thousand in this luckless realm
Had left no mourning widows for our death;
And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace.
(II.vi.14-20)

The necessity of strong leadership is forcefully stated here; the results of weakness at the very top are, of course, chaos and destruction.

Weakness of leadership in the king is not the only catalyst for upheaval. Corruption also disrupts, and such is the concern in Richard III, the fourth sequence of Shakespeare's early histories. The play resembles a tragedy in many ways, especially in the depiction of the Duke of Gloucester's ruthless rise to the throne through deception, hypocrisy, and murder, and through his subsequent fall.

The matter is ultimately decided on the field of battle; and again the soldier responds as the leadership dictates. This play affords the added advantage of viewing the King as field general, the effect being to emphasize the results of Richard's ineffectiveness, an observation highlighted even more through the juxtaposition of Richard's style of leadership to the Duke of Richmond's.

The military action of Richard III is confined to the final act. Invariably the pattern chosen by Shakespeare is to contrast the activities of Richard and Richmond. Early in Act V, Richmond speaks to his aides and emphasizes the justice of their cause. Twice he refers in close proximity to the divinity of their cause:

In God's name, cheerly on, courageous friends,
To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war.
.
Then in God's name, march. . . .
(V.ii.14-16,22)

The opposing side could, of course, invoke God's aid, but the conspicuous absence of such an invocation from Richard reiterates the justice of Richmond's cause. Richard does not invoke God's name, only the King's. In boasting about the three to one edge in numbers of troops, Richard adds:

Besides, the king's name is a tower of strength,
Which they upon the adverse party want.
(V.iii.12-13)

Since this boast follows so closely Richmond's invocation of God's name, the audience concludes that Richmond's forces have an omnipotent tower of strength on their side.

The value of exemplary leadership continues to be seen in the remainder of the two generals' endeavors. Following the pattern of contrast noted above, Shakespeare consistently places Richmond's leadership against Richard's. For instance, on the eve of battle Richmond plans the action for attack and, significantly, metes duties to each of his aides, thus reflecting the necessity of order:

Give me some ink and paper in my tent:
I'll draw the form and model of our battle,
Limit each leader to his several charge,
And part in just proportion our small strength.
(V.iii.23-26)

In precise contrast to Richmond's model of order, the actions by the King are not orderly at all. Rather than consulting with his aides, Richard dismisses them. He leaves the work to these aides, however, as evidenced in Ratcliff's report:

Thomas the Earl of Surrey, and himself
[Northumberland]
Much about cock-shut time, from troop to troop
Went through the army, cheering up the soldiers.
(V.iii.69-71)

Obviously when the King himself is absent from the cause, others must take up the slack, as Ratcliff indicates. Richard's absence is pronounced even more in his command

for a "bowl of wine" (V.iii.72) and in his wish to be left alone. Conversely, Richmond continues to discuss plans with his confidantes, and when he retires, he prays for the well-being of his forces:

O Thou, whose captain I account myself,
 Look on my forces with a gracious eye;
 Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
 That they may crush down with a heavy fall
 The usurping helmets of our adversaries!
 (V.iii.108-12)

Shakespeare continues the contrast in depicting the morning of battle. Each leader addresses his soldiers. Richmond's speech is characterized by its sincerity, its appeal to the justice of the cause, and its recognition of the common soldier's essentiality:

If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
 You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain;
 If you do fight against your country's foes,
 Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire;
 If you do fight in safeguard of your wives,
 Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors;
 If you do free your children from the sword,
 Your children's children quit it in your age.

 But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt
 The least of you shall share his part thereof.
 (V.iii.255-62, 267-68)

Richmond lays before his men the stake they have in the struggle, and he inspires the common soldiers in his recognition of their importance ("not the least of you"). Richard's oration is markedly different in tone. Nowhere

in the speech does he voice a concern for the conscript, and the coarseness of his language befits his character:

What shall I say more than I have inferr'd?
 Remember whom you are to cope withal;
 A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
 A scum of Bretons, and base lackey peasants,
 Whom their o'er-cloyed country vomits forth. . . .

 Shall these enjoy our lands? lie with our wives?
 Ravish our daughters?

(V.iii.314-18,336-37)

The most compelling testimony to the effectiveness of strong leadership is in Richmond's victory, even though earlier Richard had boasted of his three to one edge in numbers of troops (V.iii.11). As a final manifestation of a leader's wisdom in recognizing the indispensability of the common soldier's loyalty, Richmond, befitting his character, proclaims "a pardon to the soldiers fled / That in submission will return to us . . ." (V.v.16-17).

In Shakespeare's early history plays, the common soldier, then, is a significant figure, either directly through scenes enacting battle or indirectly through reports of performance and numbers killed. Although relatively few scholars have considered the common soldier as an object of study in Shakespeare, those who do reflect in their writings historical evidence that points to ineptness among conscripts in Elizabeth's army. These scholars then conclude that Shakespeare depicts the miserable side of common soldiers regardless of the historical period in which a play is set.

The collective evidence regarding the common soldier presented in the texts of the plays, however, points to another conclusion: the unranked soldier is as effective as the leadership directs. Ultimately this formula alludes to Shakespeare's most extensive theme, the necessity of order. When presented effective leaders, such as Talbot or Richmond, the conscript is a courageous fighter. Conversely, when an ineffective leader, such as Richard, directs the effort, the soldier responds accordingly. The concept of leadership inevitably is linked to the justice of the cause. An effective leader, himself convinced of the cause, evokes in the lower ranks a desire to succeed. Evincing the justice of the cause is primarily the responsibility of the king, who must present the proper example to be filtered through the ranks to the lowest conscript if the venture is to succeed. If a particular venture fails, then the higher echelon bears the responsibility.

Interrelated to the operation of leadership/performance is another noteworthy aspect of the common soldier in the early histories: Shakespeare's reference to the soldier as a symbol of waste. This perception is often inferred by the audience through the reports of the numbers of soldiers involved in battle, but in 3 Henry VI Shakespeare personifies the numbers through a scene of grieving soldiers, one who has killed his father and another who has killed his son. Indeed, the aura of waste that pervades the first

tetralogy anticipates Shakeapeare's fuller development of the theme in the second tetralogy and in the tragedies. Richard's "my kingdom for a horse" (R3.V.iv.7) effectively relates the utter waste of futile warring, and underlying it all is the awareness of the thousands who die in senseless civil insurrection.

Chapter II

"A Black Matter For the King": The Increasing Significance of the Common Soldier

Given the frightful legacy of civil disorder permeant in the first historical tetralogy, one may understandably endorse the view that in returning to the earlier period of Lancastrian triumph for a second venture in dramatizing history, Shakespeare sought an era that would, at least, culminate in order. The surface movement in the second tetralogy is from disorder in Richard II, a struggle to regain order in the two parts of Henry IV, to a restoration of order in Henry V. This interpretation depends heavily on the theory that Shakespeare consciously develops the character of Prince Hal from a dissolute youth in 1 Henry IV to the model king in Henry V. The perception of progress toward order is a neat package; but, as tempting as it is, reality is more complex.

Although Henry V approaches perfection, Shakespeare is not reluctant to expose a major fault in his otherwise flawless character; I refer to the king's non-hesitancy in seeking glory through warfare, albeit a technically justified war with France. It is in the context of Henry's

motivation for war that the common soldier assumes his most important role. Prior to the battle scene, Shakespeare individualizes three conscripts who put squarely before Henry the major consideration of the play: is the cause justified? And yet, as I have suggested before, the individualization is not unique in the sense that the common soldier has not had validity elsewhere--indeed, quite the contrary. Just as Henry V is the fruition of Shakespeare's historical drama, these three conscripts--Michael Williams, John Bates, and Alexander Court--are the culmination of the pattern that Shakespeare has developed with the common soldier all along.

As we observed in Chapter I, the evidence from the first tetralogy was overwhelming that Shakespeare intended for the responsibility of warfare and its suffering to be placed on the nobility. The common soldier was a mere pawn responding as best he could to glory-seeking nobles engaged in relentless struggle for power. More often than not, if the soldier perceived justice in the cause or if he were offered the proper example, he responded positively; if the reverse were the case, he responded negatively. Also common to both instances was the plight of the soldier; the record of death and maiming was high. The soldier emerged, therefore, as a powerful symbol of the waste in war. With the exception of a scene dramatizing the grief of soldiers in 3 Henry VI, Shakespeare's method was to present the

suffering through references to the thousands of troops participating in the nobility's war games. From these numbers the audience inferred the inevitably high casualty rates.

In the second tetralogy, particularly in the two parts of Henry IV and in Henry V, Shakespeare greatly expands themes related to the common soldier. The important incident in Henry V is preceded by very important events in both parts of Henry IV. For instance, Shakespeare uses the Falstaff recruitment scenes to criticize the inhumane practices of Elizabethan impressment. Also, Hotspur's fiery martialism is exposed as a reckless type of leadership that leads to needless slaughter. The four plays will reveal a continuation and fulfillment of the soldier presented as a valid citizen who responds in kind to proper leadership and who is, in Shakespeare's view, a humane entity not to be wasted in unjust warfare.

Richard II does not contain depiction of battle scenes; nevertheless, references occur that again indicate the common soldier's performance to be emulative of the leadership. Significantly in this play leadership means that offered by the King himself. Clearly Shakespeare designates Richard as being responsible for the civil insurrection that results in Bolingbroke's deposition. The play is thus a reiteration of the basic principle of leadership; that is, order depends upon strength at the very top.

The first reference to the common soldier in Richard II appears in the first few lines of Act I. The exposition reveals the heated disagreement between Bolingbroke and Mowbray, two rival lords. Among the numerous charges that the two nobles fling is Bolingbroke's accusation that Mowbray has kept for his own use money intended to pay the King's soldiers. Evidently exploitation of soldiers' money was a common offense throughout English history,¹ thus forming another reason for understanding a consistent lack of enthusiasm by the common soldier for military service. In the incident at hand, Bolingbroke asserts:

That Mowbray hath received eight thousand nobles
In name of lendings for your highness' soldiers,
The which he hath detain'd for lewd employments,
Like a false traitor and injurious villain.
(I.i.88-91)

Mowbray, of course, denies the accusation, but he does admit to keeping some of the money because of Richard's indebtedness to him:

Three parts of that receipt I had for Calais
Disbursed I duly to his highness' soldiers
The other part reserved I by consent,
For that my sovereign liege was in my debt
Upon remainder of a dear account,
Since last I went to France to fetch his
queen. . . . (I.i.126-31)

¹ Cruickshank, p. 78.

Regardless of Mowbray's explanation, the fact remains that the soldiers were denied a portion of their pay. If mutinies occur or if conscripts seem reluctant to fight, the actions of their leaders must be considered as primary causes. The case of denied pay is just one more example denoting the nobility's perversion of responsibility.

Indeed, irresponsibility is the key to understanding Richard's demise; and, again, the common soldier figures as a significant indicator of the consequences accompanying misrule. After banishing Bolingbroke and Mowbray from England, Richard turns to his project in Ireland. Although domestic conditions are not prime for supporting a war, Richard insists on carrying through. The manner in which he proposes to raise the money to pay for the invasion of Ireland indicates his bad judgment:

We are inforced to farm our royal realm;
The revenue whereof shall furnish us
For our affairs in hand: if that come short,
Our substitutes at home shall have blank charters;
Whereto, when they shall know men are rich,
They shall subscribe them for large sums of gold
And send them after to supply our wants;
For we will make for Ireland presently.
(I.iv.45-52)

To proceed with a war on such fragile footing can only forebode ill. This unsure financing will doubtless result in a poorly equipped army, unwilling to perform to its maximum. Within a few lines of Richard's pronouncement, an allusion to the logistical state of the army occurs. Bushy, a

servant to King Richard, enters to report that John of Gaunt, Bolingbroke's father, is near death. Richard sees Gaunt's imminent death as an opportunity to gain revenue for military supplies, namely such a basic requirement as clothing for soldiers:

Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
To help him to his grave immediately!
The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars.
(I.iv.59-62)

From this statement, the audience infers that the military supplies prior to the announcement of Gaunt's condition are paltry, yet Richard is willing to undertake an invasion of Ireland, to send his troops threadbare into the damp cold of that island. This evidence of the King's incompetent military judgment is typical of his ineffectual rule and foreshadows an inevitable demise.

Act II depicts the results of Richard's irresponsibility. To indicate the severity of the King's misrule, Shakespeare builds into this act the illusion of rapid decline. Early in Scene i, Gaunt forecasts Richard's impending fate:

His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves;
Small showers last long, but sudden storms
are short;
He tires betimes that spurs too fast
betimes. . . . (II.i.33-36)

Shortly thereafter, Richard, in the face of opposition from York and Northumberland, again announces an intention of attacking Ireland. Richard summarily dismisses York's contention that the confiscation of Gaunt's properties is an open invitation to Bolingbroke, who, thus deprived of his inheritance, would return from exile to reclaim it. Of course, underlying this entire debate is the implication of waste tied to the pursuance of war based on tentative support at best. Certainly Richard's dogged insistence on war in unfavorable conditions raises the issue of an unjust cause.

Immediately following Richard's decision to continue the Irish project, each one lists numerous complaints against Richard. Two important aspects of this dialogue are the significance of the complaints and, more interestingly, the rapidity with which the nobles abandon the King. Examples of the complaints levied are those delivered by Northumberland and Ross. Northumberland summarizes the general effect of Richard's misrule and attributes it to flattering advisors:

Now, afore God, 'tis shame such
 wrongs are borne
 In him, a royal prince, and many more
 Of noble blood in this declining land.
 The king is not himself, but basely led
 By flatterers; and what they will inform,
 Merely in haste, 'gainst any of us all,
 That will the king severely prosecute
 'Gainst us, our lives, our children, and
 our heirs. (II.i.238-45)

Ross specifically relates how the King has mistreated all classes of people:

The commons hath he pill'd with grievous
taxes,
And quite lost their hearts: the nobles hath he
fin'd
For ancient quarrels, and quite lost their hearts.
(II.i.246-48)

Obviously if the King himself does not display the proper example, the effect is predictable among those who are "food for powder." To emphasize the connection of the captain's report to the concept of order, Shakespeare appends the familiar correlation of disorder in nature to some disruption in the chain of being.

'Tis thought the king is dead; we will
not stay.
The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven;
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful
change. . . . (II.iv.7-11)

The remaining action of Richard II depicts the King's inevitable fall and Bolinbroke's accompanying rise. Yet for matters at hand, Richard II is important in emphasizing the necessity of responsibility in the high echelon. The nobles' desertion of Richard is most significant. If commoners are accused of fickleness in supporting leaders, no less can be said of the aristocracy. In the references to lack of complete pay and to logistical deficiencies,

Shakespeare again reiterates the valid concerns affecting common soldiers. Richard's obsession with an invasion of Ireland goes beyond mere ineffective judgment. It suggests a desire for glory, no matter what the cost, a theme that Shakespeare intensifies in the remaining plays of the tetralogy.

The two parts of Henry IV are distinguished from other plays analyzed thus far in this study through their extended treatment of military matters. In the early histories, battle scenes are enacted, but for the most part, martial subjects are not presented in exquisite detail. Most assuredly the common soldier is not individualized--with the notable exception of the bereaved soldiers in 3 Henry VI. And as we have just observed in Richard II, the common soldier is an important reference but not an extensive one. As Shakespeare continues his involvement in the historical genre, though, he dramatizes military scenes more fully; and this includes additional treatment of the common soldier. Again, the military scenes in the Henry IV plays and in Henry V reflect the general theme of order. Indeed Shakespeare perhaps devotes more effort to martial depiction because of the close correlation between order and the military realm, a microcosm of the state.

Although Henry V's endorsement of war with France spoils the pristine nature of the reign, the second tetralogy undeniably moves toward a pinnacle of stability that is

not present in the other chronicle plays. The first part of Henry IV records Bolingbroke's struggle to implement and maintain order following the upheaval in Richard II. The central figure in this struggle is not the King, however, but Prince Hal, whom Shakespeare presents as caught in a conflict between the ethos of the chivalric code and the dissipating appeal of the anti-establishment, represented by the characters of Hotspur and Falstaff, respectively. Hal's dilemma is thus presented in the design of a morality play, as J. Dover Wilson has shown in his The Fortunes of Falstaff.² The stunning rejection of Falstaff by Hal as the new King Henry V in 2 Henry IV climaxes the morality play. Although many critics sense an ulterior motive by Shakespeare, owing to the scathing manner of the rejection, the action is necessary because order demands it.³ The whole thematic scheme of order in the two Henry IV plays can be comprehended if viewed from a military perspective; and, as before, the common soldier is a vital referent.

In the Henry IV series we shall observe again the correlation between the quality of leadership and the response of the common soldier; similarly the common soldier

² The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943).

³ See E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 265-66.

as an element of war's waste assumes even more significance than in plays previously examined. In these two plays the responsibility for aristocratic corruption in waging war emerges more convincingly than in the plays of the first tetralogy or even in Richard II. The depth of these issues manifests Shakespeare's increasing skill in effecting characterization. The compelling characters of Hal, Hotspur, and Falstaff intensely engage the audience, and when these characters do anything, the actions affect the audience more emphatically. In the cases of Hotspur and Falstaff, the audience reacts to different military excesses: Hotspur's chivalry and Falstaff's corruption. More clearly than before, Shakespeare's concern emerges for the common soldier as a vital entity in the realm of order and as a symbol of humanity that should not be needlessly sacrificed in wars that can be avoided.

Ostensibly Hotspur represents the epitome of the would-be leader. He is Henry IV's ideal role model for his errant Hal, a notion suggested early in the exposition of 1 Henry IV through the King's high praise of Hotspur in dialogue with Westmoreland:

A son who is the theme of honour's tongue;
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;
Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride:
Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,
See riot and dishonour stain the brow
Of my young Harry. (I.i.81-86)

Even in the early confrontation of the King over a dispute about prisoners taken at Holmedon, Hotspur ironically lives up to his billing. He steals the show from the King as he humorously describes the foppish emissary demanding the release of prisoners. In concluding the defense, Hotspur presents Henry a compromising attitude that continues to foster the early favorable impression:

And I beseech you, let not this report
Come current for an accusation
Betwixt my love and your high majesty.
(I.iii.67-69)

Quickly, though, Shakespeare erases the surface view of Hotspur by placing him in circumstances that reveal the true character. Rather than accepting Hotspur's explanation, as Sir Walter Blunt urges, the King continues to vex Hotspur on the ransom issue and refuses to deal on the matter of the captured Mortimer, Hotspur's brother-in-law. The young noble immediately becomes enraged. When Henry leaves, having given an ultimatum demanding the return of prisoners, Hotspur exclaims:

An if the devil come and roar for them,
I will not send them: I will after straight
And tell them so; for I will ease my heart,
Albeit I make a hazard of my head.
(I.iii.125-28)

Hotspur is justified in his indignation at Henry's obstinacy, but the ominous aspect of this outburst is Hotspur's

admission that his primary aim is relief of his private grief, heart over head or self-satisfaction over reason. Hotspur's overt disclosure of primacy to the self signals disaster for leadership. Later, when war between the Percy allies and Henry is expected, Worcester more clearly defines Hotspur's weakness, an assertion precipitated by a heated quarrel between Hotspur and Glendower over partitioning of land. In essence Worcester's warning to Hotspur is also a definition of Shakespearean tragedy:

In faith, my lord, you are too wilful-
blame;
And since your coming hither have done enough
To put him [Glendower] quite beside his patience.
You must needs learn, lord, to amend this fault:
Though sometime it show greatness, courage,
blood,--
And that's the dearest grace it renders you,--
Yet oftentimes it doth present harsh rage,
Defect of manners, want of government,
Pride, haughtiness, opinion and disdain:
The least of which haunting a nobleman
Loseth men's hearts and leaves behind a stain
Upon the beauty of all parts besides,
Beguiling them of commendation. (III,i.177-89)

Hotspur's zeal is, therefore, at once his greatest strength and his greatest weakness, a trait he shares in common with Shakespeare's array of tragic heroes.

The military consequences of leadership offered by a person of Hotspur's rash tendencies could be calamitous. Although on the one hand Hotspur has the potential to inspire troops in a manner similar to a Talbot, his tendency to rashness could result in a needless waste of lives.

The latter possibility is precisely what happens. Act IV opens with a war-planning scene between Hotspur and his compatriots. Messengers arrive with news that should influence a reconsideration for battle. The first news is that Hotspur's father, Northumberland, is ill and cannot accompany the enterprise. Worcester understands the value of Northumberland's presence and hints that the venture should be delayed since the absence of the Earl might influence some to think that the faction has become divided. Worcester also fears that the justice of their cause could be viewed as suspect:

For well you know we of the offering side
Must keep aloof from strict arbitrement,
And stop all sight-holes, every loop from whence
The eye of reason may pry in upon us. . . .
(IV.i.69-72)

Hotspur's reply is indicative of his irrationality:

I rather of his absence make this use:
It lends a lustre and more great opinion,
A larger dare to our great enterprise,
Than if the earl were here. . . . IV.i.75-78)

The key word in Hotspur's answer is dare. Eager to fight, he is willing to take great risk. Throughout Scene i Hotspur increasingly loses sight of reality in his zest for imagined valor. Disregarding further warning about the numbers in the King's army, Hotspur works himself into a frenzy and in a climax to his foolhardiness, states:

I am on fire
 To hear this rich reprisal is so nigh
 And yet not ours. Come, let me taste my horse,
 Who is to bear me like a thunder bolt
 Against the bosom of the Prince of Wales. . . .
 (IV.i.117-21)

Immediately after Hotspur's self-directed pep talk, the rebel camp receives word that Glendower has not been able to raise an army. Even the militarist Douglas wanes; he declares: "That's the worst tidings I hear of yet" (IV.i.126). Worcester adds, "Ay, by my faith, that bears a frosty sound" (IV.i.127). Hotspur himself had even in the rallying speech affirmed the necessity of Glendower's power, yet he is undaunted by the new development. He asks Vernon the extent of the King's army and is told thirty thousand. Hotspur's reply is:

Forty let it be:
 My father and Glendower being both away,
 The power of us may serve so great a day.
 Come, let us take a muster speedily:
 Doomsday is near; die all, die merrily.
 (IV.i.130-34)

Mired in Hotspur's rhetoric and martial enthusiasm are the fates of the thousands of commoners who make possible the war plans of the nobility. Irresponsible decision making, such as that we have just witnessed in Hotspur's overzealous thirst for the glory of battle, is a perversion of order, a disregard for accountability by the aristocracy. Again, if the infantryman fights weakly or flees the

battlefield, can he be blamed? Hotspur's irrational behavior is still another example of reasons that mitigate commoners' sometimes unenthusiastic battle performance. Surely in the exposé of Hotspur's recklessness, Shakespeare directs a lesson to the aristocracy in his audience.

In the depiction of the battle between the Percy forces and those of the King, the outcome is predictable. The fight actually occurs because of Worcester's treachery in his failure to report the King's offer of peace to Hotspur and the others. Even so, Hotspur is eager for war, and Shakespeare includes another instance of his rash behavior. In this scene he wants to start the battle at night, despite the fact that all his troops, scant as they are, have not arrived. Worcester finally prevails, asserting: "The number of the king exceedeth ours: / For God's sake, cousin, stay till all come in" (IV.iii.28-29). The result of all the zealous display is, of course, defeat. Hotspur's overconfidence leads only to death in personal combat with Prince Hal. The only allusion to soldiers in the Percy fold occurs in the concluding scene of the play, and it recalls an earlier incident from 3 Henry VI. In that scene York regrets the surrender of his soldiers, despite their having been shown fierce example, but he compares the troops' task to a swan bucking endless waves, a futile enterprise. In the incident at hand, a similar situation applies. Douglas displays the correct leadership, but his

troops flee with the other rebel forces. Hal ascribes the soldiers' action to cowardice; again, however, Shakespeare has already reminded his audience of the odds against the rebels. Although Worcester's lie is the immediate cause for the battle, Hotspur's great willingness to commit forces, regardless of their being outnumbered and hastily assembled, is the primary reason for defeat. Too these soldiers are involved in civil war, and the justice of their cause is suspect, a possibility pointed to by Worcester earlier. Finally, the entire situation comes down to a conclusion reached before: Hotspur's irrationality and Worcester's deceit are additional causes of needless destruction wrought by the nobility.

If Shakespeare's treatment of Hotspur's chivalric intemperance only implies the involvement of the common soldier, the opposite occurs in Falstaff's role in the military schematic of 1 Henry IV. The scenes of the debased knight's recruitment of troops in both Henry IV plays actually reflect contemporary Elizabethan practices of impressment.⁴ Hence various critics, as noted, tend to accept Falstaff's rag-tag recruits as indicative of Shakespeare's opinion of the common soldier's worth.⁵

⁴ Refer to Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, pp. 129, 144, 153.

⁵ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 144.

This is emphatically not the case, for it is not the recruits that Shakespeare derides in these episodes--it is Falstaff himself who is the object of the dramatist's ridicule. In leadership Falstaff represents the opposite end of the spectrum from Hotspur. He is the very debasement of order. Indeed, Falstaff's corrupt misuse of impressment and his unconscionable treatment of his soldiers are the epitome of perverted leadership. Again, these corrupt practices offer important clues as to why Hal as King Henry V will reject Falstaff. My purpose in examining Falstaff's military role, however, will not be to enter the fracas about the rejection but rather to emphasize the significance of the negative leadership offered by Falstaff and how his corruption points to Shakespeare's revelation of the common soldier's dilemma that has been developing since 1 Henry VI.

In devising Falstaff as a corrupt Elizabethan captain, Shakespeare effectively attracts the audience of his time and in doing so brings attention to the widespread misuse of impressment by captains. The most abhorrent aspects of the captains' procedures were to accept bribes from men wishing to avoid military service and to facilitate a collection of dead pay by leading their recruits into the worst spots of battle to assure the killing of the majority.⁶ The fact

⁶ This is available in numerous sources, but Jorgensen's summary in Shakespeare's Military World, pp. 68-70,

that Queen Elizabeth's government did very little to discourage the corruption makes Shakespeare's dramatization of Falstaff's operation a controversial point. Abraham Zamichow states in his dissertation on Shakespeare's depiction of the common citizen: "One may laugh at Falstaff and his motley crew, but one's attention is drawn to Elizabethan abuses. In Henry IV, Parts I and II, Shakespeare comes close to an outright attack on such contemporary exploitation."⁷

The clarity, then, of Falstaff's illegality in recruiting is unquestioned. In 1 Henry IV, Falstaff reveals his recruiting method after the fact, declaring, "I have misused the King's press damnably" (IV.ii.13). Indeed. The details follow:

I pressed me none but such toasts-and-butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins' heads, and they have bought out their services; and now my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies, slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores; and such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable ragged than an old faced ancient: and such have I, to fill up the rooms of them that have bought out their services, that you would think that

is a succinct, informative capsule of Elizabethan military writers' accounts on the subject.

⁷ Zamichow, p. 189.

I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately
 come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and
 husks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me
 I had unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead
 bodies. No eye hath seen such scarecrows.
 (IV.ii.21-39)

Falstaff goes on to say that almost all of his soldiers
 come from prison and that they are hideously clothed.
 Furthermore, he vows that he will not march through any
 town because he is ashamed to be seen with his recruits.

The sight of a fat Falstaff leading the dregs of
 society is indeed hilarious. The comedy turns dark,
 however, when Hal enters the scene and chides Falstaff
 for his selection of "pitiful rascals" (IV.ii.70). Fal-
 staff passes off the remark with some incredibly inhumane
 reasoning:

Tut, tut, good enough to toss; food for
 powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as
 well as better; tush, man, mortal men, mortal men.
 (IV.ii.71-73)

As ragged and pitiful as Falstaff's recruits are, they are
 still human beings, and Shakespeare here clearly indicates
 in the phrase "food for powder" the waste of humanity so
 often alluded to in earlier plays. Falstaff's pretense as
 captain leading men to war is the most serious abridgement
 of military order observed to this point. It is a matter
 that Shakespeare will treat directly in Troilus and Cres-
 sida. If condemnation is being issued here, the dramatist

directs it not at the recruits but most assuredly at the recruiter.

Those who defend Falstaff as a harmless miscreant must perforce overlook the fates of his recruits. As alluded to above, a prevalent practice among sixteenth-century captains was to direct their troops into the thickest fighting to effect the killing of as many as possible, the reward being a collection of the dead men's pay. Evidently this is what Falstaff has in mind for his charges, as he admits:

I have led my ragamuffins where they are peppered:
there's not three of my hundred and fifty left alive;
and they are for the town's end, to beg during life.
(V.iii.36-39)

Roy Battenhouse comments that the conscripts exist as "a kind of figura of the abused state of England's poor, preyed on by their superiors."⁸ Yet, as an apologist for Falstaff, Battenhouse asserts, "We lack evidence, actually, that any of Falstaff's recruits ever took part in battle."⁹ Literally, perhaps this observation is true, but we must accept Falstaff's admission of leading the men to a place in the fray where the fatal casualties are ninety-eight percent. Battenhouse correctly identifies the purpose of the conscripts, but he downplays Falstaff's role in directing

⁸ "Falstaff as Parodist and Perhaps Holy Fool," PMLA, 90 (1975), 43.

⁹ Battenhouse, 43.

recruits. According to the pattern of leadership/ performance, Falstaff epitomizes the debased leader. The consequences of Falstaff's debased leadership are so monumental that a term line ineffective does not even come close to adequately describing it. Battenhouse casts Falstaff as a parodist; if so, the object of parody in the scene is Falstaff's abrasion of military order.

Two additional observations emerge from Falstaff's action. The first is a reference to the plight of the three conscripts who do survive; they can look forward to a life of begging. As indigent draftees, these men have no vocational skills to draw upon. Even Jorgensen admits that this development "possibly produced in audiences uneasy recognition of a royal failing."¹⁰ Yet he excuses Elizabeth from any overt responsibility in the matter by declaring:

There were occasional, though inadequate, hospitals for the maimed, and pensions for a few deserving veterans. The Queen could not afford much more. Besides, she was apparently quite at ease with her own conscience.¹¹

The text, however, does not reflect this education. A more cogent comment is Zamichow's conclusion: "Shakespeare perceives that a by-product of war was the economic, political, and social dislocation of a great portion of the lower

¹⁰ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 211.

¹¹ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 211.

classes."¹² The disregard for the common soldier's postwar welfare is still another example of the governing class's abandonment of responsibility.

A final note related to the recruits is Shakespeare's use of anachronism to emphasize the cruelty of war felt by the common man. In the late sixteenth century the technology of weaponry was relatively advanced. The "engines" of war had grown increasingly more destructive. Hence, when Shakespeare has Falstaff deliberately state the exact number of his recruits who are killed (147 of 150), he draws attention of the audience to the horrific capability possible through the use of cannon and other gunnery. Falstaff leads his men where they are "peppered"; Shakespeare, in effect, alerts the audience to the ruthless killing of soldiers in the ranks. If captains want to collect dead pay of troops in their immediate commands, advances in firearms aid the effort. The soliloquy by Falstaff is brief, but it is replete with significant details that accentuate exploitation of the common soldier.

Hotspur and Falstaff, then, represent two opposite extremes of military figures, extremes that the future Henry V must refute. The martial facet of the morality play engaging Prince Hal perhaps offers the best insight into comprehending the future conduct of the Prince as King.

¹² Zamichow, p. 189.

As Prince of Wales, Hal is aware naturally of Hotspur's reputation and his father's admiration for Percy's devotion to chivalry. In Act II Hal voices his distaste for Hotspur's firebrand martialism in a satire spoken at the Boar's Head:

I am not yet of
Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north, he that kills
me six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast,
washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this
quiet life! I want work." (II.iv.113-17)

Likewise it is erroneous to believe that Hal is not aware of the impending need to disclaim the picaresque life led by Falstaff and his companions. In the mock dialogue in which Falstaff plays Hal and Hal assumes the role of the King, Hal, perhaps, reveals his true feelings when, in the guise of the King, he replies to Falstaff's entreaty not to banish "plump Jack": "I do, I will" (II.iv.528).

Possibly to emphasize the antithetical nature of Hotspur and Falstaff as leaders, Shakespeare sacrifices Hal's role to some extent. The star of chivalry and the rogue of Eastcheap monopolize audience attention. Even though Hal assumes an active part in the Eastcheap games, it is still Falstaff's domain, his location of operation. The audience, therefore, does not have much of an opportunity to view Hal himself as a leader following his conversion to princely stature in Act III. In this scene, he pledges to Henry that

he will recover his reputation through martial struggle with Hotspur:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head
And in the closing of some glorious day
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;
When I will wear a garment all of blood
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,
Which, wash'd away, shall scour my shame with it:
And that shall be the day, whene'er it lights,
That this same child of honour and renown,
This gallant Hotspur, this all-praised knight,
And your unthought-of Harry chance to meet.
(III.ii.132-41)

Of course, Hal makes good his promise and, in a fierce duel during the course of battle, kills the overconfident Percy. In this incident he fulfills the requirement of valiance, the need for the battlefield general to be courageous as an example to the rank and file.

Yet a more important development occurs signalling Hal as a future model who considers the common soldier's welfare. The scene is short, but prophetic of Henry V. In the negotiations before the Battle of Shrewsbury, the Prince declares to both Henry IV and Worcester a concern for the lives of those who will fight:

In both your armies there is many a soul
Shall pay full dearly for this encounter,
If once they join in trial. (V.i.83-85)

Hal is leading up to a chivalric challenge to Hotspur, a duel between the two to decide the issue, "to save blood on either side" (V.i.99). Ironically Hotspur voices the same

opinion, but the battle happens anyway because of Worcester's fraudulent report. The dark irony is, of course, that Hal and Hotspur's duel does occur but too late to save the hundreds who die. The Prince's idea for the duel is, nevertheless, an early indication of his concern for the welfare of the common soldier.

The second part of Henry IV continues the issues observed in the first. The theme of leadership is alluded to often while the abuse of impressment is reiterated through another recruiting incident involving Falstaff. The first scene of the play depicts various rebel lords discussing the Battle of Shrewsbury. The discourse is a remarkable summary of the themes observed to this point: it reflects the exigency of strong leadership, the fatuity of pursuing a war in which defeat is likely and the waste of life produced therein, and the debilitating effect on soldiers of fighting a civil war. Therefore, at the outset we find Morton relegating the loss to Hotspur's death during battle. Although the younger Percy was reckless, his example as a field leader inspired all in his command, as Morton, an attendant to Hotspur's father, the Earl of Northumberland, explains:

his death, whose spirit lent a fire
Even to the dullest peasant in his camp,
Being bruited once, took fire and heart away
From the best temper'd courage in his troops;
For from his metal was his party steel'd;
Which once in him abated, all the rest

Turn'd on themselves, like dull and heavy lead:
 And as the thing that's heavy in itself,
 Upon enforcement flies with greatest speed,
 So did our men, heavy in Hotspur's loss,
 Lend to this weight such lightness with their fear
 That arrows fled not swifter toward their aim
 Than did our soldiers, aiming at their safety,
 Fly from the field. (I.i.112-25)

As we have seen so frequently in the plays considered thus far, the field leader himself must exhibit the courage he expects from the soldier in the ranks. Predictably, Hotspur's courage fulfills the inspirational requirement, but Morton tempers the accolade by guiding the conversation to the unpleasant recognition that Shrewsbury was a very imprudent pursuit. For instance, Morton reminds Northumberland of his son's vulnerability and foolhardiness:

You were advised his flesh was capable
 Of wounds and scars and that his forward spirit
 would lift him where most the trade of danger
 ranged. . . . (I.i.172-74)

And Lord Bardolph recalls for the whole group their collective irrational judgment for instigating a war that had the odds clearly set against them:

We all that are engaged to this loss
 Knew that we ventured on such dangerous seas
 That if we wrought out life 'twas ten to one;
 And yet we ventured, for the gain proposed
 Choked the respect of likely peril fear'd. . . .
 (I.i.180-84)

Implicit in this point, although of no concern to Bardolph, is the waste of life produced by military ventures known to

be impossible from the beginning. Finally, Morton reminds his comrades that the battle they fought was a rebellion, a fact that devitalized the fighting spirit of their soldiers, Hotspur's zealous inspiration notwithstanding. Addressing Northumberland, he states:

My lord your son had only but the corpse,
But shadows and the shows of men, to fight;
For that same word, rebellion, did divide
The action of their bodies from their souls;
And they did fight with queasiness, constrain'd
As men drink potions, that their weapons only
Seem'd on our side; but, for their spirits and
souls,
This word, rebellion, it had froze them up,
As fish are in a pond. (I.i.192-200)

As we may recall from 3 Henry VI, soldiers must perceive justice in the cause; revolt against sovereignty of the crown is contrary to the caste that peasants are supposed to obey, a violation of order. Morton seems to say, "How, then, could we have expected inspired effort from our common ranks?"

To remedy the problem of justice, Morton reveals that the Archbishop of York is busy stirring up people in his domain against Henry on grounds that Richard's grievance requires absolution, a cause sanctioned in heaven. Morton, of course, is aware of the prelate's scheming:

But now the bishop
Turns insurrection to religion:
Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts. . . .
(I.i.200-203)

Morton and the others, however, are elated to seize the Archbishop's manipulation as a reason to continue their rebellion. The scene thus ends with nobility once more disregarding the realm of order. For all the analyses of Shrewsbury, they have essentially learned nothing. Waiting in the wing is a plentiful supply of fresh cannon fodder.

Indeed the cannon fodder in 2 Henry IV is the subject of a comic recruiting incident by Falstaff that greatly expands the similar depiction in 1 Henry IV. The scarecrows are individualized, and we witness Falstaff's process of selection and bribery by the two finest recruits. The scene is emphatically comic as the audience views the likes of Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf being questioned by the cynical Falstaff under the scrutiny of Justice Robert Shallow. Within the comedy, however, Shakespeare has embedded another attack on the contemporary abuse of impressment. For Shakespeare to have mixed the comic and serious is exactly what he had in mind, according to A. P. Rossiter's proposition that the histories imbricate the two elements. On the recruiting episode, Rossiter states: "Ambivalence again. And all comic; though implicitly all these 'King's Press' episodes are serious commentary on the wickedness and irresponsibility inseparable from WAR."¹³

¹³ "Ambivalence: The Dialectic of the Histories," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Henry V, ed. Ronald Berman (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 77.

Not surprisingly each of the recruits, except Feeble, tries to convince Falstaff of unfitness for military service. Knowing what awaits him, Peter Bullcalf says: "In very truth, sir, I had as lief be hanged, sir, as go" (III.ii.237-38). Of the potential recruits Bullcalf and Mouldy are the most promising, but they are the ones who have the money to salve Falstaff's itching palm. Thus, when Shallow chastises Falstaff for excluding the two, Falstaff launches into an explanation that discloses why he has nothing but scarecrows for soldiers, "food for powder":

Care I for the limb, the thewes, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man! Give me the spirit, Master Shallow. Here's Wart; you see what a ragged appearance it is: a' shall charge you and discharge you with the motion of a pewterer's hammer, come off and on swifter than he that gibbets on the brewer's bucket. And this same half-faced fellow, Shadow; give me this man; he presents
no mark to the enemy; the foeman may with as great aim level at the edge of a penknife. (III.ii.276-85)

Shakespeare, through Falstaff, dramatizes what must have been a typical practice by sixteenth-century captains. As Rossiter has observed, we laugh but beneath our laughter is the void of humaneness symbolized by Falstaff's actions.

The scene yields still more insight into Shakespeare's increasing development of the common soldier as a vital entity in the macrocosmic concern with order. The character Feeble has elicited some sympathetic comment from Paul Jorgensen as being the only one of the five potential soldiers

to have "the proper spirit for serving his country. It is from his kind--more sturdily built, to be sure--that there will arise the remarkably human, troubled, but loyal soldiers of Henry V."¹⁴ Jorgensen admires Feeble's rejoinder to Mouldy's excuse for avoiding conscription; it reflects the spirit of patriotism urged in numerous "hortatory tracts," according to Jorgensen:¹⁵

By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once:
we owe God a death: I'll ne'er bear a base mind:
an't be my destiny, so; an't be not, so: no man
is too good to serve's prince; and let it go which
way it will, he that dies this year is quit for
the next. (III.ii.250-54)

Bardolph praises him highly, and Feeble repeats, "I'll bear no base mind" (III.ii.257). Yet to examine only superficially Williams' comments to Henry V is to discover logical reasoning, whereas Feeble's exhortation is a repetition of the propaganda urged in the patriotic tracts. Feeble, therefore, is emphatically not Williams' predecessor. Instead he is a satirical instrument used by Shakespeare to expose the forward precept that commoners should cheerfully give themselves to the cause of the King or any other liege who may demand it. Feeble, by affirming blindly patriotic zeal, reveals the second dimension of his name;

¹⁴ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 139.

¹⁵ Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 139.

that is, in addition to being a feeble-bodied tailor of women's clothing, he is feeble-minded. For Shakespeare to use a character named Feeble as a mouthpiece for some espoused principle is a totally ridiculous proposition. On the contrary, Feeble's role is to parody the nobiliary belief that peasantry is expendable flesh for the cause. The incident is an additional example of Shakespeare's condemning the aristocracy for twisting the societal caste to its own purpose in complete disregard for the mass of commoners.

Elsewhere in 2 Henry IV, allusions to the formula of leadership/performance abound. The rebel lords at least are more cognizant of numbers as they prepare another revolt against Henry, even if their cause is dubious. As the Archbishop and his allies plot strategy, they are all mindful of the absolute need for the presence of Northumberland and his leadership. Lord Bardolph implores his friends not to continue planning without the assurance of Northumberland's participation. He reminds the assembly that it was Hotspur

who lined himself with hope,
Eating the air on promise of supply,
Flattering himself in project of a power
Much smaller than the smallest of his thoughts:
And so, with great imagination
Proper to madmen, led his powers to death
And winking leap'd into destruction.

(I.iii.27-33)

The session ends, nevertheless, in the decision to pursue war plans, but only after Bardolph has been assured that the numbers in their army are equal to the King's forces. Later in the play when battle appears imminent, Westmoreland asserts to the rebel Mowbray that the King's army is "all too confident / To give admittance to a thought of fear" (IV.i.152-53). Further, according to Westmoreland:

Our battle is more full of names than yours,
Our men more perfect in the use of arms,
Our armour all as strong, our cause the best;
Then reason will our hearts should be as
good. . . . (IV.i.154-57)

These repetitions by Bardolph and Westmoreland that assert the importance of sufficient numbers, the necessity of strong leadership, and the awareness of justice in the cause reiterate the importance of these elements in pursuing warfare, which in this instance does not recur owing to Prince John's deception of the rebel lords.

The significant aspect of the remaining action in 2 Henry IV is Hal's much-heralded rejection of Falstaff, an event that critics believe either clues us to Shakespeare's eventual portraiture in Henry V of the ideal king or to an exposé of a Machiavellian glory seeker.¹⁶ A rational interpretation of both Henry V's character

¹⁶ See Ronald Berman, "Introduction," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Henry V, p. 9.

and Shakespeare's thematic intent in the play resists the typical critical tendency to categorize these issues into neat divisions. Rossiter's thesis of ambivalence applies well to Henry V.¹⁷ In most respects Henry is the ideal king and leader, but in depicting Henry's rapid acceptance of the Archbishop's justification for invading France, Shakespeare reveals the temptations a king may encounter. The incident indicates the awesome responsibility a king has in deciding war policy; it is in this respect that the common soldier assumes more importance than heretofore analyzed. I refer to the event that places Henry incognito arguing with skeptical conscripts about the justification of war. The scene is Shakespeare's way of bringing attention to the tenuous base for the French campaign, indeed to the tenuity on which almost all wars are warranted. Yet the soldiers are not merely thematic devices; rather the scene represents Shakespeare's permitting the soldiers who have existed as numbers or as oblique references to speak their minds as the power that affords kings or rebellious lords the ability to wage war. Their individualization epitomizes the pattern of leadership/response. Far from being exceptional, the conscripts represent a logical extension of the pattern Shakespeare has embedded throughout the history plays.

¹⁷Rossiter, pp. 74-87.

The three common soldiers' skepticism over the justice of the cause in Henry's French invasion is the dominant martial issue in Henry V; however, before a full examination of the matter, other elements that manifest the maximum development of the leadership/response pattern require attention. For instance, Henry displays superb field leadership. In the depiction of the siege at Harfleur, Henry is amidst the action and is a rallier for the troops. Significantly, he singles out the commoners for praise:

And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt
not;
For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. (III.i.25-32)

This enactment of battle presents the acme of achievement in field leadership. Henry's praise of the commoners' eagerness is no accident. The King's participation in battle inspires the troops, similar to Talbot's adventures in 1 Henry VI. Soldiers thus give their all to the effort. The Harfleur example is repeated at Agincourt, although not as graphically. Henry is not shown in battle, but his participation is implied. Prior to the attack, he again recognizes the importance of the common soldier;

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition. . . .
(IV.iii.61-63)

The concept of leadership extends also to a genuine concern for the common soldier, a trait that may be manifested in numerous ways. Indeed, to be interested in the commoner's views of war is a prime example. Henry, however, bestows concern in several situations, often subtly. For instance, following the surrender of Harfleur, he expresses to Exeter an awareness of sickness besieging his troops. Although he proposes no remedy, the acknowledgement of the problem at least indicates concern:

For us, dear uncle,
The winter coming on and sickness growing
Upon our soldiers, we will retire to Calais.
(III.iii.54-56)

In the prayer before Agincourt, Henry includes the commoners:

O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them. (IV.i.306-09)

The chorus in the prologue to Act IV also indicates the king's genuine feeling for all his band:

O now, who will behold
The royal captain of this ruin'd band
Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
Let him cry "Praise and glory on his head!"
For forth he goes and visits all his host,
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile

And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.

 Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour
 Unto the weary and all-watched night,
 But freshly looks and over-bears attaint
 With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;
 That every wretch, pining and pale before,
 Beholding him, plucks comfort from his
 looks. . . . (IV.Prologue.28-34,37-42)

Intermingling with the complete army denotes a sincere leader--and Henry is a paragon of sincerity.

Clearly the most noteworthy validation of Henry's genuine concern for the common soldier, though, emerges after Agincourt when the King reenounters Michael Williams, the most vociferous of the three common soldiers met the night before. In the course of the first meeting, the King and Williams challenge each other over whether or not the King would ransom himself. Williams is shocked when Henry reveals in the subsequent meeting that he is the person challenged. Captain Fluellen urges Henry to execute the soldier, but the King understands the circumstances. After hearing Williams' explanation, Henry generously bestows money on the soldier and implores Fluellen to reconcile his difference with Williams:

Here, uncle Exeter, fill this glove
 with crowns,
 And give it to this fellow. Keep it, fellow,
 And wear it for an honour in thy cap
 Till I do challenge it. Give him the crowns:
 And, captain, you must needs be friends with him.
 (IV.viii.61-65)

Shakespeare includes this vignette to illustrate Henry's humaneness, his true appreciation of the common soldier's role. It is the Williamses who have effected the victory at Agincourt, and Henry knows it.

As he often does, Shakespeare provides a foil, who in respect to leadership is Lewis, the Dauphin. In every aspect of military leadership, the Dauphin is contrapuntal to Henry. In his zest for war, the Dauphin resembles Hotspur but without Percy's more redeeming chivalric impulses. When Exeter visits the French court as ambassador from Henry, he is greeted diplomatically by the King. The Prince, however, is surly and scorns the King's willingness to consider Henry's claims. He refers to the tennis balls sent to Henry as an insult to the English position:

Say, if my father render fair return,
It is against my will; for I desire
Nothing but odds with England: to that end,
As matching to his youth and vanity,
I did present him with the Paris balls.
(II.iv.127-31)

Again, an emotional leader satisfying his own grievances is the type who completely disregards the welfare of his subjects. At the end of Act III, Shakespeare attaches a scene that caricatures the French leaders as pompous, overconfident war lords. Undoubtedly the event is intended to please the English audience, but vestiges of the more serious treatment of Hotspur surface. After much comedy

involving the Dauphin's inordinate love for his horse, the scene turns to anticipation of the battle. Just as Hotspur was unusually anxious for the fight, so is the Dauphin, who speaks the following:

Will it never be day? I will trot to-morrow a
mile, and my way shall be paved with English faces.
'Tis midnight; I'll go arm myself. (III.vii.87-88,97)

The Dauphin indeed is of the species who will sacrifice soldiers for his own glory. In Hotspur, the zeal was dangerous but at least heartfelt. In regard to the Dauphin, though, the Constable of France accurately forecasts the real worth of the Prince's courage: "'tis a hooded valour; and when it appears, it will bate" (III.vii.122-22).

As we observed in the analysis of Henry's leadership, Shakespeare only slightly depicts the Battle of Agincourt, but he does not fail to indicate the consequences of vain leadership, such as that offered by the Dauphin and other French nobles. Scene ii of Act IV postures the French on the precipice of battle. The Constable presents a strong contrast to Henry in an awareness of the common soldier's necessity in battle and of the accompanying need to inspire troops. The Constable's estimation of the battle discloses both a disregard for the common ranks and any requirement of direction to the troops:

'Tis positive 'gainst all exception, lords,
 That our superfluous lackeys and our peasants,
 Who in unnecessary action swarm
 About our squares of battle, were enow
 To purge this field of such a hilding foe,
 Though we upon this mountain's basis by
 Took stand for idle speculation:
 But that our honours must not. What's to say?
 A very little let us do,
 And all is done. (IV.ii.25-34)

The Constable's definition might be Shakespeare's best negative definition of leadership. Unlike Henry at Harfleur, the French nobles shun the action, content to let the "lackeys" and "peasants" do everything. And yet the Constable can condemn the peasants for their "unnecessary action." The formula of leadership/performance is emphatically intact here, but negatively. As for the Dauphin, precious little is seen of him, except for some more braggadocio at the end of Scene ii. When the French aristocrats decide to do battle, it is too late to remedy the events that have turned against them. In the subsequent report revealing the number of French nobility killed, the list is long, which points to heavy participation. Nevertheless Shakespeare has definitely indicated the nobility's responsibility for losing the battle. To be sure, the ridicule of the Dauphin and other French leaders is exaggerated to delight the English audience, but the basis underlying Shakespeare's method is still the formula of leadership/performance.

Although Henry is the ideal military leader, his strength emerges in the field and certainly not in his contribution to the inception of the French campaign. It is within Henry's rapid acceptance of the Archbishop's justification for the English claim to the French throne that Shakespeare emphatically qualifies his endorsement of Henry as the ideal king. Further, it is within this reservation that the common soldier assumes an essential role. In the confines of Henry V, the individualized conscripts assert to Henry the consequences of waging an unjust war, but in the broader perspective the incident climaxes the concerns of inhumanity in war that Shakespeare has unhesitatingly voiced throughout the historical plays.

As much as Shakespeare might have desired to portray Henry as the ideal monarch--a logical consideration in light of the Prince's character development in the two parts of Henry IV--he cannot overlook the historical facts recorded by Holinshed.¹⁸ In his apparent eagerness for war, Henry emerges not much better than some of the other glory seekers thirsting for conquests via war. The lesson Prince Hal was supposed to have learned from Hotspur is lost when a proposed military aggression receives religious sanction from the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first scene of the play exposes the machinations of the Archbishop of Canterbury and

¹⁸ Craig, p. 209.

the Bishop of Ely. These prelates are worried that a bill in Parliament could result in the confiscation of church lands. To divert the King from considering an endorsement of the bill, the Archbishop reveals that he has proposed to Henry the possibility of acquiring vast lands in France through a justification to the French crown. The details of the proposal are disclosed in Scene ii of Act I. The Archbishop's delivery of the proposal amounts to a complicated legalese that would baffle the most astute member of the audience, which is precisely Shakespeare's intention. Henry, after listening to the sixty lines of bureaucratic verbiage, appears also not to comprehend. He simply asks again: "May I with right and conscience make this claim" (I.ii.96). The Archbishop affirms the right, and the matter is settled--that quickly.

The illusion of rapid acceptance on the matter of France leads to further suspicions about Henry's character, suspicions that undeniably modify the notion of his being an ideal king. The best that could be said of the situation is to claim naiveté on Henry's part; that is, Henry believes the Archbishop, as a high official of the Church, would not endorse a non-Christian cause. Actually this could hardly be the case, since Henry is well aware of the prelatic participation in rebellions against his father. Furthermore, even though the Archbishop's genealogical tracings are incredibly complex, Henry could hardly miss

the point that ultimately the claim is based on contradictory logic. The Archbishop reasons that an ancient law forbids the inheritance of the French throne through the female line, hence the alleged illegality of King Lewis' reign. Astoundingly, however, any claim to the French monarchy by Henry is based on succession through his great-grandmother; and, as H. C. Goddard capsules the issue, "The very thing that proves the title of the French king crooked . . . serves, by some twist of ecclesiastical logic, to prove the title of the English king good."¹⁹ The worst, then, that could be said of Henry is that he is a Machiavelian, grasping for an excuse to justify his war, but this is not the case any more than his alleged naive acceptance of the need to invade France. In reality Shakespeare exposes the ease with which nobles embrace war for whatever multitude of reasons, and he is not hesitant to reveal the hypocrisy often associated with war-making, even when it relates to the popular Henry V. The unveiling of Henry's hypocrisy can be seen when Henry begins to cloak himself in the mantle of God and to declare at every turn his Christianity. Paul Jorgensen is correct when he asserts that "Henry is surely

¹⁹ The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 221.

the most disturbing study in religious warfare that Shakespeare ever created. . . ."20

Shakespeare, in both tetralogies, consistently treats cause in warfare as one of his major themes, an example being the unjust cause of Richard III pitted against the just quest of Richmond. And as we have seen, Shakespeare has been concerned with both the effect on the common soldier's performance when an unjust cause is perceived and the human toll in waste and suffering signalled in numerous references to the common soldier's plight. Henry's famous visit in disguise to the commoners, therefore, is not something unique in Shakespeare but an expansion, a culmination of a theme treated throughout the canon. Henry's visit is again a manifestation of concern for the troops. Shakespeare, as we have noted, clearly designates Henry as an exemplary leader, but the dramatist must rouse the King's conscience for undertaking a war based on a tenuous cause. The performance of Henry's army is not affected by questions about the cause, however; strong leadership compensates. This is not to say that the soldiers are not concerned about the cause or about the horrors of war, as Henry learns vividly in his call to the common quarters.

20 "A Formative Shakespearean Legacy: Elizabethan Views of God, Fortune, and War," PMLA, 90 (1975), 231.

The encounter begins with dialogue among three common soldiers just before the dawn of battle: John Bates, Alexander Court, and Michael Williams. Although the conversation is brief, through it we are allowed to enter the feelings of common soldiers on the precipice of a great battle:

Court. Brother John Bates, is not that the morning which breaks yonder?

Bates. I think it be: but we have no great cause to desire the approach of day.

Will. We see yonder the beginning of day, but I think we shall never see the end of it.

(IV.i.87-92)

Goddard is impressed by the poetry of the scene, particularly Court's lines:

Just eleven words--and the rest is silence. But those words let us into the secret thoughts of a man who never expects to see another dawn, and in his silence we hear the heartbeats. We hear to the end of the play. Did he fall in battle? We never know. Even Shakespeare seldom packed so much into so little.²¹

Indeed the scene effectively captures the feelings of the three conscripts who are well aware that the coming day might be their last. The event is not a rarity, however, in providing insight into intimate feelings of commoners at war--we must once more recall the grieving soldiers in 3 Henry VI as an equally moving depiction. Yet when Henry

²¹ Goddard, p. 240.

enters and questions the soldiers about the respective duties of the king and his troops, the scene represents the first opportunity for commoners to voice their opinions on war. What emerges from the dialectic is far removed from the reasoning of Feeble in 2 Henry IV.

The first important item mentioned is Henry's assertion that the King should not be troubled by underlings voicing their fears to him because it is necessary for the King not to show any sign of fear "lest he . . . should dishearten his army" (IV.i.116-17). Bates responds by saying he suspects the authenticity of the King's courage:

He may show what outward courage he will;
but I believe, as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish
himself in Thames up to the neck; and so I would he
were, and I by him, at all adventures, so we were
quit here. (IV.i.118-22)

Henry replies that the King wishes himself nowhere but at Agincourt, to which Bates rejoins:

Then I would he were here alone; so should
he be sure to be ransomed, and many poor men's
lives saved. (IV.i.126-28)

Throughout the histories Shakespeare has alluded to the waste of manpower inherent in war; here Bates simply relates the common man's perspective on military slaughter. This is not cowardice revealed by Bates but Shakespeare's voice of revulsion over the loss of humanity. He has voiced this perspective before, although from one higher in the caste

if we may recall Henry VI's comment about the suffering of
commoners in 3 Henry VI:

O bloody times!
Whiles lions war and battle for their dens,
Poor harmless lambs abide their enmity.
(II.v.73-75)

It remains, though, for Michael Williams to elevate the dialogue into an intellectual dialectic. Henry declares that he could not die any more contentedly than to die for the King, "his cause being just and his quarrel honourable" (IV.i.132-33). The rejoinder by Williams is quick: "That's more than we know" (IV.i.134). In this short sentence a commoner voices the view of the ranks, those who have been pressed into fighting wars, the causes of which are not clear but death certain. Shakespeare permits the Elizabethan audience to see the legitimate concerns of commoners who provide the power for the ventures of warring lords. The concern that the commoners have is not just one of dying in battle, though, but also concern over responsibility for participating in a possibly unjust war. Bates declares that the commoner should not even seek to know the cause; that responsibility is the King's:

If we know we are the king's subjects:
if his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes
the crime of it out of us. (IV.i.137-39)

Bates' assertion emphatically reflects Shakespeare's view that responsibility rests at the top. Williams then forces the point even more. He graphically relates the horrors of the battlefield and the heavy burden a king must bear if he wages an unjust war:

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all "We died at such a place;" some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afraid there are few die well that die in a battle; for how can they charitably dispose of any thing, when blood is their argument? Now if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king that led them to it; whom to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.
(IV.i.140-53)

Williams' ultimate point is that a king's responsibility is eternal, that a king will pay for injustice, a point that perhaps has been alluded to before but never so forcefully stated.

The temporal aspect of Williams' assertion is equally significant. The soldier's description of the physical horrors of war surely must jolt the audience. To mention the revulsion of dismemberment is sufficient to draw attention to horrors of battle, but Shakespeare's grotesque image of the various anatomical parts joining together again to proclaim mistreatment elevates the point of suffering in war. Further, Shakespeare, through Williams, publicizes

additional suffering encountered by the common soldier: the lack of sufficient medical attention, the plight of war widows and children left helpless, and the unresolved debts left by many dead soldiers. Michael Williams' brief, but extremely poignant, speech is Shakespeare's voice daring to relate the miseries heaped on commoners by war and is the most effective statement in Elizabethan drama on the necessity of a king's adherence to responsibility vested in the highest human link in the chain of being. To recognize that Shakespeare chooses to vent his feelings on war so powerfully in Henry V is to comprehend even more the validity of the common soldier as human commodity not to be wasted. If the popular Henry V is guilty of engaging an unjust cause, Shakespeare does not shun the disclosure of the mistake. Again the rapidity with which Henry endorsed the Archbishop's sanction of the French invasion is a point that Shakespeare makes clear in Act I; the common soldier's concerns pronounced in Act IV reiterate the consequences of that action.

The dialectic between the soldiers and Henry does not end, however, with Williams' statement. Henry attempts to assuage the soldiers with a parable relating the degree of responsibility a merchant has if his son "sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea" (IV.i.154-55). The answer, of course, is none. Henry goes on to equate the parable directly to a king's responsibility to subjects

in war. He points out that a king cannot be responsible for every soldier's actions, declaring that "Every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own" (IV.i.186-87). In his argument, though, Henry avoids the issue of the merchant's motive. Goddard condemns Henry for twisting the point:

Was ever logic more topsy-turvy? What he should have said, to parallel Williams' argument, is: "If a merchant send his son forth with orders to cheat, the father, by your rule, should bear the blame if his son is dishonest."²²

Other critics accept Henry's argument as Shakespeare's voice. G. Geoffrey Langsam, for example, states: "The soldier was admonished again and again to keep himself pure in body and spirit so that, like a rich man, he would be ready at all times to face his Maker."²³

Williams and Bates seem to accept Henry's point, but the matter still does not conclude. If it had, then perhaps Langsam would be correct in his assessment, but Shakespeare continues the issue with Henry's assertion that the King would never be ransomed. The apparently assuaged Williams reverts to his earlier skepticism, replying:

Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully: but

²² Goddard, p. 242.

²³ Langsam, p. 114.

when our throats are cut, he may be ransomed, and
we ne'er the wiser. (IV.i.204-206)

Eventually Henry and Williams wind up challenging each other on the King's veracity. As we have already seen, Williams reappears following the enactment of battle. In the earlier context, Henry's forgiveness of Williams' bluntness and eventual reward is an example of the King's military leadership. The soldier's reappearance also connects to the issue of an unjust cause. Williams' apology follows:

All my offences, my lord, come from the heart:
never came any from mine that might offend
your majesty. (IV.viii.49-51)

Yet, and most importantly, Williams, as Zamichow points out, "does not abjure the ideas he had articulated."²⁴ The fact that Shakespeare goes to some effort to reintroduce Williams and to reassert this common soldier's dignity serves as another opportunity for the essentiality of the common soldier to be put forth. Zamichow summarizes eloquently the whole matter of the confrontation between Henry and the common soldiers: "In effect, Shakespeare's paying political tribute to the royal prerogative, here, nevertheless, revealed the people's thinking through a confrontation that posited king and people as equals."²⁵

²⁵ Zamichow, p. 219.

Ultimately the second tetralogy is about the "king and people as equals," a fulfillment of a pattern involving the common soldier that began early in the Henry VI series. Shakespeare uses the common soldier as a referent to emphasize the crimes of the nobility. Order demands adherence to responsibility from the highest link in the chain; when irresponsibility occurs, Shakespeare forcefully illustrates the consequences of such misrule. He does not question the validity of order as a concept, but over and over he points to the destruction accompanying disorder. The common soldier is an element that clues us to Shakespeare's didactic intention in the historic plays. As a figure that responds positively and negatively to effective and ineffective leadership, respectively, the common soldier illustrates the basic concept of order. On another plane, when sacrificed needlessly in battles or when participating in some noble's quest for glory, common soldiers epitomize the senseless waste inherent in many military ventures. In either case, Shakespeare does not condemn the soldier; quite the contrary, he clarifies the commoner as the backbone of all military enterprises. The message may be lost on Henry, but John Bates' pledge on the matter of the responsibility of the king in Henry V rings true as a definitive indication of Shakespeare's thought on the common soldier: "I do not desire he should answer for me; and yet I determine to fight lustily for him" (IV.199-200).

Chapter III

Leadership and Loyalty: Antony, Enobarbus, and Coriolanus

In tragedy we naturally expect the hero to subsume much of the dramatic interest in that we are necessarily drawn into his restricted, personal tribulation. Owing to the greater concentration in tragedy on character, then, a question arises about how Shakespeare interrelates the social issues that occur in the histories. Of course we know that the consequences of the personal tragedy spread throughout the social order--the entire domain suffers, for instance, when Lear inanelly divides his kingdom or when Macbeth usurps the throne. But what happens to a less inclusive theme, such as the treatment of the common soldier? Do we still encounter the operation of leadership/performance and the accompanying concern of needless waste symbolized by common soldiers hurled into battle as mere common fodder? The answer is decidedly yes, at least in the two tragedies most heavily imbued with martial depiction, Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus. The two principals, Antony and Coriolanus, are themselves military figures whose actions of negative leadership anticipate

their tragedies and manifest the waste of potential associated with their downfalls.

Suffice to say, then, that the formula of leadership/performance again can be demonstrated, but in tragedy Shakespeare expands the pattern in ways that were impossible in the histories. In Antony and Cleopatra, for example, the richest evidence yet of the formula emerges through the development of a minor but very important character: Enobarbus. He is not a conscript, but we infer that he is a commoner advanced through the ranks to become a confidante to Antony. Because of his developed character, Enobarbus is more significant than Michael Williams in Henry V. Hardin Craig refers to him as "Shakespeare's mouthpiece, a common man who knows the truth and has the courage to speak it."¹ Furthermore, Shakespeare has expanded significantly Enobarbus' role from its operation in his source, North's Plutarch.² As Marilyn Williamson states, "Shakespeare develops [Enobarbus] to epitomize the predicament of the follower in a divided world."³ Yet Enobarbus' character transcends a merely symbolic function. Indeed, Shakespeare

¹ Craig, p. 1073.

² Refer to Sylvan Barnet, "Recognition and Reversal in Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly, 8 (1957), 254-55.

³ "The Political Context in Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly, 21 (1970), 247.

so fully develops Enobarbus' predicament that the situation assumes tragic proportions in its own right.⁴ It is, then, through the function of character development that Shakespeare brings to fruition his concept of the common soldier "as an accountable entity," again to use Zamichow's phrase.⁵ Through Enobarbus, Shakespeare permits the audience an extended perspective of the common soldier's point of view, a situation he anticipated in the presentation of Michael Williams' opinions in Henry V.

In light of Enobarbus' consummate embodiment of the common soldier, the presentation of the theme in Coriolanus would seem at first to add little to amplify further development. But, although it is true that the common soldier emerges only as an anonymous entity in the play, the extreme hatred that Coriolanus harbors for the common man lends another dimension. The subject of Coriolanus' incompatibility with the populace has been variously interpreted. Some critics admire the aristocratic defiance, whereas others view the rift as a statement of Shakespeare's disenchantment with the ruling class.⁶ Common to the majority

⁴ See Barnet, pp. 333-34; and Lawrence E. Bowling, "Duality in the Minor Characters in Antony and Cleopatra, College English, 18 (1957), 254-55.

⁵ Zamichow, p. 5.

⁶ Various studies support the respective views. Perhaps the most sympathetic treatment of Coriolanus is in Stirling's The Populace in Shakespeare. The most cogent

of critics on Coriolanus, though, is the observation that the play is very dark. As Norman Rabkin points out, even the first scene of the play depicting the common citizen in a rebellious mood is a "grim parody of the opening in Julius Caesar."⁷ The absence of any comic relief is felt emphatically. Needless to say, given this morose perspective, the depiction of the common soldier is also grim. The vitriolic disgust that Coriolanus holds for the common soldier is unsurpassed, making the example of his command the pinnacle of negative leadership among all of Shakespeare's leaders. Although Coriolanus does not contain an Enobarbus, a strong common bond with Antony and Cleopatra is the negative leadership that pervades both plays.

The crisis in Antony's leadership results from a dilemma that originates, in Julian Markels' words, from "the opposition of public and private values."⁸ Lawrence Bowling theorizes that the conflict owes to a choice that Antony can never bring himself to make until it is too late to avoid tragedy; that is, he is constantly torn between fulfilling

statement of the common people's perspective in the works I have examined is in Zamichow's dissertation.

⁷ "Coriolanus: The Tragedy of Politics," Shakespeare Quarterly, 17 (1966), 196.

⁸ The Pillar of the World: Antony and Cleopatra in Shakespeare's Development (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 8.

his duty to Rome and his pursuit of Cleopatra.⁹ The thrust of the play appears to be this: when confronted with a choice between adherence to duty or fulfillment of pleasure, one had better elect clearly one or the other. Wavering between the two invites disaster. Bowling summarizes the matter quite well:

All his life, from the time he first began to attract public attention, Antony had been famous for two main interests. He had won international reputation not only for his heroic deeds as a soldier but also for his successful exploits as a lover. Up to the time of his meeting Cleopatra on the river of Cydnus . . . Antony had not allowed love to interfere seriously with his other main interest, for he had kept everything else subordinated to his duty as a soldier. But after this meeting, love became such a powerful force as to challenge his duty, divide him internally against himself, and bring about his tragic downfall.¹⁰

The predominantly Egyptian setting of the play is the perfect backdrop, then, for Shakespeare to highlight the responsibility a leader has to duty. Northrop Frye sees the play as "the definitive tragedy of passion," with Antony in conflict between the "Western and Roman world . . . pervaded by order, rule, and measure," and the Eastern "Dionysian world of gigantic feasting and

⁹ "Antony's Internal Disunity," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 4 (1964), 240-46.

¹⁰ Bowling, "Antony's Internal Disunity," p. 240.

drunkenness and love making."¹¹ The Elizabethan audience would, no doubt, identify with the Roman perspective and perhaps would not have been so generous as to grant Antony the possibility of a choice. At any rate, Antony's faltering leadership leads to dire results.

It is understandable, therefore, that Shakespeare chooses to open the play with an allusion to Antony's extreme neglect of duty. The messenger is Philo, who condemns Antony's total abandonment of martial responsibility in the pursuit of Cleopatra:

Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: these his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a twany front: his captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust. (I.i.1-10)

The function of the exposition here is similar to other openings in Shakespeare's tragedies, that is, to provide the audience initial insight into the hero's vulnerability. Antony, like almost all of Shakespeare's tragic figures, has surrendered to excess. Philo clearly reveals that the foremost Roman general has completely deserted his duty; the protagonist has abandoned his proper realm--a tragedy

¹¹ Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy
(Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 70-71.

impends. Although Antony is a Roman and is thrust into an Eastern setting, he nonetheless embodies the Elizabethan concept of responsibility placed on the leader.

Philo's observation is validated immediately as Antony enters with Cleopatra, lavishly attended by her ladies and eunuchs. To the duty-minded Romans, such as Philo and Demetrius, the extent of Antony's neglecting responsibility must be shocking. When an attendant arrives with news from Rome, Antony is miffed and openly vents his disgust, merely stating: "Grates me: the sum" (I.i.17). Cleopatra adds to the matter by taunting Antony about his wife, Fulvia, and his tentative position with Octavius Caesar. Hence we find Antony deriding Rome even more:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life
Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand as peerless. (I.i.33-40)

After witnessing the exchange, Demetrius states the Roman (and, no doubt, the Elizabethan) view:

I am full sorry
That he approves the common liar, who
Thus speaks of him at Rome. . . . (I.i.59-61)

The initial exposition, then, defines the essential conflict of the play, an irreconcilable clash between duty

and pleasure that will envelop Antony. His inability to solve the matter will adversely affect the social order; and Enobarbus, the common soldier, will become the barometer that best gauges the results of Antony's dilemma.

If viewed in a military context, Shakespeare's expansion of Enobarbus' role from Plutarch is understandable. In Henry V Shakespeare provides a hint of the impact that the individualization of a common soldier can have. We may recall that Michael Williams appears twice in Henry V. The first time he argues with Henry about the justification of war; the second time Williams defends his honor in resuming the challenge made by Henry in disguise. The second appearance briefly touches on Williams' true character. Shakespeare's treatment of Enobarbus is built around a similar format, with characterization fully developed. In much of Enobarbus' role, therefore, we find him, like Williams, as an advisor, a speaker of the truth. Essentially the advising scenes reenact the principles of leadership/performance. The second aspect of Enobarbus' role takes us much beyond anything Shakespeare has done with the common soldier. We view a fully developed character and participate in the human emotion of Enobarbus' tragedy.

In Act II the consequences of Antony's dereliction of duty surface clearly, and we view Enobarbus, the advisor, reacting to Antony's absence of leadership. Antony has finally returned to Rome in an effort to mend relations

with Octavius, who has endured not only military challenges from Fulvia but also constant threats from Pompey. Of course, Octavius is incensed at Antony's disregard of Roman matters. Their initial meeting begins with an intense argument, replete with charges and countercharges. Enobarbus is also present, and the event anticipates the pattern of his advisory role. Mecaenas urges the two principals at the height of their argument to consider a reconciliation because of the increasing threat posed by Pompey. At this point Enobarbus interjects in his characteristic plain-spoken manner that:

if you borrow one another's love for the
instant, you may, when you hear no more words of
Pompey, return it again: you shall have time to
wrangle in when you have nothing else to do.
(II.ii.104-107)

For having spoken the truth, he is rebuked by Antony and put in his place: "Thou art a soldier only: speak no more" (II.ii.109). As in Henry V, it is the soldier who does speak the truth; in the present case, however, no disguise is involved. Enobarbus speaks candidly with the voice of reason, a fact that Shakespeare intends the audience to discern in Enobarbus' response: "That truth should be silent I had almost forgot" (I.ii.110). In Henry V the only tangible effect of Michael Williams' comments on Henry is to prick his conscience over starting a war for a questionable cause. The present circumstance

affords the leader an opportunity to consider the merits of the commoner's advice, but it is not to be, as Antony rebukes Enobarbus even more sharply, stating: "You wrong this presence; therefore, speak no more" (II.ii.111). Eventually Agrippa, a friend to Caesar, suggests a route of conciliation, a marriage between Antony and Octavia, Caesar's sister. The important point here, though, is that Enobarbus' helpful suggestion is shunned.

Although Enobarbus appears in several scenes in the remainder of Act II and in the first part of Act III, the most opportune place to observe the operation of leadership/ performance occurs after Antony's rift with Octavius, an event that Enobarbus twice predicts.¹² In Scene vii of Act III, Antony's martial strategy echoes the reckless behavior of Hotspur and the French Dauphin. In this instance, Octavius possesses superior naval might, yet Antony has declared his intention of challenging Caesar by sea. The reason he gives is simply "For that he dares us to 't" (III.vii.30). To recollect briefly Hotspur's strategy the evening before Shrewsbury, the notion of daring is prominent. Hotspur consistently twists bad news, such as Northumberland's sickness or the inferiority in numbers of his troops, into a greater challenge, which in reality is pure recklessness. And Hotspur is advised of

¹² See II.iii.239-45 and II.iv.133-39.

the irrationality, although futilely, of course. Antony receives similar advice about a sea battle from Enobarbus, who bluntly warns of their side's ill-preparedness for such warfare:

Your ships are not well mann'd;
Your mariners are muleters, reapers, people
Ingross'd by swift impress; in Caesar's fleet
Are those that often have 'gainst Pompey fought:
Their ships are yare; yours, heavy: no disgrace
Shall fall you for refusing him at sea,
Being prepared for land. (III.vii.35-41)

The basic soundness of the advice seems obvious. First, the manpower of the would-be navy is composed of farmers recruited involuntarily. Beyond these soldiers' lack of commitment to Antony's cause is an ignorance of naval operations. Opposed to them are seasoned sailors, veterans of numerous battles. Added to these impediments is the type of ship in Antony's fleet, heavy freighters in contrast to Caesar's warships. To all of Enobarbus' points Antony can only reply: "By sea, by sea" (III.vii.42). Enobarbus tries again, this time attempting to use a bit of psychological reasoning:

Most worthy sir, you therein throw away
The absolute soldiership you have by land;
Distract your army, which doth most consist
Of war-mark'd footmen; leave unexecuted
Your own renowned knowledge; quite forego
The way which promises assurance; and
Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard,
From firm security. (III.vii.43-50)

Here Enobarbus attempts to persuade Antony that to abandon the naval strategy is simply to endorse his forte, leading an infantry. All of this is to no avail, however; as Antony insists on incurring Octavius by sea, again an irrational approach that signals a breakdown in leadership. As in the histories, faltering leadership will result in a needless waste of lives.

Noteworthy too in the growing evidence of Antony's declining rationality is the validation of Enobarbus' advice by an unnamed common soldier who also cautions Antony about naval warfare:

O noble emperor, do not fight by sea;
Trust not to rotten planks: do you misdoubt
This sword and these my wounds? Let the Egyptians
And the Phoenicians go a-ducking: we
Have used to conquer, standing on the earth,
And fighting foot to foot. (III.vii.62-67)

The speaker is evidently one of Antony's long-time followers, and by adding this infantryman's thoughts on the sea battle, Shakespeare reiterates the soundness of Enobarbus' advice, directing the audience's attention again to Antony's folly.¹³ When Antony exits, the soldier once more declares that he is right, and Canidius responds, indicating the

¹³ A conflicting opinion on the identity of the soldier is presented by J. Leeds Barroll, who theorizes that Scarus, one of Antony's friends, is the speaker. Barroll's article is entitled "Scarrus and the Scarred Soldier," Huntington Library Quarterly, 22 (1958), 31-39.

involvement of Cleopatra in Antony's decision to engage
Octavius by sea:

Soldier, thou art: but his whole action grows
Not in the power on't: so our leader's led,
And we are women's men. (III.vii.69-71)

At this juncture the audience anticipates the outcome of the
impending battle.

In the third of three very brief scenes that follow
depicting the battle, Enobarbus enters and reveals the news
of defeat: Cleopatra's fleet has deserted at the height of
battle. The effect on Antony's followers is devastating
but, again, not surprising. The comment of Scarus, another
of Antony's followers, on the persual of Cleopatra in the
midst of battle is especially revealing:

She once being loof'd,
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
Claps on the sea wing, and, like a doting mallard,
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her:
I never saw an action of such shame;
Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before
Did violate so itself. (III.x.18-24)

The result of Antony's weakness is open defection, but
significantly the common soldier is not the disloyal
element. Canidius, before announcing his own switch to
Caesar, states again the basic principle of leadership:

Our fortune on the sea is out of breath,
And sinks most lamentably. Had our general
Been what he knew himself, it had gone well:

Essentially the difference was participation; Antony led a spirited charge, whereas Octavius relied on subordinates.¹⁴ In Shakespeare's plays from the earliest history play through the tragedies, the essentiality of proper example has been a common element of superior leadership. Antony reveals the consequences of diminished example a few lines earlier: "I have lost my command" (III.xi.23).

The inference to the audience at the end of Scene xi is that Antony has at least recovered his senses, that perhaps his better judgment will prevail in resolving the dilemma of defeat. Yet at the outset of Scene xiii, Shakespeare reminds the audience through a statement by Enobarbus of the extraordinary degeneration of Antony's judgment in the naval battle. Enobarbus' assertion is a reply to a question from Cleopatra about who should be blamed for the loss:

Antony only, that would make his will
Lord of his reason. What though you fled
From that great face of war, whose several ranges
Frighted each other? Why should he follow?
The itch of his affection should not then
Have nick'd his captainship; at such a point,
When half to half the world opposed, he being
The meered question: 'twas a shame no less
Than was his loss, to course your flying flags,
And leave his army gazing. (III.xiii.4-12)

The point of Antony's error has been clarified in prior scenes, but Shakespeare evidently believes it necessary to

¹⁴ See Craig's notes, p. 1093.

repeat; in fact, he chooses to state overtly the most damaging flaw in Antony's character, the tendency to subordinate rationality to desire or, stated another way, the elevation of will over reason.¹⁵ Shortly, within the same scene, the validity of Enobarbus' summation emerges. Euphronius, an ambassador from Caesar, arrives to state that Antony's only recourse is death or banishment from Egypt. Cleopatra is present, and Antony, perhaps to impress her, sends Octavius a message:

tell him he wears the rose
Of youth upon him; from which the world should
note
Something particular: his coin, ships, legions,
May be a coward's; whose ministers would prevail
Under the service of a child as soon
As i' the command of Caesar: I dare him therefore
To lay his gay comparisons apart,
And answer me declined, sword against sword,
Ourselves alone. (III.xiii.20-28)

In the previous chapter, we noted the duels proposed by Hotspur and Prince Hal in 1 Henry IV, but the circumstances were markedly different; that is, the opposing armies had not yet fought. Antony, however, proposes a duel after defeat; the likelihood of such of an occurrence Enobarbus sarcastically notes:

Yes, like enough, high-battled Caesar will
Unstate his happiness, and be staged to the show,
Against a sworder. (III.xiii.29-31)

¹⁵ See Bowling, "Antony's Internal Disunity," p. 240.

The audience now recognizes that Antony's reasoning is unstable, and again Enobarbus interprets the implications in an aside:

I see men's judgements are
A parcel of their fortunes; and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike. That he should dream,
Knowing all measures, the full Caesar will
Answer his emptiness! Caesar, thou hast subdued
His judgement too. (III.xiii.31-37)

Quite obviously Enobarbus' summary of the matter is correct; Antony's interest in a duel is only wishful thinking.

Up to this point, Enobarbus' role has been principally as an advisor, a voice of common sense. As the play moves toward conclusion, however, we find the second aspect of the role becoming more prominent. In fact, the drama surrounding Enobarbus' abandonment of Antony is unique in Shakespeare's treatment of the common soldier. Although we have noted only the martial aspect of the relationship between the two, it is clear in other scenes of the play that Enobarbus is intensely loyal to Antony. The inference is that they have endured many battles, many adventures. Through the development of intimacy between a triumvir of the Roman Empire and a man of common heritage, Shakespeare prepares the audience to witness the debilitating effect of misguided leadership. We are allowed to participate in the private pain of Enobarbus as he decides to desert Antony. Enobarbus' reasons for leaving Antony define perfectly the

effect of weakened leadership and also assert once more the basic dignity of the common soldier whose dedication to the principles of military leadership in this situation exceed those of the leader.

The initial emphasis on Enobarbus' dilemma occurs in a continuation in Act III of the asides to the audience. In these few lines, Enobarbus perhaps speaks for the legions of common soldiers who have confronted irrational leaders:

Mine honesty and I begin to square.
The loyalty well held to fools does make
Our faith mere folly: yet he that can endure
To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord
Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
And earns a place in the story. (III.xiii.41-46)

By having Enobarbus define the plight of a soldier facing a leader who has lost his sense of judgment, Shakespeare in effect affords credibility to the actions of the anonymous thousands, referenced throughout the canon, who have responded negatively to various forms of ineffective military leadership. The purport of Enobarbus' comments is that the only possible reason to remain loyal to a leader such as Antony is for the glory of adherence to a lost cause. Yet the very fact that Enobarbus wrestles with the question of remaining loyal or deserting manifests his strong sense of values. This is in strong contrast to the six kings who do not hesitate to leave Antony's camp, as Canidius has already reported. Antony, the once-renowned general, flees at the

height of battle to chase the would-be admiral, Cleopatra. Who, then, indeed earns a place of honor in the story? By remaining loyal to this point, Enobarbus has shown himself to be a more principled man than those of higher rank. But this should not be surprising. After all, as we have seen, it is the conscripts such as Williams, Court, and Bates who effect the victory at Agincourt for Henry, even after the king's unconvincing argument about the justice of the French invasion. Bates' strong "yet I determine to fight lustily for him" has no counterpart in any noble's reaction to Antony's behavior. Enobarbus surpasses many of higher rank in remaining loyal to Antony as long as he does.

Nevertheless, Enobarbus does choose to abandon Antony. In the course of the action, Antony becomes enraged at the sight of a messenger from Caesar. During the tantrum Antony vows to fight again, regardless of the odds against the mission:

I will be treble-sinew'd, hearted, breathed
And fight maliciously: for when mine hours
Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives
Of me for jests; but now I'll set my teeth,
And send to darkness all that stop me.

(III.xii.178-82)

To all of the preceding, Enobarbus remains aloof. He discerns the danger of Antony's revitalized spirit and recognizes the potential for disaster in the General's "throw caution to the wind" mood:

Now he'll outstare the lightning. To be
 furious,
 Is to be frightened out of fear; and in that mood
 The dove will peck the estridge; and I see still,
 A diminution in our captain's brain
 Restores his heart: when valour preys upon reason,
 It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek
 Some way to leave him. (III.xiii.195-201)

Enobarbus, the career soldier, realizes foolhardiness when he sees it; and foolhardiness is exactly what Antony's new mood is as it allows valor to prey upon reason. Williamson states: "Enobarbus deserts because he knows that Antony is no longer rationally fearful as a good commander should be."¹⁶ The especial significance of Enobarbus' summation is that it speaks for the numerous unnamed soldiers who have deserted or fought unenthusiastically for the Hotspurs, Dauphins, or Richard III's. As for Enobarbus specifically, he represents a clear example of a subordinate's exceeding the General's military judgment. If Antony could be forgiven once for bad judgment in engaging Octavius by sea, he cannot be forgiven again. This situation is not at all similar, for instance, to Talbot's predicament in 1 Henry VI. There Talbot's army was outnumbered and surrounded; the only honorable course was to "go for broke." Surely if Antony were in the same spot, Enobarbus would be leading the charge. Instead, Antony's reckless reasoning, his

¹⁶ Williamson, p. 247.

"diminution of the brain" can leave Enobarbus, the dedicated soldier, only the choice of desertion. Antony's dotage is one matter, but the abandonment of sound military judgment is the supreme desertion of duty. Enobarbus' desertion of Antony is not a reprehensible act at all; indeed it is a very courageous act. Earlier Ventidius, one of Antony's commanders, remarks that he can accomplish even more for Antony, but he will not, for:

Who does it the wars more than his captain can
Becomes his captain's captain: and ambition,
The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss,
Than gain which darkens him. (III.i.21-24)

Enobarbus is in a similar dilemma. Given Antony's loss of judgment and the prospect of annihilation by Caesar, Enobarbus knows that he has done all that he can for his master.

Shakespeare, however, does not end the story of Enobarbus at the point of his decision to defect. Instead he builds considerable drama into the event that immediately precedes the desertion and especially into the aftermath, the part that justifies labelling Enobarbus' plight a tragedy itself. Scene ii of Act IV depicts Enobarbus' intense agony about his decision. For instance, Antony asks Enobarbus if he will fight well; the audience must sense the artificial enthusiasm in his reply: "I'll strike, and cry 'Take all'" (IV.ii.6). The audience at this point might

infer that Enobarbus has changed his mind and will stay with Antony, but Scene v reveals the desertion. The soldier who reports the news of the desertion is the same who had earlier urged Antony not to engage Caesar's navy. Antony states that he wishes the soldier's advice had prevailed, to which the soldier asserts:

Hadst thou done so,
The kings that have revolted, and the soldier
That has this morning left thee, would have still
Follow'd thy heels. (IV.v.4-7)

Antony replies with another statement declaring his realization of the consequences of his unwise judgment. He generously orders Enobarbus' chests to be sent after him and declares to Eros:

Say that I wish he never find more cause
To change a master. O, my fortunes have
Corrupted honest men! (IV.v.17-19)

The subsequent scene reveals the effect of Antony's generosity on Enobarbus. The once loyal soldier is overwhelmed by guilt:

I am alone the villain of the earth,
And feel I am so most. O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my
heart:
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought: but thought will do't,
I feel.
I fight against thee! No: I will go seek

Some ditch wherein to die; the foul'st best fits
My latter part of life. (IV.vi.30-39)

Antony's errant leadership does not differ significantly from other ineffective forms we have noted thus far, but we have not seen yet the close bond between a common soldier and his general such as the relationship between Enobarbus and Antony represents. Confusion is the net effect of Antony's weak example; if the general had not wavered in his duty, the loyal career soldier would not have defected. Bowling states: "It is Antony's unpredictable and sudden changing from one nature to another which sets up the internal division in Enobarbus, who is unable to reach a single and clear decision concerning which of Antony's natures constitutes the real Antony."¹⁷

Enobarbus' death, however, emphatically specifies the toll that Antony's wavering effects. Shakespeare heightens the significance by devoting Scene ix of Act IV to Enobarbus' dying. Enobarbus enters amidst a group of Caesar's soldiers and, apparently oblivious to their presence, vents the guilt he feels and dies extolling Antony:

O Antony,
Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
Forgive me in thine own particular;
But let the world rank me in register

¹⁷ Bowling, "Duality in the Minor Characters," p. 254.

A master-leaver and a fugitive:
O Antony! O Antony! (IV.ix.18-23)

The nature of Enobarbus' death has intrigued many critics.¹⁸ Jorgensen is puzzled by Shakespeare's "altering the cause of Enobarbus' death from the unromantic ague suggested by Plutarch, and by extending the heartbreak through two scenes of lamentation."¹⁹ Jorgensen goes on to label the scene as "an artistically doubtful episode," which can possibly be clarified through an Elizabethan view that deserters are subject to "fatal melancholy."²⁰ Barnet finds that Enobarbus is killed by his "recognition of Antony's grace."²¹ Craig, however, assigns the cause of death to despair: "Enobarbus has passed into the condition of despair, his spirits having descended into his bowels, leaving his heart dry."²² From the perspective of leadership/performance, the intense grief that Enobarbus exhibits is indicative of the powerful influence a leader may have on his subjects. Enobarbus, the

¹⁸ A helpful summary of the criticism on Enobarbus' death is in Paul A. Jorgensen, "Enobarbus' Broken Heart and The Estate of English Fugitives," Philological Quarterly, 30 (1951), 387-88. Barnet's article, cited earlier, also contains some critical summary.

¹⁹ Jorgensen, "Enobarbus' Broken Heart," p. 387.

²⁰ Jorgensen, "Enobarbus' Broken Heart," p. 388.

²¹ Barnet, p. 334.

²² Craig, notes, p. 1099.

ultimate common soldier, is forced to make a fatal decision because of the leader's irresponsibility. It is not merely self-preservation that influences Enobarbus' decision, but a recognition of Antony's total abandonment of basic military principles. Yet, the past bond--indeed the friendship--that existed between Antony and Enobarbus precludes a clean break. Enobarbus' tragic fate is inextricably tied to Antony's fatal decisions.

Waste is a ubiquitous by-product of tragedy. For Antony, the waste is so needless when we consider what could have been--essentially an empire in Egypt.²³ Over and over he is told that if he had reasoned matters more carefully, the battle with Caesar would not have been lost. The death of Enobarbus is one of the emphatic footnotes connected to Antony's tragic course. Enobarbus will stand, however, as one of Shakespeare's most remarkable revisions, a monument to the Michael Williamses, to the grieving father and son of 3 Henry VI, and to the anonymous thousands who fed the war machines of the Hotspurs and Richard III's. Enobarbus has indeed "earned a place in the story."

The abandonment of responsibility by Antony and the resultant tragedy is not the only instance of a Shakespearean military leader's inability to control judgment. We have already witnessed Hotspur's inordinate thirst for

²³ Bowling, "Antony's Internal Disunity," pp. 240, 242.

combat; another example is Othello, the career general, who has no time for adjustment to marriage before he is plunged back into a martial enterprise, ripe for Iago's devious manipulations. Still another of these career soldiers is Coriolanus. Although a renowned general who defends Rome in heroic fashion, Coriolanus cannot effect a successful transition to a consulship because of an unwillingness to compromise his utter disgust for the common populace. Coriolanus' attitude toward the common soldier reflects the vitriolic hatred of the masses he exhibits in civil society. Coriolanus is the most ferocious military figure to appear in Shakespeare, a fact that on the surface would seem to make him a paragon of military leadership. As we shall observe, though, Coriolanus' disgust for the "common file" affects the commoners' performance. His blatant disregard for the welfare of the common soldier is equalled elsewhere in Shakespeare only by Falstaff's callous actions. Coriolanus is an English warlord in Roman uniform, an aristocrat who views the common soldier as food for the weapons of war.

As a general, Coriolanus supersedes all others of that rank in Shakespeare as far as personal participation in battle is concerned. Yet with Coriolanus a feature exists that makes him unique in military leadership: principally he fights alone. Isolation does not denote wise leadership; it is a trait that, as Jorgensen says, "befits an adventurer

rather than a general."²⁴ Coriolanus performs heroic feats and berates those who do less. Consequently, he has nothing but contempt for the common soldiers, who are much less aggressive than he. Evidently Coriolanus believes the commoners should be imbued with the same fervent patriotism as he, even though they have little incentive to be so.

The exposition discloses the essential conflict between Coriolanus and the common citizenry. The first scene reveals a group of mutinous subjects armed with clubs, primed for revolution. The purported cause of the mutiny is famine due to lack of grain; yet the commoners believe a surplus is hoarded by patricians. The spokesman for their cause is the First Citizen:

What authority surfeits on would relieve us:
if they would yield us but the superfluity, while
it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved
us humanely; but they think we are too dear:
the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our
misery, is as an inventory to particularize their
abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them.
(I.i.16-22)

Quickly the name of Caius Marcius (later Coriolanus) emerges as the symbol of the commoners' wrath; he is referred to as "a very dog to the commonalty" (I.i.29). One of the citizens, however, supports Coriolanus as an able defender of

²⁴ "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," PMLA, 64 (1949), 222.

Rome, but the First Citizen retorts that Coriolanus' feats were all for self-aggrandizement:

I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.
(I.i.37-41)

The credibility of the citizen notwithstanding, this part of the exposition discloses the essential conflict that exists between the common populace and Coriolanus.

The first appearance of Coriolanus occurs a bit later in Scene i, and the initial impression is to sustain the First Citizen's opinion. The entrance immediately follows a lecture by Coriolanus' compatriot, Menenius, to the common people on the necessity of adherence to place in the chain of being. His analogy is to the Roman Senate as a great stomach that nourishes the entire state. Therefore, the common mass should be content because, as Menenius asserts to the First Citizen about the Senate:

you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you
And no way from yourselves. (I.i.155-58)

Menius goes on to label the First Citizen as the "great toe" (I.i.159) of the anatomical order, and at this juncture, Coriolanus, the symbol of nobility, enters. The commoners, who have just failed in pleading their case to

Menenius, now are confronted with their arch-enemy. Indeed, Coriolanus' first speech is marked by bitterness and belies Menenius' insistence on the benevolence of the aristocracy. He refers to the people as "scabs" (I.i.169) before launching into a vicious condemnation of the common citizenry:

What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights
you,
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon ice,
Or hailstone in the sun. (I.i.172-78)

In the later battle scenes depicting the war between Rome and Corioli, it is from the ranks of the people thus addressed that Coriolanus expects ultimate sacrifice. The extremity of Coriolanus' hatred for the common masses emerges a few lines beyond:

They say there's grain enough!
Would the nobility lay aside their ruth
And let me use my sword, I'll make a quarry
With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high
As I could pick my lance. (I.i.200-04)

His hatred of the common man is scathing, unique in its extremity among all Shakespearean despots.

Scene i has yet more to yield as an indictment of Coriolanus as a tyrant. The potential revolt of the populace over the dearth of corn indicates hard times, but another crushing blow revealed in the conclusion to Scene i is the

news that the Volscians are ready for war. Time after time Shakespeare has depicted the waste of war caused by irresponsible nobles who care nothing for the well-being of the common ranks; Coriolanus is certainly no exception. His response to the war alert is, "I am glad on't: then we shall ha' means to vent / Our musty superfluity" (I.i.229-30). As with Hotspur before, the thought of war is enhanced for Coriolanus by the element of personal motive. In this situation the object is Tullus Audifius, the leading Volscian general, who adds spice to the prospect of war for Coriolanus:

Were half to half the world by the ears and he
Upon my party, I'd revolt, to make
Only my wars with him: he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt. (I.i.236-39)

As Jorgensen has concluded, Coriolanus is an adventurer. He has no conscience, no regard for the half-starved peasants who will comprise his army. The extremity of his contempt for the populace surfaces in a sarcastic comment to a Senator's admonition that all the assembled commoners go home:

Nay, let them follow:
The Volscies have much corn; take these rats
thither
To gnaw their garners. (I.i.254-56)

In earlier Shakespearean plays, various nobles have exhibited a disregard for commoners, but Coriolanus' overt hatred

confirms an earlier statement about the nobility spoken by the First Citizen: "If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us" (I.i.89-90).

Based on the initial exchange between Coriolanus and the common people, his acclaim as a military practitioner could not be the result of the formula of leadership/performance. His reputation is based on magnificent feats performed solitarily. To be sure, Coriolanus is unforgiving of any who do less than his heroics. In the first depiction of battle in the play, Coriolanus almost single-handedly defeats the Volscians; his most remarkable effort is to enter Corioli alone and to emerge wounded but victorious. Yet as the confrontation between Coriolanus and the citizens anticipates, he shows no respect for the common ranks; in fact, he curses them as he did the citizens. In previous plays, Shakespeare has only alluded to the plight of the common citizen who has been wrested from his work and plunged into wars in which he has little stake. Coriolanus, however, presents the case overtly from the commoner's perspective. Suffering from famine and hunger, the Roman plebeian is cast into a war that only satisfies the sport of those like Coriolanus. The common citizen of Rome is no different from the thousands who are depicted as fulfilling the glory-seeker's desires in Shakespeare's history plays set in feudal England. We may recall briefly an appeal for war from another famous militarist: "O, let the hours be

short / Till fields and blows and groans applaud our sport" (1H4.I.iii.301-02). The speaker, of course, is Hotspur. By drawing attention to the plight of commoners in Coriolanus, Shakespeare clarifies the situations that have existed in all the plays depicting war: the common people are pawns manipulated by their whimsical leaders.

In the first battle scene, therefore, the condescending attitude that Coriolanus displays toward the common soldier yields predictable results. When the Volscians repel the first Roman thrust, Coriolanus acts as he did in the earlier civil confrontation. He curses his troops unmercifully:

All the contagion of the south light on you,
You shames of Rome! you nerd of--Boils and plagues
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd
Further than seen and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
From slaves that apes would beat! (I.iv.30-36)

Even after such rebuke, Coriolanus still expects maximum performance, which evidently he receives. A second thrust sends the Volscians fleeing to the gates of the city. Coriolanus urges the soldiers to follow him through the gates, but on this point they renege. One of the soldiers labels the action as "Fool-hardiness" (I.iv.46). Despite the number of Volscians, though, Coriolanus comes through the fight and reenters in a bloody state, assaulted by the enemy. All of this precipitates more fighting, and eventually Corioli falls.

Within the city, Roman soldiers resort to plunder, again an event that has stirred harsh comment from critics. But Shakespeare has spelled out very clearly the circumstances under which the plebeians are serving. The drought has taken its toll, and the commoner can hardly be blamed for trying to reap some benefit from a war meaningless to him in a period of economic deprivation. Coriolanus naturally has no sympathy for the looting:

See here these movers that do prize their hours
At a crack'd drachma! Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up: down with
them! (I.v.5-9)

Actually Coriolanus condemns not only the premature looting but also the nature of the items taken--and in doing so he reveals further evidence of the aristocratic misconception of the common people's needs. The soldiers take things that fulfill only the most basic of their needs, which Coriolanus finds repugnant. Based on the economic plight of the plebeians, however, the plundering can be understood. Shakespeare has been careful to influence the audience in comprehending the misery of the common people, and the soldiers' looting of very basic items of needs indicates even more the gap between the low and high echelons of society. Coriolanus, on the one hand, displays his exceptional military prowess but on the other shows his absolute failure as a leader of men.

Although Scene v of Act I enacts the Roman entrance into Corioli, Shakespeare extends the depiction of battle and thus exposes more of Coriolanus' method of warfare. Scene vi opens with Cominius, another of the Roman generals, speaking to his troops who have withdrawn from battle. The contrast to Coriolanus in the preceding scene is emphatic:

Breathe you, my friends: well fought; we
are come off
Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,
Nor cowardly in retire: believe me, sirs,
We shall be charged again. (I.vi.1-4)

In the prior action, a soldier called Coriolanus' entrance through the gates of Corioli "fool-hardiness." Thus, it is no accident that Shakespeare has Cominius, a respected general, speak of foolish stands. Cominius' action of giving troops some relief and praising them for their work represents a balance, a responsible act of leadership. Shortly, Coriolanus enters and the brief respite from his firebrand martialism concludes. First, Cominius questions him about the course of the day. Coriolanus seizes the opportunity to insult the common soldier again. He tells Cominius:

The common file--a plague! tribunes for them!--
The mouse ne'er shunn'd the cat as they did budge
From rascals worse than they. (I.vi.44-46)

Next, with characteristic fervor, Coriolanus questions Cominius about his perspective of the battle and asks:

"Where is the enemy? are you lords o' the field? / If not, why cease you till you are so?" (I.vi.47-48). Cominius replies that they "have at disadvantage fought" (I.vi.49), but for Coriolanus no excuse is acceptable. Thus, we find Cominius permitting Coriolanus to select the best soldiers from the company to continue the fight because Coriolanus is particularly interested in challenging Aufidius, and nothing will stop him. His strong appeal to lengthen the battle, "Filling the air with swords advanced and darts" (I.vi.61), affects the troops in Cominius' command; they respond to the appeal and hoist Coriolanus on their shoulders. The scene closes as Coriolanus chooses four of the group to follow him. Superficially the rallying of the forces by Coriolanus appears to fit the mode of exemplary leadership, but the soldiers just addressed have been commanded by Cominius and are accustomed to his moderate style of leadership. They do not know the real Coriolanus.

The previous scene is, perhaps, the most significant part of the exposition in defining Coriolanus' character. For instance, Rabkin is interested in what the nature of Coriolanus' appeal in the process of selecting the soldiers reveals:

Those are they
That most are willing. If any such be here--
As it were sin to doubt--that love this painting
Wherein you see me smear'd; if any fear
Lesser his person than an ill report;
If any think brave death outweighs bad life,

And that his country's dearer than himself;
 Let him alone, or so many so minded,
 Wave thus, to express his disposition,
 And follow Marcius. (I.vi.66-75)

Rabkin observes that "the love of blood painting comes first, the love of country last."²⁵ He contends that Coriolanus at this point in the play appears alternately admirable and abhorrent: "The opposition Shakespeare has so carefully established between two aspects of the warlike personality reveals the doubleness of our own attitudes towards war, and more particularly the composite nature of that personality. The gallantry is inseparable from the bloodiness. . . ."²⁶ Coriolanus' appeal for soldiers who "love this painting" underscores Eugene Waith's observation that Shakespeare is replete with examples of soldier-heroes who strive tragically to fulfill a concept of manhood as being physically powerful and undaunted by any challenge.²⁷ Waith refers to Hamlet's admiration of Fortinbras' "unreasoning courage," but he adds that "when reason is used to discredit reason and glorify a sort of honor which consists in taking a bloody revenge, we must realize that the hero's conception of manhood has become seriously confused: to be a

²⁵ Rabkin, p. 201.

²⁶ Rabkin, p. 201.

²⁷ "Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," Journal of English Literary History, 17 (1950), 262-64.

man means to have thoughts that are bloody or 'nothing worth.'"²⁸ Surely Coriolanus is the ultimate example in Shakespeare of the military man driven by this confused sense of manhood.

Within the same line of thought, Katherine Stockholder observes that "while Coriolanus prizes above all else a martial masculine independence, ultimately he relies upon seeing a martial image reflected back at him by all beholders, and is thus dependent upon beholders for an image of his independence."²⁹ Stockholder's argument is that Coriolanus constantly strives to fulfill an image that prevents him from ever accepting praise from those among the citizenry who have not performed the heroic feats as he has; to accept praise would compromise his martial integrity, tarnish his image.³⁰ Coriolanus' only possible response to any threatening situation is, then, confrontation--never compromise. A later scene featuring Cominius and Coriolanus facing hostile plebeians again captures perfectly the primitive, violent reaction to which Coriolanus is bound. The incident recalls the battle scene in that it again demonstrates the rationality of a moderate response by Cominius opposed to Coriolanus' radical violence.

²⁸ Waith, p. 264.

²⁹ "The Other Coriolanus," PMLA, 85 (1970), 229.

³⁰ Stockholder, pp. 230-33.

In the fracas, the citizens and tribunes are driven back, and Coriolanus comments: "On fair ground / I could beat forty of them" (III.i.243-44). Cominius responds:

But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic;
And manhood is called foolery, when it stands
Against a falling fabric. (III.i.244-46)

Cominius scorns Coriolanus for his needless threat against a retreating body, but the upbraiding assumes more importance than the momentary relevance. The reference to manhood is what Waith refers to:

True manhood is a comprehensive ideal, growing out of the familiar Christian concept that man is between the beasts and the angels in the hierarchy of creation. To be worthy of this station a man must show more than the physical valor which characterizes the soldier and traditionally distinguishes the male of the species.³¹

Coriolanus is limited to the physical response, a trait that renders his governing in civil society an impossibility. But in the military realm, he is equally ineffective. His military reputation depends on his heroics as a solitary figure, not as a leader of men. Again, in Scene vi of Act I, the brief contrast that Shakespeare provides between Cominius and Coriolanus as military leaders is highly prophetic of Coriolanus' eventual failure.

³¹ Waith, p. 263.

Ultimately Coriolanus' fate is sealed in the politics of power. In many of his plays Shakespeare has shown that it is a rare individual who can successfully balance the advantages accompanying power. Henry V comes close, but even he succumbs to the powerful temptation of seeking personal glory at tremendous expense. Again, given the limitations imposed by Coriolanus' hatred of the populace, the prospects are not good for his being able to manipulate the power of a consulship, an office that demands a political sophistication. As Menenius remarks, Coriolanus "is ill school'd / In bolt'd language; meal and bran together / He throws without distinction" (III.i.321-23). The problems he has with the common soldiers provide, in Jorgensen's words, "a parallel in war to the more serious dissension in peace when the General will be forced to sue rather than command."³² The corrosive effect of power on Coriolanus is the subject of Aufidius' summary of Coriolanus' decline in Rome:

First he was
A noble servant to them; but he could not
Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,
Which out of daily fortunes ever taints
The happy man; whether defect of judgement,
To fail in the disposing of those chances
Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
Not to be other than one thing, not moving
From the casque to the cushion, but command-
ing peace

³² Jorgensen, Shakespeare's Military World, p. 295.

Even with the same austerity and garb
 As he controll'd the war; but one of these--
 As he hath spices of them all, not all,
 For I dare so far free him--made him fear'd,
 So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit,
 To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues
 Lie in the interpretation of the time:
 And power, unto itself most commendable,
 Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
 To extol what it hath done.
 One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;
 Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths
 do fail. (IV.vii.35-55)

The speech, though, introduces another aspect of Coriolanus' tragedy, the concept of time: "our virtues / Lie in the interpretation of time." Coriolanus' experience, both as a general and as a consul, perhaps alludes to a point Shakespeare wants the Elizabethan audience to ponder, that is, the inadequacy of the stratified social order held over from feudal times. James E. Phillips asserts that "Shakespeare finds dramatic conflict and interest not in the fulfillment of such as idealized order, but rather in the human weaknesses which make its fulfillment a difficult and often helpless task."³³ Concomitant with the dramatic conflict, though, are the certain consequences to society of the misrule a person in power may effect. Coriolanus is an example of an individual with vested power who destroys rather than

³³ "Introduction," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Coriolanus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. James E. Phillips (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 6.

builds--one whose virtues are revealed as vices in the unfolding chapters of time.

Coriolanus' defection to the Volscians proves to be a tragic mistake. As firm as Coriolanus is in his resolve to turn his back on Rome, he is unable to resist the pleas of Volumnia, his mother, to spare the city from attack. Even though he wins favorable terms for the Volscians, his failure to follow through on threats against Rome opens an avenue for Aufidius to concoct a change of conspiracy. He dies at the hands of numerous conspirators, all the while resisting the charges laid against him. The Volscian experiment, however, was doomed from the start. For two men of like strengths such as Aufidius and Coriolanus, the likelihood of their sharing power was tentative at best. Ironically, the last words spoken by Coriolanus allude both to his awesome strength as a fighter and to the fatal weakness of solitariness that the strength engenders:

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
Alone I did it. (V.vi.114-17)

Shakespeare, then, in the two tragedies most heavily infused with military depiction, continues to manifest the theme of leadership/performance begun in the histories; but he enlarges the theme in ways that the earlier chronicle plays could not. Antony and Cleopatra is distinguished

by its clear presentation of the effect a leader has on his followers, a point that reaches its culmination in the characterization of the common soldier Enobarbus, who struggles unsuccessfully to find the proper response to Antony's unstable military decisions. Antony fails as a military leader because he elevates desire over reason. In pursuing Cleopatra, he permits his emotions to rule. Hence, he neglects the affairs of Rome altogether until it is too late to rectify matters. When the situation is forced to war between Antony and Octavius Caesar, Antony still allows his emotions to conquer rationality: on a cause so slim as Octavius Caesar's dare, he engages Caesar by sea, although he is advised over and over to fight on land; during the sea battle, he foolishly retreats to follow Cleopatra, who is trying her hand at being a naval commander; finally, Antony decides to throw everything into one great battle against Caesar, even though he stands little chance of victory.

The consequences of Antony's irresponsibility are intensely manifested in the characterization of Enobarbus. The fact that Shakespeare drastically altered the character of a common soldier from Plutarch is especially significant. Enobarbus provided Shakespeare the opportunity to depict fully the common soldier as a human being. Enobarbus' eventual defection from his long-time general is in response to Antony's total abridgement of military

reasoning and, in this respect, is a precise enactment of leadership/performance. But through an extended insight into Enobarbus' struggle, Shakespeare permits the audience to view the emotional trauma of a common man groping for an answer to his master's complete loss of judgment. Similar to Michael Williams in Henry V, we understand the soundness of Enobarbus as a soldier, but in Antony and Cleopatra we view the total character. Enobarbus is the zenith of Shakespeare's achievement in dramatizing the common soldier's perspective.

In Coriolanus we do not find the common soldier individualized, but the play reaches another pinnacle as far as leadership/performance is concerned, although from a negative point of view. Coriolanus can be included in a category of militarists who indulge in war as the ultimate adventure. The most notable of this class from earlier plays is Hotspur of 1 Henry IV. The extended view through five acts of an extreme militarist bound by a sense of manhood that restricts the individual to the physical and violent yields an ugly picture. To such leaders as Coriolanus, the common soldier is merely a means to an end; there is little concern for the well-being of the lower-ranked masses. Essentially Coriolanus is a solitary figure who performs very heroic feats when fighting alone, but who miserably fails as a leader of men. The martial traits he

carries into civil governance preclude success and anticipate the tragedy destined for a man "bred i' the wars" (III.i.320).

Chapter IV

"The Rest is Silence": Further Directions in Leadership/Performance

Shakespeare's depiction of the common soldier is most prominent, of course, in plays concerned with military operations: the eight plays of the two historical tetralogies and Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus. Yet in plays that are less militarily oriented, references to the common soldier occur in a variety of ways, ranging from a repetition of leadership/performance in King John and Julius Caesar to a more profound function in Hamlet. Also, Othello contains extraordinary reference to the code adhered to by martial zealots, such as Coriolanus and Hotspur; Othello can be added to their number. Regardless, though, of the context in which references to the common soldier or to military leadership occur, the integrity of the common soldier is again upheld, while the misguided perspective of reckless leaders is exposed. Analysis of the plays partially oriented to the military, then, will reiterate the basic military patterns recurrent in Shakespeare's plays and will lead to a synthesis of the common soldier's perspective.

Separate from the chronology of the first tetralogy, King John is, nonetheless, part of Shakespeare's early production of chronicle plays. King John differs significantly, however, from the treatment of military action in the plays of the first tetralogy, where overt depiction of battles is an important feature. The work is a revision of an earlier play, The Troublesome Raigne of King John of England (the author of which is unknown); the fact that it is a revision may account for the different format in presenting military action. Also unlike the other plays is the lack of clear effectiveness or ineffectiveness in the leaders. Certainly King John is no hero, and his French counterparts are equally unimpressive. The closest representation of the dynamism of a Talbot or a Richmond is the character Faulconbridge, the bastard son of Richard the Lion-Hearted. Faulconbridge is an integral part of the military action alluded to, but again the absence of battle scenes precludes a true analysis of his leadership.

The single clear reference to Faulconbridge's leadership is negative and connects emphatically to the common soldier's symbolizing waste in war. The incident involves Faulconbridge's attempt to have troops at the battle front in the war that inevitably develops between England and France. He reports to Hubert that he led his men through the Lincoln Washes, the result being that half of his troops "are taken by the tide; / These Lincoln Washes have devoured

them" (V.vi.40-41). He adds that he was safe only because he was "well mounted" (V.vi.42). This occurrence is a needless waste of life, one further account of numerous such incidents in Shakespeare. Faulconbridge's action here anticipates the reckless abandon that characterizes Hotspur's and Coriolanus' waste of troops.

Still it is Faulconbridge who, earlier in the play, strongly condemns the tendency of kings to fight wars as the principal method for resolving grievances. His condemnation is a reply to King Philip's boast that France will repel an English invasion:

Ha, majesty! how high thy glory towers,
When the rich blood of kings is set on fire!
O, now doth Death line his dead chaps with steel;
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs;
And now he feasts, mousing the flesh of men,
In undetermined differences of kings.
(II.i.350-55)

Faulconbridge's assertion is among the strongest statements in Shakespeare on the cruelty of war, in which the only clear winner is Death. The statement is, however, similar to a pattern signifying the needless waste of war established in the early histories. Notably, Faulconbridge's assertion recalls others in 3 Henry VI that denote soldiers as an expendable commodity, food for Death.

If references to the common soldier are relatively sparse in King John as compared to other plays of the first tetralogy, a similar observation applies to Julius Caesar

in relation to its companion Roman plays, Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus. Of course, Julius Caesar precedes the latter plays by at least eight years.¹ A slight allusion to looting by soldiers occurs in Act V, and the issue of soldiers' pay is the catalyst for an intense argument between Cassius and Brutus in Act IV.² Nevertheless, the play is significant in that Shakespeare again reveals the utter waste inherent in a war rooted in private revenge and headed by nobles who are unwise in their military leadership.

We have previously noted in Coriolanus that a war between Rome and Corioli has especial appeal for Coriolanus, since it will permit him another chance at Tullus Aufidius, a man he envies:

I sin in envying his nobility,
And were I any thing but what I am,
I would wish me only he. (I.i.232-34)

Coriolanus then adds:

Were half to half the world by the ears and he
Upon my party, I'd revolt, to make
Only my wars with him: he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt. (I.i.236-39)

The Roman model for Coriolanus' envy is Cassius' lengthy list of Julius Caesar's weaknesses to which Cassius finds

¹ Craig, pp. 770, 1071.

² Brutus accuses Cassius of denying him gold with which to pay his soldiers. Cassius refutes the accusation by declaring that the messenger who brought the gold lied.

himself subjugated. The airing of the grievances is a part of Cassius' first attempt to turn Brutus against Caesar and includes primarily physical weaknesses, a taboo for the Roman concept of manhood.³ The extent of Cassius' envy is evident when he declares to Brutus:

And this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
(I.ii.115-18)

The semination of the later war between the forces of Cassius and Brutus and those of Antony and Octavius lies here in Cassius' personal jealousy of Julius Caesar.

Both the planning for battle and the depiction of fighting connect Julius Caesar to issues of leadership we have noted elsewhere. As generals, Cassius and Brutus are definitely not notable leaders. In Act IV the spirited argument between the two, ostensibly over pay for their soldiers, begins with troops witnessing the exchange. After they settle that issue, a more serious blunder occurs in planning for the imminent battle with Antony and Octavius. Cassius, the more militarily experienced, contends that their forces should remain at Sardis and await the enemy who will tire in the long march. Brutus,

³ Refer to Stockholder, pp. 229-33, and Waith, pp. 262-64.

however, believes that the people between Sardis and Phillipi so favor Caesar that the enemy will be reinforced by fresh recruits gained in their march. Despite Cassius' objections, Brutus rules, as he has in every crucial matter since joining the conspiracy. The answer as to which is the better strategy for battle comes at the beginning of Act V, spoken by Octavius:

Now, Antony, our hopes are answered:
 You said the enemy would not come down:
 But keep the hills and upper regions;
 It proves not so: their battles are at hand;
 They mean to warn us at Phillipi here,
 Answering before we do demand of them. (V.i.1-6)

Brutus' strategy, then, fulfills the fondest hopes of Antony and Octavius. Looming in the background of Brutus' bungled planning are the fates of the soldiers who supply the war machine.

The soldiers who populate the armies of Brutus and Cassius are conscripts.⁴ As draftees, their circumstances are similar to those of the feudal conscripts appearing in the two tetralogies. Predictably their performance correlates to the leadership presented and to their perception of justice in the cause, once more a tentative matter since the war is rooted in aristocratic feuding. Hence we find these Roman soldiers are subject to the same behavior as their

⁴ See IV.iv.41-42.

English counterparts. For instance, Scene iii opens with Cassius railing against his soldiers and, even worse, standing over the body of his own ensign, whom he has killed for retreating. Cassius asserts to Titinius, a confidante:

O, look, Titinius, look, the villains fly!
 Myself have to mine own turn'd enemy:
 This ensign here of mine was turning back;
 I slew the coward, and did take it from him.
(V.iii.1-4)

Titinius blames the matter on Brutus and his soldiers:

Brutus gave the word too early;
 Who, having some advantage on Octavius,
 Took it too eagerly: his soldiers fell to spoil,
 Whilst we by Antony are all enclosed. (V.iii.5-8)

Again, as in other plays where pillage is mentioned, troops, who are a part of wars in which they perceive little justice, may resort to plunder or other forms of retreat. Their performance owes to leadership. In this instance, Titinius' estimate is not entirely true because, a few lines later, Messala reports that Octavius' legions are "overthrown by noble Brutus' power" (V.iii.52), which mitigates somewhat the previous report of pillaging.

The remainder of Scene iii in Act V and the subsequent two scenes contain no important allusions to the common soldier but depict the suicides of Cassius and Brutus. Julius Caesar provides no additional insight into the theme of leadership/performance, but it does offer added

substantiation to the validity of the pattern. In the chronology of Shakespeare's works, the play glances back at the histories and anticipates the later Roman tragedies.

Both King John and Julius Caesar are not distinguished, therefore, by any enlargement on the military themes we have already analyzed. This is not the case, however, in Hamlet, where we find the common soldier inspiring Hamlet to abandon his hesitancy to take action against Claudius. The incident is more complex, though, than simple inspiration. Hamlet is an intellectual, and his observation about the senseless nature of Fortinbras' mission to Poland represents an intellectual's inevitable conclusion that the venture is a frivolous pursuit, one that will result in needless slaughter. The event happens in Act IV, as Hamlet--on his way to England, accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, following the decree by Claudius--confronts a group of Norwegian soldiers headed to Poland. Much earlier in the play, a reference to the Norwegian mission occurs when Voltimand and Cornelius, Danish ambassadors to Norway, report to Claudius. The King dispatched the two to Norway in an attempt to persuade the Norwegian King to divert a plan by his nephew Fortinbras to attack Denmark. Fortinbras' idea was to take soldiers levied for the venture against Poland into an all-out assault on Claudius. The ambassadors report, however, that the Norwegian King persuaded

Fortinbras to desist in the action, in fact to endorse a ban on possible future attacks against Denmark. The King, though, rewards Fortinbras with permission to resume the original mission against Poland. According to Voltimand, the King

Gives him [Fortinbras] three score thousand
crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ these soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack. . . .
(II.ii.73-75)

This complex event underscores the caprice that accompanies much of the war-making decisions in Shakespeare's plays. Fortinbras' chicanery puts him squarely in the mode of the militaristic, and the King's rewarding the nephew with money and the continued use of soldiers is an excellent example of an aristocrat's abuse of power.

The soldiers encountered by Hamlet are, then, the same as those referred to in Act II. Hamlet questions a captain of the troop, and the dialogue reveals even more about the abuse of the power to make war that accompanies autocratic monarchies. Significantly, too, the scene again manifests the overt disregard for human life characteristic of a militarist like Fortinbras. After determining that the troop's destination is Poland, Hamlet asks whether the intention is "against the main of Poland . . . / Or some frontier" (IV.iv.15-16). The captain's answer is startling:

Truly to speak, and with no addition,
 We go to gain a little patch of ground
 That hath in it no profit but the name.
 To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
 Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
 A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.
 (IV.iv.17-22)

Elsewhere in Shakespeare we have noted the ease with which kings and princes enter wars with questionable causes, but the captain's explanation of Fortinbras' adventure gives, perhaps, the clearest example of a senseless war. Naturally Shakespeare has plans for the scene as it relates to Hamlet's characterization, but the Norwegian mission fits the pattern of needless warring replete in the canon. Hamlet responds that he would expect the Poles not to defend such a meaningless piece of ground, but the captain declares that "it is already garrison'd" (IV.iv.24). Hamlet then renders the intellectual's summation of the matter:

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
 Will not debate the question of this straw:
 This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
 That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
 Why the man dies. (IV.iv.24-28)

The key word in the response is cause. Hamlet compares the situation to an internal abscess that ruptures and kills an apparently healthy person.⁵ The cause is invisible, which also applies to the impending deaths of the Norwegian and Polish soldiers. They will vie for a parcel of ground,

⁵ See Craig's notes, p. 930.

which, as the captain has related, is worthless. Fortinbras' consolation for having to refrain from an attack on a larger prize translates unequivocally into the most unjust cause for a war presented in Shakespeare. It is as if Fortinbras is pursuing the hunt.

As the scene connects to Hamlet's milieu, it marks a turning point. Heretofore, Hamlet has hesitated, for a variety of reasons, to take resolute action against Claudius. He now questions that with such a valid cause as his, "Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do'" (IV.iv.44). The event, then, precipitates in Hamlet a shift to the physical mode, a turn that eventually leads to the retribution he seeks; but it also results in his own death. To be sure, Hamlet recognizes Fortinbras for what he is:

a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg shell. (IV.iv.48-53)

Although his estimation of Fortinbras as "delicate and tender" is hardly plausible, Hamlet effectively defines the Norwegian's adventurous spirit. Thus, when Hamlet compares his own lack of activity to Fortinbras' action-filled life, he is influenced to abandon caution.⁶

⁶ Waith, p. 264.

Fortinbras' rashness is not the only aspect of the matter that influences Hamlet's change. The Prince also considers the plight of the common soldiers who comprise the "army of mass and charge" (IV.iv.47). Actually their example is equally influential on Hamlet:

How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? While, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? (IV.iv.56-65)

In his example of twenty thousand men who may die in a meaningless fight, Hamlet effectively relates the pattern of the soldier as a symbol of waste in war. The context of this assertion is different from the distinct military references we have noted before, but again the implication is the same: that countless men are sacrificed universally in futile wars.

Although the machinations of Fortinbras and his uncle form the primary military references in Hamlet, the denouement associates with issues raised in the Polish invasion. In adopting the mode of action, Hamlet becomes what he admires in Fortinbras, a man who acts but who leaves much to chance. For Hamlet, the result is death, but a demise much admired by Fortinbras. Thus, it is clear why Fortinbras has the last word and hails Hamlet as a soldier:

Let four captains
 Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
 For he was likely, had he been put on,
 To have proved most royal: and, for his passage,
 The soldier's music and the rites of war
 Speak loudly for him.
 Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
 Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
 (V.ii.406-13)

Ironically, the once contemplative Hamlet is hailed in death as a man of action. He actually joins the ranks of the quintessential militarists: Hotspur, the French Dauphins, and, later, Coriolanus. All of these characters connect manhood to physical valor,⁷ and death surrounds each of them. As one of the same mode, Fortinbras alludes to the trappings of the blood sport when he declares that the sight of the numerous dead "Becomes the field." Indeed, the court has become a miniature war zone, replete with, in Horatio's words, "casual slaughters" (V.ii.393). The audience's final view of the stage is a panorama of death with bodies strewn promiscuously about, the inevitable result of Hamlet's tragic conversion to the militaristic. The physical mode is much unsuited for the contemplative Prince, but the pressure on him to do the "masculine" chore begins early when the ghost of old Hamlet returns from the grave in battle armament--"complete steel" (I.iv.52), according to Hamlet--to urge revenge. And the message is not lost on Hamlet. When the travelling actors audition for him in

⁷ Waith, p. 264.

Act II, the scene he requests is Pyrrhus' slaying of Priam, a part that climaxes in a description of Hecuba's viewing Priam's death:

But if the gods themselves did see her then
 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
 The instant burst of clamour that she made,
 Unless things mortal move them not at all,
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion in the gods. (II.ii.535-41)

Hamlet seeks inspiration from a very bloody tale. Although the final scene of Hamlet is not exactly a "mincing of limbs," the result is the same: death. The scene represents, in a sense, a microcosm of Shakespeare's pattern of leadership/performance: Hamlet, the converted battle leader, directs a foray, in which the casualty rate is staggering. Waste is the only fruit of this venture, a result that links Hamlet to Shakespeare's more overtly martial plays. Hamlet's final words are "The rest is silence" (V.ii.369), a fitting summary of the war spectacle.

Interestingly, Shakespeare's next play, Othello, develops the obverse of Hamlet's milieu. Whereas Hamlet is the contemplative man, Othello is the physical man of action. Too, Hamlet is a lover, as evidenced by his relationship with Ophelia; but Othello is a novice at love. The misplacement of both characters contributes heavily toward their tragedies, and a further common bond between the two is the debilitating effect of the martial influence. Hamlet

belatedly adopts the militaristic mode and dies tragically; Othello cannot rid himself of the martial imperatives rooted in his character.

Indeed, much could be written about the martial influence determining Othello's tragic fate. Yet, Iago is such an overwhelming antagonist that common critical tendency is to blame him for the outcome rather than emphasize a weakness in Othello's character as the primary cause for the tragedy.⁸ Jorgensen, for example, states that "only a soldier of Othello's social innocence could have fallen victim to Iago, but the blame must rest on the villain, not on the tragic hero."⁹ It is not likely, however, that Shakespeare departs from his formula for tragedy to write a play in which an antagonist is the cause of the hero's decline. Connecting the cause of Othello's tragedy to the military background, C. F. Burgess offers the following comment:

It seems odd that little consideration has been given to Othello in the role he fits best and, in terms of the play, has played the longest, that of general and military commander. This critical neglect is all the more surprising since it can be demonstrated . . . that Othello's military

⁸ See A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (1904; rpt. New York: Fawcett Premier Books, n.d.), p. 150, and Helen Gardner's comments on Bradley's study in "Othello: A Retrospect, 1900-67," in Aspects of Othello, ed. Kenneth Muir and Philip Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), p. 1.

⁹ Shakespeare's Military World, p. 254.

background is a major factor in the tragedy that overwhelms him.¹⁰

Othello is another of Shakespeare's consummate generals, a man of physical bearing and firm action, clearly in control as the play opens. He successfully meets the challenge offered by Desdemona's father, Brabantio. He exudes confidence at every turn.

As Iago's lies begin to take effect, however, the man of war gradually loses control. At the beginning of this stage, Othello asserts his regret of marrying and the loss of a pure military life. In stating his regret, we could say that Othello speaks for the numerous military characters in Shakespeare attracted to the appeal of war:

O, now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and the quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!
(III.iii.347-57)

Out of context, the passage seems almost ridiculous, but if considered in the perspective of total military depiction,

¹⁰ "Othello's Occupation," Shakespeare Quarterly, 26 (1975), 209.

Othello's unabashed salute to war is an overt declaration of the militarist's creed.

Actually General Othello's removal from the "flinty and steel couch of war" (I.iii.231) was accomplished only by Desdemona's willing toleration of a courting practice unique to a military careerist, that is, providing audience to numerous tales of martial exploits. Othello, in defending himself before the Venetian Council on the matter of his elopement with Desdemona, reveals:

Her father loved me; oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life,
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly
breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
And portance in my travels' history:
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch
heaven,
It was my hint to speak,--such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
And Anthropophagi and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline. . . .
(I.iii.128-46)

As reward for relating the tales, Desdemona gave Othello "a world of sighs" (I.iii.159), thus building the General's military ego. The transition for a man of Othello's military bearing to domestic life would be difficult, at best.

Thus, when Othello is called immediately to service (the Turkish invasion of Cyprus), the lack of time for adjustment to marriage plays into Iago's hands. When Othello is convinced of his wife's infidelity, he resorts to his accustomed means of meting justice: killing. Actually he considers the murder of Desdemona as a duty he must fulfill, still another aspect of his military composure, the soldier-turned-lover-turned-soldier, as it were. Entering the bedroom and prepared to kill Desdemona, Othello declares:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,--
 Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!--
 It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
 Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
 And smooth as monumental alabaster.
 Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
(V.ii.1-6)

Disloyalty on the battlefield spells instant death; therefore, it is logical that a general of long standing, like Othello, might resort to killing his wife if he believes her to be unfaithful. Just as the court is a battlefield in Hamlet, the bedroom assumes the same in Othello. Othello, the confident general and epitome of leadership, does not doubt his verdict for the disloyal subject; and as on the true battlefield, he will not shun the responsibility of wielding justice. Desdemona, thus, dies at the hands of the General, as any treasonous subject would. And to be consistent, when Othello understands his error, he applies

the martial code of justice to himself. Couched in an ultimate military metaphor, Othello takes his own life:

Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus. [Stabs himself
(V.ii.351-56)

Again, the final result of the militarist's code is death and widespread waste. The destruction surrounding Shakespeare's martial heroes reveals an unmistakably clear pattern: violence breeds violence, and the innocent, whether they be common soldiers or wives, suffer.

Northrop Frye, in his Fools of Time, comments that "the people in Shakespeare constitute a 'Dionysian' energy in society: that is, they represent nothing but a potential of response to leadership."¹¹ The thrust of Frye's assertion is to place responsibility for behavior of the citizenry on the leadership. The people, therefore, represent an entity of potential dynamism for the effective leader. The reality in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, however, is that the responsible leader is a rare specimen. Invariably, noble characters in the histories and tragedies wrestle with the privilege of power; their reactions vary from responsible (Richmond in Richard III) to totally

¹¹ Frye, p. 18.

abusive (Coriolanus). The scale tips heavily toward the abusive type.

The political implications of an individual leader's misrule engender critical debate about Shakespeare's opinion of the populace. Many critics point to the common citizenry's apparent fickleness and conclude that Shakespeare intends to portray a negative view of the populace.¹² Admittedly the people are often inconsistent--for example, the rapid changes in the mass opinion of the conspirators against Julius Caesar or the Volscian people's vicious reversal against Coriolanus. But the quality of the leadership must also be taken into account, which is why the common soldier should assume more importance as a subject for Shakespearean study than heretofore recognized. The military establishment is a microcosm of society; a particular leader's behavior affects the troops commanded either negatively or positively. The operations within the military setting correspond precisely to Frye's observation on the potentiality of response among commoners. The common soldier displays a remarkable pattern of consistency: he responds favorably to effective, sincere leadership and negatively to ineffective, often abusive leadership. If

¹² For instance, J. Dover Wilson, as quoted in Zamichow, p. 220, says that the initial scene in Julius Caesar, "like other first scenes in Shakespeare, introduces us to the 'underlying forces' of the play," including "the fickleness of the Roman populace."

the common people seem to be inordinately changeable in civil settings, the fickleness is offset by common soldiers' consistency. The pattern of leadership/performance establishes the common soldier as a solid performer when fighting for a just cause, led by a sincere commander. The powerful and consistent presence of this pattern throughout the canon indicates Shakespeare's recognition of the common soldier's worth and, by extension, the common people's worth. Leadership is of paramount importance, either in a military operation or a civil setting.

Connected to the pattern of leadership/performance is another aspect of the subject that strongly establishes Shakespeare's concern for the humanity of the soldier; that is, the depiction of the soldier as a symbol of the waste inherent in war. Shakespeare's plays abound with abusive military leaders engaged in futile wars, almost always related in some way to the seeking of power or its preservation. The soldiers who mass the armies are the pawns caught "Between the pass and fell incensed points / Of mighty opposites."¹³ Shakespeare clearly dramatizes the

¹³ This quotation is, of course, from Hamlet (V.ii.61-62) and is Hamlet's reply to Horatio about the fates of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who supposedly are to be decapitated in England. Hamlet is responsible for their deaths because of the orders that he draws up and stamps with the Danish seal. Hamlet's final summation of the two fits the role of a martial hero: "They are not near my conscience. . ." (V.ii.58).

abuses of the military establishment, and he views the plight of the conscript as a powerful manifestation of the suffering effected by militarists.

In fact, of all the military principals in Shakespeare--and it is an extensive list--only two emerge as clearly effective: Talbot in 1 Henry VI and Richmond in Richard III. King Henry V is an effective leader who shows genuine concern for the common soldier, but his cause--the quest for holdings in France--is very questionable. Talbot's and Richmond's performances are superior in that both recognize the essentiality of the common soldier, and Talbot dies while fighting alongside his soldiers. The consideration of cause does not apply to Talbot (unless he can be blamed for being a part of the effort to retain the English holdings in France, gained by Henry V). Clearly Talbot is an English patriot fighting for his homeland, and he inspires the men he commands to perform their best. Although Richmond is not shown extensively in battle, his cause is unquestionably justified, given Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III as a tyrant. Too, Richmond's distinctive "But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt / The least of you shall share his part thereof" (V.iii.267-68) rings clear as one of the strongest endorsements of the common soldier's importance. Richmond is one of the few military figures in Shakespeare who could speak a prayer for peace. At the conclusion of Richard III, he relates

his hope that the legacy his marriage to the Yorkist Elizabeth might bear:

O, now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
 The true succeeders of each royal house,
 By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!
 And let their heirs, God, if they will be so,
 Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
 With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days!
 (V.v.29-34)

The evident sincerity of Richmond's desire for peace is a rarity in the Shakespearean military annals.

King Henry V forms a subclass of one in the category of effective leaders. Undeniably he is a successful leader of men, and he is highly visible on the battlefield. Like Richmond, he frequently expresses concern for the welfare of the common soldier. Henry, though, succumbs to the vision of glory and endorses the Archbishop of Canterbury's morally flawed plan to invade France. In respect to cause, then, Henry is as guilty as the more overt warmongers in Shakespeare's histories. An even more alarming aspect of the venture is Henry's constant invocation of God's sanction to the cause--Henry, poised as God's warrior. The individualized common soldiers--Williams, Court, and Bates--serve to warn Henry and the audience of the consequences of pursuing an unjust cause. In the final analysis, as far as cause is concerned, Henry emerges no better than the warmongers.

The inventory of abusive military leaders is extensive, but common to their failure is an abject disregard

for humanity. Two sub-categories of the abusive leader exist: those that simply use the soldier for their own purposes and the zealots who revel in war and view military exploits as the maximum fulfillment of manhood. The first category includes such leaders as Richard III, Richard II, and Falstaff. To these three figures, the common soldier is nothing but a means to an end. For instance, Richard III struggles to keep his kingdom at great expense; the soldier to him is an expendable entity. The common man in Richard III is caught in the web of civil war and suffers from the nobility's inability to solve their differences. On the other hand, Richard II is willing to start a foreign war despite the lack of a proper financial base as support. Prominent in Richard II are the noticeable references to the army's lack of provisions, a dire problem for any leader who plans an excursion to a place so cold and wet as Ireland. Rather than strengthen his base at home, Richard stubbornly carries through with the Irish plan and fails miserably. Falstaff, in the two parts of Henry IV, also belongs to the category of nonconcerned leader. Although Falstaff is a comic figure, his callous disregard for impressed recruits is reprehensible. The effects of Falstaff's indifference are not far-reaching, but Falstaff is a part of the noble establishment. The recruiting scenes involving him in both plays detail the corrupt practices of Elizabethan impressment. Even more significant is Falstaff's leading recruits

into the thickest part of battle, thus assuring the deaths of ninety-eight percent of the group. The benefit to Falstaff is a collection of the dead pay.

Shakespeare portrays most vividly the second category of unconcerned leaders, the military zealots. This group of militarists also views the common soldier as a nonentity, but the zealots are further distinguished by their passionate devotion to military adventure. The category includes Hotspur, Coriolanus, Fortinbras, the French Dauphins (1 Henry VI and Henry V), and Cassius. Othello is also a zealot, but we do not have the opportunity of witnessing his military leadership, per se. The zealots are happiest when at war, which is the most dangerous aspect of their eagerness. For example, Fortinbras in Hamlet is very willing to sacrifice several thousand men for a miniscule amount of land in Poland. Often personal revenge is their principal basis for desiring war--for instance, Hotspur's quarrel with Bolingbroke, Coriolanus' envy of Aufidius, and Cassius' hatred of Julius Caesar. The zealot's creed is perhaps summarized best by a character not considered in this study: Alcibiades in Timon of Athens. At the banquet scene in Act I, Timon declares to Alcibiades: "You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends" (I.ii.78-79). Alcibiades replies: "So they were bleeding-new, my lord, there's no meat like 'em: I could wish my best friend at such a feast" (I.ii.80-82). We may also refer again to

Hotspur through Hal's parody in 1 Henry IV of the younger Percy's militarism for another view of the creed:

I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of
the north; he that kills me some six or seven
dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands,
and says to his wife "fie upon this quiet life!
I want work." (II.iv.113-17)

The zealots are a dangerous lot, and Shakespeare depicts plainly the effects of their destructive potential. They are hunters pursuing the ultimate game, participating in blood sport, as it were.

Unclassifiable in the inventory of leadership is at least one character: Antony. Through various references in Antony and Cleopatra, we infer that Antony has been an effective leader. Indeed a reasonable conclusion is that his past record might qualify him as an exceptional leader. Granted that he fits the mold of the militarist in that much of his power was gained through his military exploits, there is strong evidence in the play that he considers the common soldier as an integral aspect of the military structure. Also, the ease with which an unnamed soldier offers advice and condemns the General's plan for naval warfare indicates Antony's high regard for a commoner's opinion. The greatest evidence, though, of Antony's attitude toward the soldier is the close relationship he develops with Enobarbus. The positive potential is negated, of course, by Antony's complete surrender of judgment, a result of

Cleopatra's enervating influence. To some extent, Antony tries to fulfill the militarist's sense of manhood by attempting to impress Cleopatra with his military muscle. Generals and common soldiers alike detect the deterioration of Antony's command, and he loses the loyalty of both types. The military losses lead to Antony's blame of Cleopatra and to the complex events preceding the tragedy itself. In the final analysis, Antony's greatest problem is indecisiveness, his inability to conclude whether he should be a Roman and fulfill the duties of the state or to embrace Egypt as his domain and, thus, forget Rome. Antony's faltering leadership is then intertwined with his indecisiveness, which is surely not a trait of his former self. Otherwise, Antony would not have gained his reputation as an effective general. His failure as a leader is indeed tied to his wavering. Although his pursuit of battle is decidedly careless, it is not of the consciously reckless variety that marks a Coriolanus. Antony is temporarily removed from reality, which promotes his bad judgment; consequently, he does not distinctly conform to any one category of leadership.

Without question, then, Shakespeare's depiction of military leadership is overwhelmingly negative. When we consider the staggering number of wars and battles that are either enacted or alluded to and when we further contemplate that almost all of the military action is without just cause, a logical assumption might be that Shakespeare was

patently anti-war. The assumption is actually not a far-fetched one. After all, we most likely would agree that a mutual theme in Shakespeare's tragedies is a sense of needless waste, the loss of strong potential. Likewise, the histories are replete with waste wrought by civil war. Since Shakespeare is so concerned thematically with wasted potential, it should be very clear why he devotes so much dramatic space to military events. War, for Shakespeare, is the ultimate display of waste. The energy that a Hotspur or a Coriolanus expends in the blood sport of war could instead be directed to fertile enterprise. As it is, death and destruction rule. Essentially through focusing the role of war in the rise and fall of the House of Lancaster, Shakespeare gives a fundamentally tragic view of history in the two tetralogies--and, in setting all of the great tragedies against the backdrop of wasteful war, he clearly connects military leadership to tragedy itself.

The common soldier enters the picture, then, as a symbol of the suffering war brings. The soldier is not some object of comic derision or another facet of Shakespeare's alleged scorn for the populace; rather, he is an element of humanity who suffers intensely when his leaders engage in savage pursuits of war. Michael Williams and his comrades in Henry V are not anomalous creations; rather, they are the voice of the thousands who have suffered and died in the seemingly inexhaustive number of wars presented by

Shakespeare. And the grieving son and father of 3 Henry VI are not happenstance characters; rather, they represent some of the earliest evidence of Shakespeare's concern for the commoner's plight in civil war: except for war, the two would have been farming, involved in a fertile operation. Concurrently, the reason for Shakespeare's expansion from Plutarch of Enobarbus' role in Antony and Cleopatra is clear, that is, to present the ultimate dramatization of the common soldier's dilemma when faced with leadership gone awry. With Enobarbus we view not only a precise enactment of leadership/response in his defection from Antony, but we also participate in the intense agony of his decision. Enobarbus effectively speaks for those soldiers whom numerous critics would expect to fight to the hilt regardless of the cause. When Enobarbus dies from despair, his death rightfully represents the tragedies of all commoners who die in the numerous wars in Shakespeare.

The most significant implication in Shakespeare's portrayal of the common soldier is an endorsement of the commoner's worth. Yet why should this recognition of humanity be something so hotly denied by the majority of scholars who have addressed the question of the military or the populace in Shakespeare? After all, Shakespeare is a man of the Renaissance, the time in which the bud of humanism began its slow emergence. Surely, Shakespeare

would not have grown steadily in appeal through the centuries if he did not comprehend ingeniously the human psyche with its myriad of strengths and frailties. How could a man of such consummate vision look to a mass portion of the human order and scorn it? Shakespeare did not, I submit, and his ability to comprehend the common soldier's plight in the face of futile warring is the true basis for the father and son in 3 Henry VI, Michael Williams and company in Henry V, and Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra. Shakespeare reacts to the Elizabethan concept of social order and recognizes the helplessness of the mass. In the histories and tragedies, he exposes the inherent weakness of the social caste that concentrates power in the hands of a few. Although it is the leaders' responsibility to preserve the domain and its people, leaders are human beings, subject to temptations that power can offer. Shakespeare's main characters show us the results power can exert on individuals--few can cope with it. As a result, the common man is hurt in the power play, a theme too often overlooked in Shakespeare. To recall in Henry V the scene prior to Agincourt is to be reminded of Shakespeare's understanding of the common soldier's place in the war scheme. As H. C. Goddard recognizes, the words spoken by Alexander Court are brief but potent. Court sees the glimmer of sunrise and asks

his companion: "Brother John Bates, is not that the morning which breaks yonder?" (IV.i.89). We do not meet Alexander Court again. Goddard wonders: "Did he fall in battle? We never know."¹⁴ If Court were a victim of the battle, though, the same could be said about him that Macbeth remarks about his dead wife: he "should have died hereafter; / There would have been time for such a word" (Mac.V.v.17-18). The time taken from soldiers who die in battle is the folly of history; and in depicting the portraits of misguided leaders, who recklessly pursue war, Shakespeare defines the soul of tragedy.

¹⁴ Goddard, p. 221.

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