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## Harry at Harfleur: Gender Roles and the Character of the King

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### Oral Presentation 1.3

#### HARRY AT HARFLEUR: GENDER ROLES AND THE CHARACTER OF THE KING

Rebecca J. Brackmann and Dan Terkla\*, Department of English, IWU

The battle of Harfleur in Shakespeare's Henry V has long been considered an example of Henry V's misogyny and ruthlessness. In the paradigm of Henry V proposed by Norman Rabkin, Henry can be either an ideal Christian king or a brutal warlord at different moments in the play, and most critics put the king at the battle of Harfleur solidly into the second category. This paper explores in depth the gender roles in the battle, with the feminization of the city and the resulting rape metaphor, but also shows that Rabkin's model for the play as whole also applies to the battle of Harfleur. While Henry is definitely an aggressor in the battle, the scene also subverts its own reading of Henry by the time the battle ends, much as the play as a whole sets up different readings of King Henry at different times.