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Visible Bullets: Critical Responses to Shakespeare's Representation of War

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Abstract:

Although war is ubiquitous in Shakespeare, criticism on this topic has been sporadic and sparse. A seminal book by Paul Jorgensen, *Shakespeare's Military World*, was published in 1956, but was not followed by other substantial literary studies. Not even "new historicism", the critical movement developed in the 1980s and 1990s, and which was alert to the examination of all early modern cultural formations, devoted attention to the representation of war in Shakespeare. While, interestingly, in those same years, Shakespeare's representation of war was examined by jurists in connection with the "just war" principles, it was only in the late 1990s that the topic started to gain ground in the work of professional Shakespeareans, as seen in the publications of a few book-length studies and collections of essays (de Somogyi, Taunton, Barker, King and Franssen, Pugliatti, Quabeck). This new wave of interest had also been preceded by seminars and conferences starting in 2003, a significant date with regard to the waging of war, with the invasion of Iraq and the war of aggression which followed. Indeed, as this article intends to show, the most crucial factor in determining, or reviving, interest in this dimension of Shakespeare have been the wars being waged in the world. It is certainly to be hoped that the study of war in Shakespeare may not again sink into oblivion; but, more importantly, it is hoped that its discussion may not be revived, as happened in the past, in the harsh light of more wars being waged around the world.

Keywords: Early Modern Culture, Politics, Shakespeare Criticism, War.

1. *Preliminary*

In spite of the omnipresence of war in the Elizabethan theatre of the 1590s and especially in Shakespeare's works, very few studies have been devoted to this topic or have discussed the interrelation between the theatrical representations of war and the warlike spirit of the Elizabethan era, which is also witnessed by the production of an exceptional number of war manuals. Surprisingly, Paul A. Jorgensen's 1956 seminal book was not followed by other substantial studies until the 1990s, when two books on war in Shakespeare were written by Theodor Meron (1993; 1998), a professor of international law. In addition to these, a long article by Steven Marx which tackled the issue of war in Shake-

speare by discussing the complementary issue of peace was published in 1992, 49-95. But it was only in the late 1990s that the book-length study of war in Shakespeare and his contemporaries was resumed by Shakespeare scholars. In 1998 Nick de Somogyi published his *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* and in 2001 Nina Taunton's *1590s Drama and Militarism* appeared. That the issue of war has finally gained ground in the crowded field of Shakespeare studies is further shown by a recent book by Simon Barker (2007). Finally, the most recent contributions in this inexplicably neglected field of study are *Shakespeare and War*, edited by Ros King and Paul Franssen (2008) and my own *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition* (2010); their publication shows that further reflection on this issue is indeed appropriate; and further reflection was indeed provided by a recent book by Franziska Quabeck (2013).

The renewed wave of interest shown by the works published since 2007 was preceded and prepared by seminars and conferences taking place inside the Shakespeare community: in 2003 two seminars on "Shakespeare and War" were chaired by Paul Franssen and Ros King at the Utrecht ShinE (Shakespeare in Europe) Conference; in 2005, the topic of the Cracow ShinE Conference was "Shakespeare in Europe: History and Memory" and some of the papers read on that occasion were devoted to discussing issues connected with war; finally, in 2008, Clara Calvo chaired a seminar on "Shakespeare, Memory and War" at the biannual International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon. The first two of these occasions produced papers which have now been collected and published¹; some of them (Simon Barker's at the Utrecht Conference and mine at the Cracow meeting) have been expanded into book-length studies; at the 2009 Conference of the British Shakespeare Association, Clara Calvo and Ton Hoenselaars chaired a seminar on "Shakespeare in Wartime"; a Conference entitled "Wartime Shakespeare in a Global Context" was held in Ottawa in September, 2009 and the ESRA (European Shakespeare Research Association) Conference, which was held in Pisa in November, 2009, was devoted to "Shakespeare and Conflict".

2003, the date of the first of those seminars and conferences, is a significant date as far as the wars being waged around us is concerned. In the month of March of that year, Iraq was made the object of a military invasion and of a preventive war which many considered a downright aggression; by the same time, the military engagement in Afghanistan was already proving destructive as well as inane. Evidently, this kind of atmosphere affected even the usually secluded academic world and a need to discuss the issue of war started to be manifested even in the most secluded of its sectors, that of literary scholars and, in particular, of Shakespeareans.

As we shall see, actual wars being waged in the world have been the most crucial factor in determining, or reviving, interest in the treatment of war in Shakespeare's work. Indeed, the most convinced (if not convincing) arguments for the hypothesis that Shakespeare himself may have served in war were conceived by an Englishman while he was serving in World War I.

2. *Shakespeare's Military Service*

So pervasive and ubiquitous is war in Shakespeare, so detailed and pregnant the military world he has staged, so competent and professional the discourse of war by which he has represented the issues and reproduced the parlance connected with that world, that some critics have hypothesized that, at some stage, Shakespeare may have served in the Low Countries. There is, however, disagreement about the time in which his military service is imagined to have taken place.

The first hypothesis places Shakespeare's service in the Low Countries in or around 1605. It was William J. Thoms who, in 1859, suggested that Shakespeare spent some time serving in war. Thoms, Schoenbaum says, was "a peaceable antiquary [who] conscripted the poet for military service in the Low Countries – a William Shakespeare, he triumphantly noted, is listed in 1605 in a muster roll of hired soldiers within Barlichway Hundred, in the village of Rowington". Schoenbaum believes that "Thoms has of course confused the poet with some namesake"; for "Rowington had his quota of Shakespeares" (1975, 87-88)². Other – even less reliable, but more elaborate – hypotheses have been advanced, argued mainly on the basis of Shakespeare's alleged expertise in matters of war. For some, serving in war seemed a realistic way to fill in the "lost years" and a sound explanation for young Shakespeare's departure from home: war could indeed be an apt and honourable activity to choose for a *pater familias* who has decided to leave his wife and children and an apt excuse for him to abandon the province and launch on more "international" enterprises. Sir Duff Cooper argued this view after World War II but the idea had come to him while he was serving in World War I. One night, he says, a Sergeant Shakespeare who served in his battalion was killed by a gas explosion: "Thus, on the fields of Flanders", Cooper says, "the name seemed to strike some dim echo out of the past" (1949, 6). Sir Duff had with him a small volume of Shakespeare's comedies (many English soldiers are said to carry with them copies of Shakespeare's works while engaged in war); he decided to start reading *Love's Labours Lost* and was surprised by the fact that a text which he considered "fanciful, [...] artificial [...] and remote from the workaday world" was full of war metaphors; and was directly startled when he met the word "corporal" (8). The only thin piece of external evidence which Sir Duff produces to substantiate his hypothesis is the presence of Leicester at Kenilworth in 1585: "Is it not much more than probable", he says, "that a young man, with an able body, a stout heart and a thirst for adventure, instead of setting forth on the ninety miles walk to London, [...] should have preferred to walk the thirteen miles to Kenilworth, and offer himself as a voluntary recruit to one of the most remarkable men of the age?" (32). Cooper's further arguments, in the following pages, are entirely based on internal evidence, that is, on quotations from Shakespeare's works whose content is discussed on the basis of Sir Duff's own knowledge of military life and of his experience of war.

Thus, the issues connected with war have become one more source of frustration as regards Shakespeare's biography. "The idea is gruffly dismissed by scholars", J.R. Hale suggests; however, he expresses the opinion that the hypothesis is "least bizarre than trying to deduce a professional basis for the wealth of his allusions to horticulture, medicine, and the law" (1985, 89). Jorgensen appreciates at least one aspect of Cooper's theorizing, namely, "Cooper's important assertion that Shakespeare was ignorant of ranks above the captaincy" (1956, 64); and Charles Edelman seems to appreciate the same issue in Cooper's treatment of the topic when he says that "Duff Cooper was able to determine that the language and conduct of such characters as Othello and Enobarbus are those of a hard-fighting NCO, hence the author who created them must have held that rank" (2000, 1).

3. *An Ignored Pioneer*

When, in 1956, Paul A. Jorgensen wrote his book *Shakespeare's Military World* he could only establish a dialogue with Shakespeare's plays, the contemporary war conduct books and some criticism, mainly on the history plays, in which, however, war was not the main topic. The writers he acknowledges in the Preface of his book are mainly scholars of Renaissance military literature and only a few authors of "studies of war and peace in Shakespeare's day and in the early Tudor period" (ix). Indeed, Jorgensen's was certainly the first attempt to discuss war in all of Shakespeare's work. His interest was markedly historical: "I have tried to interpret [Shakespeare's] concept of war and his military personnel in Renaissance terms", he said and added his conviction that "Shakespeare's ideas were primarily those of his own day"; and that "he altered even classical history to agree with contemporary doctrine" (viii). Jorgensen's historicism is neither of the "old" type nor, obviously, of the "new" type; it is the kind of historicism which we find in Lily Campbell's 1947 book. Campbell ranks herself among those critics who believe that "there is in the history plays a dominant political pattern characteristic of the political philosophy of the age". She further clarifies her position saying: "I do not believe that a poet exists in a vacuum, or even that he exists solely in the minds and hearts of his interpreters [...] His ideas and his experiences are conditioned by the time and the place in which he lives" (1947, 6). Adopting a similar perspective, Jorgensen reads war in Shakespeare as connected to the discourse which developed in contemporary England, especially in the works of writers of war manuals, which constituted the commonsensical knowledge which Shakespeare absorbed and translated into stage tales and discourses. Jorgensen believes that Shakespeare "was not a professional, nor even a conscientious student of military science", but also that "most of his military ideas would have been recognized as real, perhaps urgent, when they were first spoken from London stages" (ix). The general idea he transmits

and discusses, therefore, is that of a culturally bound discourse and therefore of a view of war which does not challenge established ideas and ideologies. Even when he discusses “discords”, as in chapter II, Jorgensen (wisely) avoids presenting Shakespeare’s texts as contrasting the contemporary *doxa* and deals, instead, with what was recognized as discordant elements: lack of order in battle array and in manoeuvre, dissensions among the personnel, the problems arising from divided command, insubordination, chaos following disruption of military hierarchy and so on. Nowhere is Jorgensen tempted by “ironic” readings of Shakespeare’s attitude as challenging ideas established since Vegetius or Frontinus and even since Plutarch. When he quotes Machiavelli, reference is generally made to passages in which the Florentine secretary warns against the perils of insubordination and lack of order. More generally, the dominant note and Jorgensen’s main interest is that of showing harmony with, and adherence to, contemporary ideas.

But Jorgensen also produced extremely insightful analyses and a fine critical and historical exegesis, tackling the whole of Shakespeare’s work, especially focussing attention on the representation of the military: from that of the higher ranks to the lower troops which Falstaff (realistically) defines as “food for powder” to a discussion of the place of the soldiery in society.

As I said, Jorgensen’s seminal book was not followed by other substantial reflections by Shakespeare scholars until the late 1990s: it is as if the cold war years had frozen all discourse on this aspect of Shakespeare’s work; more realistically, the discourse of war was no longer fashionable as it had been during World War II and its aftermath. During those silent decades, a remarkable exception is another “classic” of the Shakespeare and war criticism, a short text by J.R. Hale which was published in 1985. Hale was professor of Italian history and, among other things, he had started to publish books and articles on war in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance in 1961, when *The Art of War in Renaissance England* appeared, and devoted to the study of warfare and of related topics a large part of his research activity until 1990, when *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance* was published. Apart from the perspicuity and lucidity of his reflections on war and the Renaissance, Hale’s comments on Shakespeare in “Shakespeare and Warfare” and, *passim*, in other of his works, offer a precious source of inspiration.

4. *Pacifism*

The temptation to read the representation of war in Shakespeare as mirroring Shakespeare’s own ideas on what has been defined “a unique human interest and activity, with its own character, its own self-images, its own mystiques, its own forms of organization” (Hale 1985, 9), has always been strong. Alternatively, commentators have argued for a militarist or an antimilitarist stance on the author’s part, in the first instance reading mainly *Henry V* and in the

second *Troilus and Cressida*. In 1992, *Renaissance Quarterly* published a long article by Stephen Marx bearing the unambiguous title “Shakespeare’s Pacifism”. Stating that Shakespeare “repeatedly dramatized the disagreement between militarist and pacifist perceptions of warfare”, Marx intended to show “Shakespeare’s development from a partisan of war to a partisan of peace in the course of his career” and places the turning point of this supposed development “between 1599 and 1603” (49). Connecting the change in perspective to the culture of pacifism which he considers “the dominant Stuart mode of expression” (58), Marx rightly argued that *Troilus and Cressida* may be read as an antimilitarist critique and that the praise of peace is clearly expressed in such plays as *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*. In order to show that Shakespeare experienced a radical change of mind, however, he unconvincingly argued the idea that Shakespeare’s earliest history plays undeflectively celebrate militarism and that during the Elizabethan years Shakespeare chose, at least, to please the public (if not his own mind) that wanted “glorification of chivalric battle and of English victory over France” (63). Indeed, if it is, on the one hand, true that the Trojan war in *Troilus and Cressida* “is portrayed not in terms of glamor, glory, or heroism but rather as cruel butchery” (80), less arguable it is that the *Henry VI* plays stage unambiguously the glorification of warfare.

The idea of a “pacifist” Shakespeare was launched again some years later by Laurence Lerner. In an article published in 1995, entitled “Peace Studies: A Proposal”, Lerner half seriously endorsed the birth of a field of pacifist literary studies on the model of Women’s Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, Black Studies and so on (641-643). In order to try and exemplify what appears to him the correct method for pursuing the kind of perspective which he is elaborating, Lerner chooses Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *Henry V* as test-cases. The idea is to tackle texts whose militarism is apparent and see if there are in them any elements which subvert or contradict the surface impression. As far as Shakespeare’s play is concerned, Lerner says that “A pacifist reading of *Henry V* will search for two things. First, for those moments when the text complicates the simple heroism which it appears to glorify; and second, those occasions when we resist the text, by measuring it against criteria which, as readers committed to a contrary ideology, we bring it bear on it” (646). Useless to say, he will find a number of those moments inside and outside the field of Agincourt; thus, Lerner ranked himself among the critics who have read *Henry V*, so to speak, against the grain (or “ironically”), stressing its ambivalence (a tendency to which I will return in the following pages).

5. Militarism and Antimilitarism: Wartime Shakespeare and *Henry V*

Henry V is indeed an extraordinarily ambivalent and perhaps ambiguous play. As Gary Taylor says, its critics

almost all divide into two camps: partisans of Henry and partisans of pacifism. Partisans of Henry generally like the play, interpreting it as a blunt straightforward Englishman's paean to English glory; [...] Partisans of pacifism either dislike the play intensely, or believe that Shakespeare [...] himself intensely disliked Henry, and tried hard to communicate this moral distaste to the more discerning members of his audience. (1984, 1)

The alleged ambivalence of the text has made and is still making its exploitation in different contexts and to opposite ends possible and has produced a number of what was once termed "ironic" readings. These are generally aimed to show that the play has the nature of a double assertion, namely, that while, on the surface, it glorifies Henry and his enterprise, it is run through by a hypotext which suggests that Henry is a cynical double-dealer³. In an essay published in 1984, Richard Levin argued that the authors of what he calls "the new orthodoxy" had simply "misinterpret[ed]" Shakespeare (1984, 141) as they had misinterpreted Hazlitt's judgement of Henry from which many of the "ironic" readings were determined (1817).

The same year, an article by Graham Holderness, which can be read as an (indirect) answer to Levin's critique, appeared (1984). In it, Holderness challenges the idea that there is a "correct" interpretation (versus "misinterpretations") of any text. His attention is directed towards the way in which certain institutions – social, political and artistic – have exploited "Shakespeare" by appropriating *Henry V* in the year 1944: G. Wilson Knight's patriotic essay "The Olive and the Sword" (1944), Olivier's film *Henry V* and Tillyard's book *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944)⁴. The 1944 revival made use of the play in a moment of national crisis and made it complicit, Holderness says, "with that ideology of national unity which the leading sections of British society [...] were fighting to forge and perpetuate throughout the war" (1984, 27).

World War II, in any case, was not the first occasion on which, in a moment of crisis, *Henry V* was evoked publicly to raise patriotic feelings. In an article about the tercentenary celebrations of Shakespeare's death in 1916, Balz Engler discusses the way in which, in spite of the war, those celebrations took place both in England and in Germany. In England, Engler says, during four days, separate institutions paid homage to the national poet: "on Sunday the Church, on Monday politics, on Tuesday the arts, on Wednesday education" (1991, 105). The interesting thing for the present argument is that "The beautiful memorial programme printed for the occasion contains 'Notes on Shakespeare the Patriot', concerning his views on language, patriotism, the fleet, etc., and illustrating them with passages mainly from *Henry V*" (107).

Nor are the tercentenary celebrations the only instance of an appropriation of Shakespeare and of *Henry V* during World War I; in his famous 1918 British Academy speech, significantly entitled "Shakespeare and England", Walter Raleigh suggested that "There is certainly no other English poet who

comes near to Shakespeare in embodying our character and our foibles” (1918, 11). Repeatedly, Raleigh evokes parallels between the war scenes staged by Shakespeare and the present war: “We entered on the greatest of our wars with an army no bigger, so we are told, than the Bulgarian army. Since that time we have regimented and organized our people, not without success” (*ibidem*); and he does not spare the Germans who, he argues, in the present time, “have made a religion of war and terror, and have used commerce as a means for the treacherous destruction of the independence and freedom of others” (15). They “were once the cherishers, as now they are the destroyers, of the inheritance of civilization” (*ibidem*)⁵. Therefore, he concludes, “For the present, [...] the best thing the Germans can do with Shakespeare is leave him alone” (16).

6. *Further Appropriations: the Jurists' Point of View*

Also scholars not professionally engaged in the study of literature have discussed the issue of war starting from *Henry V*. Theodor Meron is Emeritus professor of international law at the New York University Law School, was president of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and a member of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and, among other activities in this field, he has served as counsellor to the U.S. Department of State and to the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Although he is not a professional reader, Meron is probably the scholar who has written most about Shakespeare and war. David L. Perry teaches Ethics at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He has written an interesting “pedagogical” article on *Henry V*, founding his evaluations on the just war doctrine. Given their professional engagement, for these scholars, *Henry V* has become the ideal test-text for the illustration, in technical juridical terms, of issues concerning the modern regulations of both the *jus ad bellum* and the *ius in bello*; their perspective, therefore, is the just war doctrine, as it has developed from its origin to the international agreements contained in the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

Meron’s first book is entitled *Henry’s Wars and Shakespeare’s Laws*. In it he uses *Henry V* “as a vehicle to analyse the issues of war that governed, or should have governed, [the battle of Agincourt] and to develop an intertemporal, historical perspective on the law of war and its evolution” (1993, 211). The second of Meron’s books is entitled *Bloody Constraint*, with a subtitle: *War and Chivalry in Shakespeare*. In it, Meron expands on the topic of the chivalric principles obtaining in the late Middle Ages and on the way in which these are reflected in Shakespeare’s representation of war.

David Perry has written an article entitled “Using Shakespeare’s *Henry V* to Teach Just-War Principles”, in which he uses Shakespeare’s text to show his students the flouting of all the principles elaborated by international law as regards both the right cause to wage war and the norms regulating the con-

duct of hostilities. Perry's didactic concerns find in *Henry V* the exemplary text to teach what should by no means be done both as regards the *ius ad bellum* (just cause and right intention) and as regards the *ius in bello* (non-combatant immunity, proportionality and treatment of prisoners), which – he remarks – in the play are infringed in many ways.

These two readings, although developing contrary arguments, end up by producing the same – more or less explicit – conclusion about Shakespeare's attitude to war. For Meron, Shakespeare was not a warmonger: he was ready to justify Henry's conquest because he believed that its cause was just. Perry's conclusion is implicit but more on the "ironic" side: by exposing all of Henry's faults, Shakespeare showed clearly what his idea of an unjust war was. Once again, two Shakespeare readers have interpreted the play in entirely different ways; but Shakespeare critics have known for a long time that the play's "meaning" has been constructed by its contradictory readings as precisely that of a conflictual experience.

7. *The New Historicism and Beyond: the 1980s and '90s*

The 1980s and the 1990s were dominated, in Shakespeare scholarship, by the movement known as "New Historicism" and, less pervasively, by the complementary but different movement known as "Cultural Materialism". Both had a lot to say about Shakespeare and the Renaissance and both had a lot to say against what they considered the failure of "old historicism": mainly, the tendency to view cultural formations as monolithic expressions. Surprisingly, war was not a favourite topic with either new historicists or cultural materialists. "It is a striking fact", N. de Somogyi rightly remarks, "that, despite its obsession with violence and power, New Historicism has neglected the subject of early modern war" (1998, 5). Indeed, the new historicists' suspension of interest in the issue of war is surprising mainly because that school of criticism produced a number of theoretical statements about the ways in which the past is constructed (and should be reconstructed). Although the composite and heterogeneous image the New Historicism elaborated of the Renaissance was not entirely new, the kind of broadly intertextual connections it established and the redrawing of the boundaries between the literary and the non-literary it performed and encouraged represented an exciting experience for Renaissance scholars: an experience from which the study of the representation of war would certainly have profited. Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" is one of the few essays in which, although tangentially, the issue of war in Shakespeare appears. The text under discussion is, once more, *Henry V*. What Greenblatt suggests in this enormously influential piece of criticism, which is also the manifesto which launched the subversion-containment formula, is a sort of second-degree "ironic reading" of the play. Starting from a view which is not far from Hazlitt's (that, in spite of everything, we like Henry in the play),

Greenblatt discusses the “everything” which apparently subverts “the monarch’s glorification” (first-degree ironic reading) but which ends by intensifying Henry’s glorification. In other words, the idea is that “the subversive doubts the play continually awakens originate paradoxically in an effort to intensify the power of the king and his war”. In short, “the play’s central figure seems to feed on the doubts he provokes” (second-degree “ironic” reading); (1988, 62-63).

Curtis Bright wrote his book in 1996, a moment in which the influence of New Historicism was waning; thus, it was finally possible – and it had almost become fashionable – to question its very historicity. Bright – who declared to have been inspired by the kind of Marxist analysis suggested in “the first chapter of Frederic Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*” (1996, 35)⁶ – mounted a sharp critique of the methods and of some of the tenets of the New Historicism and especially questioned the historical competence of its practitioners. His contention is both against the traditional “reverential historiography” which tended “to represent the Elizabethan era as a time of ‘order’ when people ‘consented’ to be ruled by a powerless state” (3) and “the new historicists’ supposedly alternative view of the Elizabethan world”. The latter, Bright says, although they deny the monolithic character of cultural and historical formations, “tend to preface their cultural analyses by claiming that the state’s lack of a standing army, police force and/or secret service crippled its domestic coercive capabilities” (6) and thus tended to pronounce the power as powerless and only describable in terms of theatricality. Bright, then, concludes his argument by stating that “New historicists made the simple mistake of writing about history without be(com)ing historians” (8). His fundamental tenet, on the contrary, is the dominance of a *regnum Cecilianum*, a powerful and cruel regime which dictated the *Realpolitik* both at home and abroad. Bright’s arguments spring from the reading of a corpus of texts which, he says, has been neglected by historians, namely, “the oppositional discourse, largely written by English Roman Catholic exiles on the continent” (1-2) which (obviously) described the Cecilian regime as a state of terror. As regards the wars being waged by that regime, Bright contrasts the idea of “Spanish aggression against poor little England and of the Cecilian faction as a peace party” and argues, on the contrary, that “The regime’s constant provocation of Spain beginning at least by 1568 [...] was not countered in any significant way for twenty years” (5) and that, therefore, the Spanish “aggression” was only a delayed response to continuous provocations. In Part II of his book, Bright outlines the possibility of Burghley’s responsibility in Marlowe’s murder. Finally, in Part III, he discusses militarism as represented in Shakespeare’s *Henriad* and reads the four plays as reflecting “antagonistic collective discourses” or as “political allegory dramatizing medieval history to comment on Cecilian strategies from 1569 to 1599” (171).

Nick de Somogyi expresses, in the Introduction to his book, a more nuanced methodological critique as regards the achievements of the New His-

toricism, keeping at a safe distance from both “old” and “new” historicisms, an attitude which would be more or less silently embraced by subsequent studies. He first acknowledges that it was a weakness in the “earlier traditions of literary historical scholarship” to have considered contextual documents only capable of offering keys to unlock and explain artistic works, but also remarks that the New Historicism, “while usefully demonstrating the rewards of a common scrutiny of printed playhouse-scripts and non-‘literary’ texts, has laboured too hard to deny [...] the [...] cultural centrality of the works of authors like Marlowe and Shakespeare”. He, thus, declares that his study “has been written with an eye to avoiding the faults of both kinds of enquiry” and adds that it “makes no apologies for placing literary texts at the heart of its enquiry, and Shakespearean plays at its heart of heart” (1998, 5).

Somogyi’s book “explores the relations between drama and history, and seeks to illuminate the influence of wartime in the production of Elizabethan plays” (2). *Shakespeare’s Theatre of War* examines and discusses, with the help of an impressive bibliography, a wide range of often very little known texts and Shakespeare’s plays (mainly *Hamlet*, *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Henry V*) with the aim of exploring the relationships existing between what was presented on the stage and England’s involvement in war activities from 1585 until 1604.

8. *Other Voices*

In January, 1989, a Conference entitled “Shakespeare et la guerre”, organized by Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies, took place in Paris. For the first time the Shakespeare community devoted special attention to the issue of war; furthermore, the conference, whose proceedings were published the next year, also hosted contributions by non-Shakespeareans: a distinguished historian like Philippe Contamine, Jean-Paul Charnay, Director of the “Centre d’Etudes et Recherche sur les Stratégies et les Conflits” of the CNRS and the psychoanalyst Daniel Sibony, who provided interesting and stimulating disciplinary and methodological suggestions. Apart from their interventions, the topics discussed ranged from the rhetoric of war (Margaret Jones-Davies) to the relationships between images of war and images of the feast (François Laroque), from the legendary traits which compose the cult of Mars (Michèle Willems) to the idea of “éclairage” in painting as applied to the events of war (Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard), to the “perverse ingenuity” of certain images of death in the tragedies (Ann Lecerclé). Finally, two of the papers were devoted to performance (Lois Potter’s on the staging of war scenes in certain historical productions and Russell Jackson’s on the issue of style in the productions of the 1980s). A round table on TV representations of war concluded the meeting. In the following years, the study of various forms of performance would become one of the main directions of research in the field of Shakespeare studies.

In 2001 the study of Shakespeare and war was resumed with one more important work and the first comprehensive book since Jorgensen's *Shakespeare's Military World*: Charles Edelman's *Dictionary*. Edelman's is much more than a dictionary and a reference book, since it provides ample treatment of most of the items listed with reference to Shakespeare's and other authors' works, historical information, explanation of the function and development of each item also including reference to recent works of most of the terms, discussion of contemporary usage and meaning nuances, sociological explanations, thus providing a rich and multilayered framework not only for the comprehension of technical terms but also for their historical placement, including reference to their sources. The same year, a book by Nina Taunton appeared. Taunton's book focuses on the 1590s and is especially interested in discussing the interrelation between the prescriptive discourse of war in contemporary war manuals, the historical events of that decade and the discourse of war which developed in the drama of the same years. Taunton devotes the first part of her book, which is also the most original, to "Generals" (2001, 22-91), outlining the models which, she argues, shaped the portraits of real military leaders which were seen on the stage in the 1590s. Of those models, she discusses the embodiments mainly in the characters of Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Chapman's Byron and Shakespeare's Henry V, also evoking the prescriptions of the ideal general drawn in contemporary conduct manuals and discussing the theatre characters both when they conformed to the model and when they contradicted it.

During the following years, interventions on war became frequent at Shakespeare conferences and they have all found their way into printing.

In Simon Barker's 2007 book, whose main interest is the relationship between war and nationality, the themes (and the ideology) developed in the war manuals are contrasted with the critique which, according to the author, came from the stage. In this perspective, Barker examines a wide range of plays, Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean, providing of some (especially *Richard III* and *Henry V*) unconventional interpretations. Barker also tackles certain forms of dissemination of Shakespeare's texts, especially discussing their impact on Brecht's work and the ideological assumptions of certain screen versions of Shakespeare's plays.

In the Proceedings of the Cracow Conference quoted above, Ton Hoenselaars, in the essay which opens the volume, reads Agincourt as a site of memory, past and present, and as one of the most persistent of the European Shakespeare myths, developing a comparative analysis in the recent reception history of *Henry V* on both sides of the Atlantic "to see if this process can help us define more clearly what we call 'European Shakespeare', if such a thing exists" (in Gibinska, Romanowska 2008, 11)⁷.

Shakespeare and War, edited by Ros King and Paul Franssen is a more recent contribution in this direction of study. In the opening chapter, the

editors contextualize Shakespeare's "use" of war as one in which contemporary events are mirrored and also devote some pages to the way in which Shakespeare's works have in turn been "used" in the twentieth century, especially in time of war. The book's chapters are arranged into four thematic sections or parts: I. "Ideas of War and Peace"; II. "Rhetoric of War"; III. "Translation and Adaptation"; IV. "War Time Interpretations". The collection offers a number of different issues and perspectives: from the discussion of the way in which Shakespeare's vision transforms the ideas expressed in contemporary war manuals (Ros King)⁸ to the study of the cost of war on "war patients" (Ruth Morse); from a multi-faceted reading of "Shakespeare's *Edward III*" (Ellen C. Caldwell), a play to which also Morse devotes attention, to a further elaboration of the idea of a "pacifist" Shakespeare (Thomas Kullmann). As can be imagined, *Henry V* takes the lion's share: Scott Fraser analyzes Henry's speech before Harfleur; Madalina Nicolaescu examines certain overtones of its Roumanian translations; and Diana E. Henderson produces fresh arguments about its stage exploitations. Simon Barker returns to Brecht discussing his use of *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar*. Finally, the essays in Parts III and IV read the translations (both linguistic and theatrical) of Shakespeare's texts as cultural adaptations, the various experiments in re-reading, translating and staging and foregrounding their relationships with the time temper (political, social esthetic, and so on) which produced them.

In the last few years, little more has been said on the issue of war and/in Shakespeare; therefore, as Gérard Genette said of the conclusion of certain novels told by an "I" narrator, at this point the *histoire* has reached the *récit*. To discuss the sequel of this *histoire* is left to a different chronicler, with the wish that the issue of war in Shakespeare may not again sink into oblivion; but, also, with the added wish that its discussion may not be revived, as happened in the past, in light of more wars being waged around the world.

Notes

¹ The Utrecht seminar produced papers which are now collected in King and Franssen, eds (2008); some of the papers presented at the Kraków Conference have appeared in M. Gibinska and A. Romanowska, eds (2008).

² The text quoted by Schoenbaum is W.J. Thoms 1865, 136.

³ Tackling the issue of "duplicity", years ago I argued that *Henry V*, far from presenting two alternative readings, presents a polyphonic political picture and a political assertion about how ambivalent political and historical issues can be (Pugliatti 1993).

⁴ Olivier's film bears the following inscription: "To the Commandos and Airborne troops of Great Britain, the spirit of whose ancestors it has been humbly attempted to recapture in some ensuing scenes, this film is dedicated". In 1943, before the film was released, Olivier gave a speech in the Albert Hall, which ended with the words: "may God bless our cause".

⁵ In the Bush era, the internet became crowded with articles and cartoons which developed parallels between G.W. Bush and (Shakespeare's) Henry V; such parallels were especially based

on their (mended) mad youth, on the fact that they followed their fathers in a public office of rank and on their wars of aggression.

⁶ Jameson's book was first published in 1981.

⁷ My own Krakow paper, "The Art of War in Shakespeare and in the European Renaissance Treatises" was published in the same book (Gibinska, Romanowska 2008), 57-77.

⁸ In her contribution, King devotes a few pages to the issue of the "just war", which is the focus of my *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition* (2010).

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