

Ireland and Islam: *Henry V* and the 'War on Terror'

Henry V, scholars have long been aware, is deeply implicated in discourses surrounding an expensive, unpopular and ethically contentious foreign war; the Elizabethan military apparatus in Ireland, and in particular the Earl of Essex's mission to quell the Tyrone rebellion, loom behind the text, threatening at every moment to rupture the theatrical illusion of a glorious English king.¹ Scholars are also aware of how *Henry V* has been appropriated for propagandistic purposes in a number of later conflicts, most famously in Laurence Olivier's Second-World-War film version. A similar process is now at work in Britain (and America's) latest expensive, unpopular and ethically contentious foreign war, the operation in the Middle East and beyond euphemised as the 'war on terror'. The popular interpretation of the conflict in British media and culture has, not always deliberately, constructed the 'war on terror' in Henrician terms. The parallels are common and unpleasant: questionable interpretations of Salic Law and of United Nations Constitutions; the portrayal of military commanders as masters of Henrician eloquence, urging their troops unto the breach like the mirror of all Christian kings;

¹ On the presence of Ireland and O'Neill in *Henry V*, see, for example, David J. Baker, *Between Nations: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marvell, and the Question of Britain* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997); Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, eds., *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray, eds. *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Matter of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); Andrew Murphy, *But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us: Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1999).

Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and the execution of the French prisoners. Perhaps the most startling way in which *Henry V* is in operation in this conflict can be witnessed in the way in which large sections of the media reach quickly for the 'Irish' parallel, comparing the 'Islamic terrorists' to the 'Irish Republicans' of the past few decades. Macmorris is raising his head again: and *Henry V's* uneasy strategy of incorporation is again promoted as the preferred mode of dealing with a perceived cultural threat.

I

As various scholars have suggested, in staging a drama of incorporation, whereby the non-English regions of 'Britain', represented by the four captains and Princess Katherine, come under the influence and control of the King of England, *Henry V* glorifies the nation-building strategies of the Tudor monarchs.² So, for Clare McEachern, the play is interested not so much in the personal qualities of its titular monarch as in 'the tropes of subjectivity used to produce a particular Elizabethan political affect - that of corporate identity, of what we might call "the nation"' (35). This strategy of nation-building necessarily involves the exertion of violence, political and otherwise. If, as Jonathan Baldo has argued, 'the four captains in *Henry V* bear testimony to the Elizabethans growing conviction that the national unit was not England but England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland' (146), then the play deliberately elides the necessity of violent and/or political conquest of these regions. Indeed, the strategy may have been counterproductive for Anglocentrism: Baldo's claim that English Elizabethan activity in Ireland allowed Hugh O'Neill to 'become

² For an important collection of recent work in this field, see David J. Baker and Willy Maley, eds.

British Identities and English Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).

the credible leader of a movement for an independent Catholic Ireland' is perhaps a little enthusiastic in its terminology, but certainly suggests a nascent *Irish* nation developing (imaginatively, of course) in the period (152).

The question as to how far this violence is re-enacted on stage has focused almost exclusively on the execution of the French prisoners (most of the violence of war, as the chorus argues, is barely representable on an Elizabethan stage).³ For Joel Altman, the execution of the French prisoners must be staged, as it is of a piece with the play's celebration of its protagonist: 'the visual amplification is performed not in the service of critique but rather to gratify the passion for violence that has already been deflected from the King and aches to be released in foreign quarrels' (30). Altman's reading suggests the play's investment in the seductive allure of violence: 'the audience would have greedily participated the outrage committed before their eyes' (30). Yet at the same time the reading itself reveals a capitulation to the seductive rhetoric of violence: '[the assault on the prisoners] must have been a fierce sacrificial struggle' (30). The audience, in this reading, identifies strongly with the violent strategies of nation building displayed on stage: 'Shakespeare's audience is transformed into a polity whose mind ... is historically coextensive with Harry, sharing both the heroism and the savagery of his French exploits' (16). According to this reading of the play, the martial exploits of Henry in France also represent 'the heroism and the savagery' of Elizabethan engagements with Ireland; and the soldiers engaged in the Nine Years' War are also part of Harry's 'band of brothers':

³ For a recent summary of some of the arguments surrounding the execution of the prisoners, see John S. Mebane, "'Impious War': Religion and the Ideology of Warfare in *Henry V*," *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 250-266, especially pp. 260-1.

'Shakespeare has joined past to present ... in an honourable fellowship transcending time and space' (16).

What is significant in Altman's reading of the violence of the play is the critic's exact focus on the ritual qualities of the text, and in particular the way in which the language of sacrifice is evoked to excuse the act of violence. Altman is aware that the 'embracing ritual gesture' of the play is both 'sacramental and ... poetic' (16). By sacramental he largely means eucharistic, although the theology of sacrifice in this play is particularly problematic; as Altman argues, 'if Harry thus becomes, both for his troops and Shakespeare's audience, the chief participant in a national sacrificial ritual, the French become the host they feast upon' (29). But the host, of course, is the most important part of the ritual; in ingesting the host, one ingests Christ, whether 'Really' (theologically speaking) or metaphorically. In ascribing the role of sacrificial victim to the conquered peoples, the play seems insecure about the theology of sacrifice which it invokes. This insecurity is apparent throughout; as Janet Spencer has noted, this is particularly telling in regard to the text's rewriting of its sources, and of its theology of monarchy. In Shakespeare's sources, the object stolen by Henry's soldiers is a 'pyx'; *Henry V's* Bardolph, however, steals a 'pax'. As Spencer observes,

The substitution of the pax, an object designed to represent the historical event of the crucifixion of Christ rather than to contain his body, may register a demystification not only of the sacrament but also of the theological underpinnings of the king's two bodies. (173)

That is to say, the loss of sacramental certainty registered in the text affects not only theological understandings of Christ's body; it also draws attention to the problems associated in imagining and representing monarchical bodies.

However, not only must the body of the king be problematically present in this play, drawing attention both to the limits of incarnational theology and dramatic representation; so too the body of the enemy must be problematically absent. The execution of the prisoners, if staged, may represent an attempt to bring that body to the fore, to stage a display of the violated and dismembered body of the conquered.⁴ But it cannot fail to highlight that the bodies of conquered Irish soldiers, the mythic bodies to which the corporeal bodies of the French refer, are absent from the stage. Altman has argued that London audiences harboured a 'deep-seated hostility toward [their] notoriously barbaric neighbour' across the Irish Sea, and that *Henry V* represents part of an ongoing process whereby 'their collective anxieties and aggressive impulses were daily attracted to an absent though imaginatively present adversary' (7). Of course, Ireland is not absent from the Folio text, where both Macmorris and the Earl of Essex famously appear. Yet Ireland is less obviously present in the Quarto text, which Andrew Gurr has recently argued may have been

⁴ One might note here the problematic presence of these bodies in Kenneth Branagh's film version of the play (1989); as Donald K. Hedrick has noted, there is 'an odd disjunction in Branagh's plotting: he motivates the killing of the prisoners ... but does not follow through by having Henry kill them, as he does in the text' (219). Olivier's earlier decision to 'exclude ... the order to slay the prisoners' is, as Deborah Cartmell has noted, part of a broader urge to excise textual moments which cast doubt on the heroism of Henry: 'he excludes the treatment of the traitors, the speech before Harfleur in which Henry pictures the consequences of war, Henry's exchange of gloves with Williams, Henry's acknowledgement of his father's guilt in the prayer before battle, the hanging of Bardolph, the order to slay the prisoners, Henry's bawdy exchanges with Burgundy and Katherine, and the final remarks of the Chorus who reminds the audience of the ephemeral nature of Henry's victory' (96).

the text actually performed in 1599.⁵ If Gurr is right, and the issue is far from settled, it seems significant, given the sacramental anxieties which the play can be seen to reveal, that Ireland is represented primarily through a 'Protestant' semiotics of representation, rather than a 'Catholic' semiotics of presence. Ireland is not 'Really Present' in the play in the same way that Christ is not 'Really Present' in the Protestant eucharist; nevertheless, it is called to mind, speculatively memorialised, through both the conquest of France and, as Baldo has argued, the conquest of Wales (Fluellen, of course, is present in the Quarto): 'audiences ... might easily have compared Henry IV's troubles in Wales [in the Henry IV plays] to Elizabeth's in Ireland ... Henry [V]'s Wales is as much an allusion to the burning question of Ireland and the Essex expedition as the more explicit Chorus to Act 5 and the minor part of Macmorris' (149).

Furthermore, the theologies of absence and of memorialisation, both of which are particularly charged due to the sacramental anxieties of the period, are not simply confined to this text; rather, as Baldo reminds us, they are among the central tools of the Elizabethan colonialist strategy towards Ireland: 'the subduing of local memory, either by absorption or by erasure, was an essential feature of Elizabethan policy towards Ireland' (134). Not only is Ireland significantly absent in the play, it is also *going to be* forgotten, absorbed into the nation in the same way as Wales (*Henry V* displays a telling amnesia towards the threatening otherness of Glyndwr's Wales). The incorporation of the non-English regions demands a deliberate forgetting of their alterity: '*Henry V* continually reminds us of the communal amnesia that helps to produce and support the sense of nationhood' (140).

So, if one accepts Gurr's proposed performance history of the play, the absence of the direct references to Ireland in the Quarto do not negate the status of

⁵ See Andrew Gurr, ed., *The First Quarto of Henry V* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

the text as one which seeks to legitimate colonial violence in Ireland; as Baldo argues, 'the play offers not one but two representations of Ireland and, in a sense, two alternatives: brutal conquest *à la France* or passive absorption *à la Wales*' (145). But to what extent can Gurr's conjectures be supported? The Quarto text has no Captain MacMorris; as an Irishman problematically incorporated into Henry's army, he has served as a crucial figure in critical discussion of the text's relationship to Ireland. And it also contains no Chorus, thereby suggesting that the infamous reference to the Earl of Essex in the Chorus of Act Five may not have been voiced on a public stage in London in 1599. Gurr argues that the 1599 *Henry V* is radically different to the later, Folio, version: 'the quarto text of *Henry V* is probably closer to the version of the play that Shakespeare's company first put on stage in 1599 than any form of the play that modern audiences have seen' (2). But, as James Bednarz has recently argued, previously unexamined evidence suggests that the Chorus, at least, may have been in the version of the play originally performed. Arguing that 'the first quarto of Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants in 1599 at the Globe and subsequently registered for publication on 8 April 1600, contains a parody of the choruses of *Henry V* that reflects a familiarity with their use in performance' (487), Bednarz concludes that the 'long suspected allusion to the earl of Essex regains the plausibility it possessed before being challenged' (489). In other words, Ireland remains potentially present in the play's earliest performances.

Regardless, then, of whether Gurr or Bednarz is correct, the 1599 *Henry V* remains a text deeply implicated in the strategies of colonial violence undertaken by the Elizabethans in Ireland. Janet Spencer has argued that 'despite the European pursuit of territory throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the morality of conquest could not simply be assumed' (161). Arguing that 'the requirements of a just war were carefully articulated in multiple sources', Spencer goes on to argue that

'whether a conquest was ultimately designated a just war of recovery or an unjust act of expansionism boiled down to the issue of legitimate title to the territory in question, an issue decided in practice more often by the outcome of the conflict than by any other criteria' (162). So, although Canterbury's obfuscatory speech outlining the grounds for war (not present in Q) may suggest, via its failure to present a concise and convincing argument, that the conquest of Ireland is an act of colonial expansion, nevertheless the play's confident prediction of an Elizabethan victory in Ireland clearly suggests its propagandistic purpose. It is, perhaps, this characteristic duality of the text – it is *both* propagandistic *and* interrogative – which can explain its appeal to commentators describing the current 'wars' on terror and in Iraq.

II

Comparisons between Tony Blair and Shakespeare's Henry V were a common feature of British journalism throughout the former's decade-long premiership. In its online coverage of the Labour Party Conference of 1998, the BBC asked theatre director Mark Wing-Davey to analyse what it termed Blair's 'performance', suggesting that the dividing line between politics and theatre at this juncture was as indistinct as in the Elizabethan theatre. Complementing the language of sacrificial ritual which Altman finds in Shakespeare's Henry, Wing-Davey was particularly struck by Blair's employment of religious imagery: 'He managed to get a balance between a rather friendly religious revivalist preacher and a serious statesman ... he used religious metaphors such as spirit and body. That sense of his own religious beliefs was quite present' ('Theatrical Tony plays to the audience'). Apparently pushed by the interviewer to come up with a Shakespearean parallel, Wing-Davey delivered the following verdict: 'Were one playing Henry V one could have a few

lessons from Tony Blair' ('Theatrical Tony'). The tone from both journalist and director is light, almost jocular; the novelty and optimism of Blair's prime-ministerial persona – he had been elected, of course, only in 1997 – seems to have been a factor in media representations of 'Theatrical Tony'.

The events of September 11, 2001 significantly altered the media perception of Blair, although the sense of Blair as performer remained. Yet the role of Henry V was also frequently applied to George W. Bush, cast not so much as the eloquent orator of the eve of Harfleur, as the reformed libertine of the *Henry IV* plays. In a *Guardian* article of 2001, Simon Hoggart locates Blair in the Welsh assembly in Cardiff, a place where 'the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland ministers ... had been dragged from their Celtic fastnesses to witness [Blair's] speech' ('Sinews stiffened, minds dulled'). If the gathering of the secretaries of state is an echo of the 'Celtic' captains of Shakespeare's play, so too the 'hymn-singing anti-war demonstrators [at] ... the door of the Welsh assembly' recalls the magical alterity and Anglophobia of Glyndwr's Wales in *Henry IV* ('Sinews Stiffened'). For Hoggart, the parallels with Shakespeare's play serve to highlight not Blair's rhetorical skill, but rather his lack of oratorical excellence:

We were in Cardiff, we had been told, to hear one of the great orations, up there with Henry V's ... speech at Harfleur. It would stiffen the national sinews and summon up our blood ... [but] it was dull ... it sounded as if he was warning us of the dangers of ... dry rot' ('Sinews Stiffened').

Similarly, a piece from the same newspaper (a left-wing British broadsheet) a few months later attempts to draw a negative comparison between the American president and Shakespeare's protagonist. Comparing the 'steely-eyed, firm-jawed

wartime leader' with the earlier image of Bush as a 'callow and goofy figure', Julian Borger suggests that *Journeys with George*, a documentary about the Bush campaign trail, is 'a reminder of the Prince Hal lurking beneath Mr Bush's Texan version of Henry V' ('George's Journey'). In other words, the 'reformation' of Prince Hal has not been fully effected; Bush, like Blair, is playing a role.

At the same time, however, the theatre director Edward Hall was using the British print media to circulate narratives about the continuing potential of Shakespeare's play to promote debate in contexts where the processes of nation-formation are under fierce scrutiny. In Hall's journalistic pieces, local political concerns are revealed as frequently impinging on the interpretation of 'this contentious play' ('Guns and Roses'). When Hall's company performed *Henry V* in Mexico, for example, 'the black balaclavas worn by the actors as soldiers were taken as signs of pro-Zapatista leanings ... We sparked a huge debate on the issue of nationalism and national identity, a debate that we perhaps ought to be having in post-devolutionary Britain' ('Guns and Roses'). Hall's account of the political implications of *Henry V* in Bangladesh is equally significant:

In Bangladesh we were stopped from taking our audience outside in *Henry V* as the authorities felt that the play might ignite a crowd already on the edge of riot. The two major political parties were at loggerheads and many of their respective supporters had taken to the streets. On the last night a gun battle erupted between the university and government house, trapping us in the theatre, which stood in the middle. The next day, heavily guarded, we were ushered to the airport and away ('Guns and Roses').

This play, then, is still capable of provoking intense reactions; but its appropriation by British journalists to describe, more often than not ironically, contemporary political leaders threatens to empty it of the provocative sentiments which Hall describes.

But by early 2003, when the 'war on terror' was inexorably metamorphosing into a war on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the recourse to a Shakespearean parallel began to be taken more seriously by print and online journalists. In an article in January of that year, Julian Borger was still convinced that the story of 'how the callow and unimaginative American prince was challenged by the horror of September 11 and responded Henry-V style, by showing his true mettle' was simply a piece of 'rightwing polemic' ('How I Created the Axis of Evil'). However, by March, Simon Hoggart, who less than two years earlier had poured scorn on Blair's Henrician ambition, now began to take the claim more seriously:

Recently [Blair] has looked tired, drawn and drained. His face is still grey and his hair seems to be shrinking back into his scalp, but yesterday he was roaring, alive, quivering with ferocious tension, like a sub-lieutenant about to lead a battalion into battle⁶ ... This was one thunderous performance, passionate yet coherent, furious while icily controlled. Listening to it, you sensed that if things go horribly wrong this week he won't take the chance to flee. Instead it will be hand to hand fighting in Downing Street with the risk of terrible casualties. He blazed with conviction. ('PM Goes Over the Top and Survives Skirmish in No Man's Land')

⁶ Hoggart is confused here, of course: a battalion is commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, while a sub-lieutenant is a naval rank.

The rhetoric is reminiscent of that used to describe Shakespeare's Henry as a national hero. Constructing a politician in militaristic terms, the piece gives credence to the Blair-Bush project for Iraq just as the 1599 *Henry V* may be seen to support the Elizabethan strategy in Ireland. Indeed, for Hoggart, 'at the end he kicked into Henry V at Harfleur mode' ('PM Goes Over the Top').

Within a matter of days, the war had begun, and the *Henry V* parallel was widely employed once more, this time to describe neither Bush nor Blair, but Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Collins, whose speech on the eve of battle was widely compared to Henry's at Harfleur. Most British newspapers made this comparison, but the right-wing tabloid *The Sun* is probably the most forceful: the following is the full-text of the newspaper's editorial column on the speech, in which each sentence was granted the typographic significance of a new paragraph:

A commander's call to arms on the eve of battle is vital.

Few can match Shakespeare's words in the mouth of Henry V.

But the inspiring speech by Lt Col Tim Collins shows the true mettle of the British forces.

God bless them all. ('Clarion Call')

The conservative invocation of a martial deity (or at least, a God who is imagined to support military action) is significant, as the problematic theology of Shakespeare's text is almost entirely absent from this account. But Collins echoes Henry in other

ways, too, as an anonymous piece in *The Daily Telegraph* (like *The Sun*, a politically conservative publication) argued:

Brought up in east Belfast ... Collins personifies much of what is best in the Union itself ... His uniform alone bears witness to the magical hybrid nature of the British Army: it was Lt Col Collins who reintroduced the shamrock-green caubeen ... as normal working head-dress ... Even ... in Shakespeare's battle dispatch, brave Celts are to the fore ('United in Arms')

Collins is here explicitly imagined in similar terms as Macmorris, a potentially threatening 'regional' warrior incorporated into a 'British' army made stronger by such assimilation. Yet it is the army, rather than Collins himself, who is imagined as 'hybrid': he is essentialized, in the terms of Anglocentric colonial discourse, as a 'brave Celt'. (A case could potentially be made for the 'hybrid' nature of Collins' regiment, but it would be more complicated than the reductive sense of identities on display here; the Royal Irish Regiment was formed as an amalgamation of the Royal Irish Rangers and the Ulster Defence Regiment. The latter was locally-recruited and overwhelmingly Protestant, and deeply mistrusted by the minority Catholic population of Northern Ireland. In both of its recent incarnations, the name of the regiment is complex and contradictory: both 'Irish' and 'Ulster' suggest an incursion beyond the political bounds of the British state, into the Irish Republic).⁷

⁷ 'Ulster', of course, as an ancient term for the northernmost province of Ireland, is not synonymous with the current political entity of 'Northern Ireland', although the terms are used interchangeably by some political groupings.

The prevalence of *Henry V* in much British news journalism covering the conflict in Iraq, and the 'war on terror' more generally, forms an interesting context for the overwhelmingly positive reception afforded Nicholas Hytner's 2003 National Theatre production of the play. For Michael Billington, theatre critic for *The Guardian*, the production 'undercut the rhetorical glamour surrounding war', and was, rather euphemistically, 'absolutely a *Henry V* for our age' (*Henry V*). Michael Hubbard, reviewing for the BBC, was less reticent about pointing out the contemporary parallels: 'The production's use of live TV feeds to broadcast Henry's propaganda ... recalls addresses given to the Iraqi people by George W Bush and Tony Blair during the recent war ... Scenes in the French court are denoted by elegant chairs and amusingly gargantuan vases of flowers – calling to mind Saddam Hussein's palaces' ('Henry Packs Political Punch'). A rare voice of dissent was voiced by *The Sunday Telegraph*'s John Gross who, according to Matthew Bell, 'thought the production drew absurd parallels between Henry's campaign against the French ... and the Iraq war' ('Hytner Hits the Target with Henry'). Nevertheless, Billington would claim at the end of the year that 'the heartening thing about 2003 has been theatre's reconnection with the wider world ... the most cheering aspect of the year was the varied and rapid response to the Iraq crisis' ('Hello Cruel World').

It is, perhaps, in the world of the theatre that the resonances between Shakespearean drama and the 'war on terror' are continuing to be explored. The news media, perhaps partly as a result of Hytner's explicit juxtaposition of *Henry V* and Iraq, has shied away from the parallel, displaying a level of self-consciousness unknown in the earlier years of the decade. For example, although Sidney Blumenthal (writing in *The Guardian*) refers to Fred Barnes' recent partisan biography of George W. Bush, *Rebel-in-Chief: Inside the Bold and Controversial Presidency of George W. Bush*, as a 'hagiography on the theme of Bush-as-Prince Hal,' the book makes few

explicit references to Shakespeare's play. ('A Deaf Man Spouting'). The most obvious is when Barnes claims that 'President Bush operates in Washington like the head of a small occupying army of insurgents, an elected band of brothers (and quite a few sisters) on a mission' (14). But the phrase 'band of brothers' is a cliché in American military and journalistic discourse, and may not necessarily function as a direct invocation of Shakespeare. Theatre in Britain, on the other hand, continues to use Shakespeare to make sense of the ongoing conflict: Roy Williams's recent *Days of Significance* rewrites *Much Ado About Nothing* to tell the story of young British soldiers in Iraq, while Sulayman Al-Bassam's version of *Richard III* (*Richard III - An Arab Tragedy*), which is performed in Arabic and set in an unnamed Gulf state, was performed in Stratford in February 2007. It is undoubtedly through the figure of Henry V, however, that Shakespeare has most frequently been invoked in the present conflict; more concretely, it is the 'Irish' dimensions of Shakespeare's play which often informs the representation of 'Arab' or 'Islamic' militants in the British media.

III

In January 2007, in a piece in the left-wing Sunday broadsheet *The Observer* about the Armenian genocide, the columnist Jasper Gerard suggested that the prosecution of Orhan Pamuk - the Turkish novelist and Nobel laureate threatened with prosecution for referring to the killings as a 'genocide' - was as outrageous as if 'men in size 12s bundled off Martin Amis for, say, daring to mention Bloody Sunday' (13). While the scale of the violence is clearly not comparable, Gerard clearly overlooks the fact that the killing of civilians in Derry/Londonderry is not a settled 'fact' of history, but continues to be the site of struggle over the ownership of political memory, and that

questions of culpability remain very much alive. Nevertheless, warming to the 'Irish' metaphor, the columnist moves on to examine Islamic terrorism:

In extreme cases, Islamicists trade on Western self-abasement. So in Britain last week it was claimed a terrorist suspect took refuge in a mosque. Police refused to enter for 'cultural reasons'. Would they have been so polite if an IRA suspect had been holed up in a Catholic church? (13)

Despite the title of the piece - 'We must never forget Turkey's "first solution" - this type of writing, which has become a frequent occurrence over the past few years, participates in precisely the same kind of 'communal amnesia that helps to produce and support the sense of nationhood' which Jonathan Baldo has traced in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (140). For in drawing convenient parallels between Islamic and Irish terrorism, British newspapers and media outlets continue to operate from an Anglocentric perspective, where the effect of 'terrorism' is privileged above the cause, and where the specifics of regional grievances are elided into a wider narrative of normalcy versus deviancy.

Even a more sensible piece, such as Martin Jacques' 15 February 2007 column for *The Guardian*, cannot resist making the same comparison. Arguing that political attacks on 'multiculturalism' are misguided, Jacques makes the point that 'deaths in the UK from Islamist terrorism have been far fewer than those perpetrated by the IRA' (31). Again, the implication is that there is an unidentified common denominator between Irish and Islamic terrorism which, by virtue of never being spelled out explicitly, constructs both practices as indistinct. In *Henry V*, the threat of violent regional uprisings is ideologically contained by a strategy of incorporation,

bringing representative captains within the fold of 'Britishness'.⁸ Jacques suggests that a similar rhetoric of 'integration' is also being used in contemporary Britain: 'The argument typically starts from the global terrorist threat and ends up by suggesting the Muslim community nurtures and sustains such a terrorist mentality by its failure to integrate' (31). While clearly aware of the political uses to which such rhetoric is being employed, Jacques seems unable to fully escape its implications. While claiming that 'enshrined in the principle of multiculturalism is the idea that the white community does not insist on the assimilation of ethnic minorities but recognises the importance of pluralism', he nevertheless insists that 'none of this is to deny the importance of finding ways of integrating the Muslim community' (31). The tension here, of course, is in Jacques' distinction between assimilation and integration; the suggestion is that 'integration' can lead to heterogeneity, 'assimilation' only to homogeneity.

The distinction is clear enough theoretically, but rather less so practically. This is made clear in the figure of Col Collins. In his autobiography, *Rules of Engagement: A Life in Conflict*, Collins draws attention to his hybrid identity, a dual Irish and British heritage. Yet the autobiography speaks most frequently not from the point of view of Macmorris, or from that of Gerard's 'suspect', but from the view of the white male 'colonial gaze'. The following description of the 'West Side Boys', an

⁸ 'Britain' as a political entity, of course, can hardly be said to exist in 1599, four years before the union of the crowns under James VI and I, but I use the term in the spirit of the 'British' history influential in recent critical approaches to questions of nation and ethnicity in early modern culture. For a recent interrogation of the term, see Philip Schwyzer, "'British History'" and "The British History": The Same Old Story?', *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David J. Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002): 11-23.

armed militia group encountered by Collins and his regiment while on military duty in Sierra Leone, is an excellent example:

From time to time they would sally forth and attack villages and take recruits, who would then be led back to the camp to have their heads shaved before being indoctrinated and eventually initiated into the West Side Boys' group in a voodoo ceremony that was also supposed to bring protection from gun shots. On other occasions they would capture children as they played on the fringes of villages, using ruses such as the 'Monkey Jump Game', in which they would don monkey skins and masks to leap out of the bush, howling like apes (14).

The similarities with conventional colonial narratives are clear: in particular, Collins establishes a dialectic between the rational 'Western' narrator (himself), and the animalistic tendencies of the 'un-civilized' natives (here likened to 'monkeys and apes').⁹ Later Collins employs the same colonial gaze: 'There can be no doubting the psychological importance of dressing soldiers properly so that they feel equipped for whatever awaits them. Frankly I would have preferred to lead the men into Iraq in our European dress rather than looking like some ragged third-world army' (33).

There are, of course, attempts by Collins to display his 'Irishness': following a military tradition of naming foreign bases with familiar appellations from 'home,'

⁹ There is an irony here in the fact that 'apes' is one of the terms used to describe the native Irish in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Shakespeare's major source for the history plays. See Richard A. McCabe, 'Making History: Holinshed's Irish *Chronicles*, 1577 and 1587,' in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David J. Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 51-67, especially pp. 62-3.

the rows of tents erected by his soldiers in Kuwait are given nicknames of well-known streets in Belfast and Dublin: 'Shankill Road', 'Newtownards Road', 'O'Connell Street'. Given the history of Collins' regiment, it is notable that the names cross the national/political border of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and particularly that 'O'Connell Street' – the Dublin thoroughfare indelibly imprinted in the Irish Nationalist imagination as the site of the 1916 Easter Rising against British rule – is included. St. Patrick's Day sees the troops having 'a ceilidh ... and the usual round of Irish songs' (53), but the 'Irishness' is frequently constructed, seen from a point-of-view which has internalised the perspective of the Elizabethan colonists. At one point, indeed, Collins resembles nothing so much as Captain Macmorris: "'You're all saved," I boomed as I entered. "The Paddies are here, and this time we're on your side!" ... I tilted my caubeen at a jaunty angle and responded appropriately in my best stage Irish' (74-5). What this means is that the distinction between assimilation and integration is not always clear; the effect of this is that Collins, a native of East Belfast, comes to see Iraq and Ireland in exactly the same way:

We introduced ourselves and I began by explaining that we had come to liberate Iraq and that I was disappointed to see the people destroying their own country. The chief spokesman responded by explaining that that it was the oil workers from the other village who had been doing all the damage and that they also despaired at the waste. It was just like the Ardoyne Road in Belfast, I thought. It's always the other side's fault (124).

Whether integrated or assimilated, the Anglocentric, colonial gaze is reproduced.

In its twenty-first century afterlife, then, Shakespeare's *Henry V* has been unable to escape either its militaristic or its 'Irish' contexts. Shakespeare's text both interrogates and endorses Elizabethan military adventures abroad – in doing so, it plays a constitutive role in developing senses of both 'Englishness' and 'Britishness'. The tendency to view contemporary conflicts through Shakespeare's play – so apparent in Olivier's film version – has surfaced again in the current decade, both in the theatre and in the worlds of print, television and internet journalism. Henry can be invoked in various ways – ironically or enthusiastically, to support or to criticise Bush, Blair and/or the war in Iraq. Furthermore, the crucial role played by an 'Irish' regiment of the 'British' army, coupled with the apparent cessation of Irish Republican terrorism, has led to a situation whereby ethnic and political identities demand to be reconfigured; perhaps as a result of the tendency to read current politics through the lens of *Henry V*, one of the outcomes of this appears to be a surprising conflation of Irish and Islamic alterity, an apparently conservative political manoeuvre, examples of which are nevertheless found across the traditional political divides in British journalism.

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