

Shakespeare's Pacifism

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Like *Youth and Age* or *Reason and Passion*, *War and Peace* was one of those polarities that Renaissance writers persistently thought about as well as with. Reflection upon war and peace was at the heart of the Humanist movement, just as the conduct of war and peace was at the foundation of the European state system during the early modern period. This concern with war and peace arose from Humanism's defining traits: its exaltation of fame, its fascination with the military cultures of Greece and Rome, its emphasis on human dignity and freedom, its pursuit of secular knowledge in history and psychology, and its political commitment to improving the quality of institutional and personal life.¹

The Humanist response to war and peace often split into opposing positions categorized as martial vs. irenic—that is militarist vs. pacifist.² Associated with what some scholars label “civic humanism,” militarists like Caxton, Machiavelli and Guiccardini lionized an ideal of the prince or courtier as soldier and scholar and regarded the warrior's activity as essential for individual achievement as well as for social order.³ Their pacifist opponents, who, like Erasmus, Thomas More, Baldassare Castiglione and Juan Vives, were often identified as “Christian Humanists,” envisioned the ideal prince or courtier as a jurist and philosopher, and criticized the military ethos as irreligious, immoral and impractical.⁴ This debate shaped the ac-

¹Hale, 1971, 3–26.

²Pro and anti-war positions were not categorized as “isms” or labelled as “militarist” and “pacifist” until the later nineteenth century, but Renaissance writers used the contrary adjectives “martial” and “irenic” (after Eirene, the Greek goddess of peace and prosperity) to convey the meanings of “war loving” and “peace loving.” I use the term “militarism” to cover a variety of attitudes affirming war as a cultural institution and the use of organized violence as an instrument of state power. As is indicated later, different militaristic attitudes can be mutually contradictory as well as supportive. “Pacifism” is also an umbrella term. In general, it denotes hostility to war and to the profession of soldier and a desire for peace. But varieties of pacifism range from strict non-violence on absolute religious principles to an acceptance of military action for defensive purposes as a last resort. See n. 47 below and Cady. For extensive primary evidence of the existence of pacifism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Swinne.

³Baron, 12–47.

⁴See Adams, Dust, and Tracy.

tions of monarchs, the deliberations of councils, the exhortations of divines, as well as the imaginative productions of artists and writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Shakespeare repeatedly dramatized the disagreement between militarist and pacifist perceptions of warfare in the many plays he devoted to military matters. This essay charts Shakespeare's development from a partisan of war to a partisan of peace in the course of his career. It argues that the central turning point of this development occurred between 1599 and 1603—the publication dates of his two battlefield plays, *Henry V* and *Troilus and Cressida*—and that the shift in outlook reflects a shift in British foreign policy that began during the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign and was completed with the accession of King James I.⁵

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“A prince therefore must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only profession which befits one who commands”: so Machiavelli opens chapter 14 of *The Prince*, entitled “The Prince's Duty Concerning Military Matters.”⁶ His equation of sovereignty with military strength was both traditional and innovative. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, European political power and social status were vested largely in a warrior elite descended from Germanic chiefs. Their martial values and cultural identity were sublimated by the intellectual and bureaucratic legacy of the Church of Rome into the institutions of feudalism and the ideology of chivalry, but Europe throughout the Middle Ages retained the underpinnings of a warrior culture.⁷ Hence the symbols of gentility and honor were inextricably tied to the practice of arms. With the secularization of literacy and the rediscovery of classical civilization in the Renaissance, learning be-

⁵Shakespeare's treatment of war and peace has been studied by Bevington, L. Campbell, and Jorgensen. But neither they nor more recent students of Shakespeare's Jacobean politics link his pacifism to the Erasmian tradition. See Goldberg, Marcus, Tennenhouse, and Yates. Woodbridge's brief but trenchant discussions of “‘masculine’ wartime values and ‘feminine’ peacetime values” (160–70) and in her unpublished essay, “Palisading the Body Politic,” is to my knowledge the only commentary that treats Shakespeare's shift to pacifism as both politically and dramatically significant.

⁶Machiavelli, 124.

⁷Howard, 1986, 1–17.

came a source of prestige no longer restricted to the clergy and was eagerly pursued by military aristocrats. The paradigm of the Renaissance prince combined the virtues of the general and the scholar. In the texts that he studied and the statues he admired, he found not only models of intelligence and grace, but also exemplars of military strategy and a celebration of amoral prowess free of the moral strictures of the Christian Church. In *The Art of War*, Machiavelli observes that “since military institutions are completely corrupted and have, for a long period, diverged from ancient practices, bad opinions about them have arisen, causing the military life to be despised . . .”⁸ and calls for “a rebirth of classical military skill through the imitation of ancient military institutions.”⁹

That call for a Humanist militarism was widely heeded—by Machiavelli’s patron Lorenzo de Medici, by mercenary captains who elevated themselves to nobility, like Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, by the Kings of England and France, Henry VIII and Francis I, and by Elizabethan courtiers like Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh. For them war and politics were the extensions of one another and formed the opportunity, or “occasione,” for displaying a worldly “virtu”—a self-created ability forged in mortal strife. Machiavelli sees the presence of many warring states as the reason why “in Europe there are countless excellent men”; he finds vitality and health in the class struggles, civil wars, and foreign engagements of the Roman Republic, but disdains the *pax romana* of the Empire as the source of ability’s decline.¹⁰ Humanist militarists had no use for medieval justifications of war—that it was God’s punishment upon sinning man or a means of bringing about peace. For them it was an end in itself, the fundamental condition of social life, individual psychology and all creation: “There is not in nature a point of stability to be found; everything either ascends or declines: when wars are ended abroad, sedition begins at home, and when men are freed from fighting for necessity, they quarrel through ambition . . . I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire after power that ceaseth only with death.”¹¹

⁸Machiavelli, 484.

⁹Ibid., 482.

¹⁰Ibid., 509.

¹¹Sir Walter Raleigh, *Works*, VIII, 293, translating Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, cited by Jorgensen, 181.

Such glorification of war and denigration of peace permeate Renaissance culture. Maps and diagrammatic accounts of contemporary battles were distributed as broadsides. Treatises in military science, designed to teach advanced techniques of strategy, battle formation, and fortification, were widely reprinted and studied by playwrights like Marlowe, who included a lengthy lesson on how to penetrate different sorts of ramparts in the second part of *Tamburlaine*. And Shakespeare both satirizes and adulates the current fascination with the ancient wars and the punctilio of combat in the character of Fluellen in *Henry V*. Sermons, poems, political speeches repeat the lesson that “peace is quiet nurse/of Idleness and Idleness the field/where wit and power change all seeds to worse,”¹² that it is not to be trusted, that it is a hidden disease of the body politic—a cause, in Hamlet’s words, of “th’imposthume . . . /that inward breaks and shows no cause without/ why the man dies” (4.4.27); that it, rather than war, is God’s punishment upon man.¹³ Elizabethan drama in general clearly illustrates the prominence of Renaissance military culture. Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* and *Massacre at Paris*, the anonymous *Famous Victories of King Henry V*, and Peele’s *Battle of Alcazar* edify popular audiences with what Jorgensen refers to as “War’s cheerful Harmony”¹⁴—sound effects of drums, trumpets, and cannons, spectacles of armor, weaponry, and carnage. This is the background music for many of Shakespeare’s plays and the environment that determines Jaques’ selection of the role of “soldier—full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard/Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel/Seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon’s mouth” as representative of young manhood itself.¹⁵

But if militaristic approval of war was dominant, it was by no means monolithic. In 1516, three years after Machiavelli sent *The Prince* to his patron, the most prestigious Humanist in Europe, Desiderius Erasmus, published *The Education of a Christian Prince* (*Institutio Principis Christiani*), which he wrote as a handbook for the future Emperor Charles V. In it, he advocates an “Art of Peace” contrasted to Machiavelli’s Art of War.¹⁶ Rather than normal

¹²Fulke Greville, *Caelica* 108, cited by Jorgensen, 185.

¹³Jorgensen, 186.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵*As You Like It*, 2.7.149–53.

¹⁶Erasmus, 1965, 205–14.

health, Erasmus sees war and violence as aberrant pathology—in nature, in society, and in the individual.¹⁷ Rather than identical with force, Erasmus sees power or authority as distinct from it.¹⁸ The duty of Erasmus' prince consists not of making or preparing for war but rather of avoiding it and serving his people, on whose satisfaction he depends for legitimacy. Real power and true heroism lie not in physical dominance over others but in self-mastery.¹⁹ To establish and maintain peace should be the goal of all princes, a goal achieved by the greatest spiritual and temporal leaders in history, Jesus and Augustus.²⁰

In 1517 Erasmus published another of his numerous anti-war works, *The Complaint of Peace (Querela Pacis)*, headed with the epigraph, "The Sum of All Religion is Peace and Unanimity."²¹ In it he adds a series of pragmatic objections against militarism to the spiritual ones in the *Institutio*. War is conducted not for the benefit of the people but for the aggrandizement of princes; the hoped for benefits of battle—righting wrongs, gaining territory, resolving disputes, revenging hurts—never approximate the actual costs in lives, property, and social disruption: "There is scarcely any peace so unjust, but it is preferable, on the whole, to the justest war. Sit down before you draw the sword, weigh every article, omit none, and compute the expence of blood as well as treasure which war requires, and the evils which it of necessity brings with it; and then see at the bottom of the account whether after the greatest success, there is likely to be a balance in your favor."²² And while Machiavelli praises religion for providing an invaluable ideological support for political strategists, Erasmus directs his strongest invective against those who attempt to use religion to aid in making war:

Let us now imagine we hear a soldier, among these fighting Christians, saying the Lord's prayer. "Our Father" says he; O hardened wretch! can you call him father when you are just going to cut your brother's throat? "Hallowed be thy name" how can the name of God be more impiously unhallowed, than by mutual bloody murder among you, his sons? "Thy kingdom come" do you pray for the coming of his kingdom, while you are endeavoring to establish an

¹⁷Ibid., 249.

¹⁸Ibid., 163.

¹⁹Ibid., 142.

²⁰Ibid., 202.

²¹Idem., 1964, 174–204.

²²Ibid., 192.

earthly despotism, by spilling the blood of God's sons and subjects? Dare you to say to your Father in heaven "Give us this day our daily bread;" when you are going, the next minute perhaps, to burn up your brother's corn fields; and had rather lose the benefit of them yourself, than suffer him to enjoy them unmolested? With what face can you say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," when, so far from forgiving your own brother, you are going, with all the haste you can, to murder him in cold blood, for an alleged trespass that, after all is but imaginary. Do you presume to deprecate the danger of temptation who, not without great danger to yourself, are doing all you can to force your brother into danger? Do you deserve to be delivered from evil, that is, from the evil being, to whose impulse you submit yourself, and by whose spirit you are now guided, in contriving the greatest possible evil to your brother.²³

This outpouring of pacifist sentiment was at first welcomed by the monarchs to whom it was directed. Under the influence of Cardinal Wolsey, who seemed to share Erasmus' and More's views that religion should condemn rather than encourage war, Henry VIII agreed to make a treaty of "Universal Peace" with his rival, Francis I: "This peace treaty with France was an element in a much wider scheme which Wolsey was promoting on behalf of the whole of Europe . . . he was accepting the ideals of the international religious humanists Educated within the ethos they evoked, Wolsey was ready to act on their belief in the peaceful possibilities of human nature to Henry VIII Wolsey offered the enormous prestige of leading Europe towards 'humanistic peace' in place of the traditional prestige of European warfare."²⁴ Two years later, in 1518, Henry and Francis met with grandiose fanfare organized by Wolsey to commemorate the treaty at the "Festival of the Cloth of Gold in Honor of Perpetual Peace." But by 1523, jealous of Francis I's prestige and allowing himself to be manipulated by Charles V's fear of an alliance between France and England, Henry had exchanged the role of peacemaker for that of conqueror and had mounted bloody though fruitless invasions of both Scotland and France.²⁵

²³Ibid., 191-92.

²⁴Crowson, 78.

²⁵The traditional view—propounded in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*—that Wolsey pursued peace primarily to further his personal ambitions to become Pope and that he was responsible for torpedoing the alliance between Henry and Francis has been challenged by Crowson, who shows evidence that, like Thomas More, Wolsey was compelled by the king to support the militaristic policies the cardinal had previously opposed.

The repeated collapse of peace policies like Wolsey's along with the repeated triumph of ever more brutal militarisms in later European history have led some historians to deny this pacifist strain in Renaissance thought: "The idea of war may, to many living now, have become repulsive, unnatural, and essentially destructive. The historian has to note that this marks a big change. War appeared in quite a different light through the greater part of history."²⁶ Others have treated it as only a passing fantasy, a sentimental wish fulfillment. J. R. Hale for instance states that "the international wave of quasi-pacifist feeling that for a generation stirred the writings of . . . [European Humanists] soon died away."²⁷ And he dismisses pacifism as no more than "a creative irritant to those who wrote about war throughout the century."²⁸

However, the phenomenon of Renaissance pacifism is neither an anachronistic construct nor an ephemeral aberration. Like Humanist militarism, it derives from a rich range of ancient models, including the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the teachings of Stoics and Epicureans and the cultural ideals of the *pax romana*.²⁹ Fifteen years after it appeared, according to Sir Thomas Elyot's *Book of the Governor*, Erasmus' *Institutio* was still "the most widely read and quoted literary production of the period," and its purpose of cultivating a Humanist peacemaking prince was adopted both by the tutor of Queen Elizabeth, Roger Ascham, in his *Schoolmaster* and by Castiglione in his educational handbook, *The Courtier*.³⁰ Between 1517 and 1529 alone, *The Complaint of Peace* went through twenty-four editions and was translated into most European languages.³¹ Its engaged pacifism typified opinions originating in a circle of Humanist scholars known as the London Reformers, including More, John Linacre and John Colet, and spreading to Guillaume

²⁶Best, 7–10.

²⁷Hale, 1985, 40–41.

²⁸Idem., 1974, 4.

²⁹See Hutton and Johnson.

³⁰Chapiro, 66. This book contains Chapiro's translation of Erasmus' *Querela Pacis*, entitled "Peace Protests," along with an essay on Erasmus' political backgrounds and on the modern applicability of Erasmus' texts. The book is dedicated to "The United Nations, Embodiment of the ideals of Erasmus and source of the highest hopes of our times," and its jacket cover includes a tribute by Thomas Mann. The book typifies a perennial rediscovery and revival of Erasmus' political writings by antiwar propagandists.

³¹Adams, 65.

Bude and Jean Postel in France and Juan Luis Vives in Spain. The visual arts of the sixteenth century display further evidence of pacifist sentiment. Peter Brueghel's *War of the Treasure Chests and Money Bags* (1567) illustrates the satirical indictment of conducting wars for plunder and profit made by Erasmus in the 1529 colloquy, "Charon," while Urs Graf's etchings portray the sufferings of civilians and the brutality of soldiers with images that initiate the graphic tradition of depicting the horrors of war carried forward by Caillot, Rubens, Goya, and Picasso.³²

The status of pacifist ideas oscillated between subversive and orthodox throughout the Renaissance, depending upon the shifting alliances and moods of rulers. After being lionized by both Charles and Henry, Erasmus became persona non grata at the courts of the great and retired to his study in Basel in 1521. The *Complaint* became a dangerous text, anonymously translated into English, and condemned and burned both by the French and the Spanish authorities.³³ The "Spanish Erasmians" were forbidden to publish additions to "Charon" by the censors of Charles, as Erasmus himself had predicted: "matters are come to such a pass, that it is deemed foolish and wicked to open one's mouth against war, or to venture a syllable in praise of peace; the constant theme of Christ's eulogy. He is thought to be ill affected to the king, and even to pay but little regard to the people's interests, who recommends what is of all things in the world the most salutary, to both king and people, or dissuades from that which without any exception is the most destructive."³⁴ One can surmise that during the period of dynastic and growing religious warfare in the later sixteenth century, pacifist ideas were suppressed rather than "dying away," as claimed by Hale. Indeed, they make their persistence known by the vituperation of attacks upon them in militaristic literature and religious propaganda. In Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, for example, Calyphas is stabbed to death by his heroic father for refusing to join battle after his scruples against killing are ascribed to a voluptuous laziness.³⁵ In Robert Wilson's "The Cobler's Prophecy" (1594), when the character called "Contempt" voices these anti-military sentiments—

³²See Bruckner and Chwast.

³³See Bataillon, 669 ff.

³⁴Erasmus, 1964, 191.

³⁵*The Second Part of Tamburlaine The Great*, 4.1.1-170.

“thou saist thou art going to thy Patron Mars with a supplication for bettering thy estate, and how, by war: wher how many rapes wrongs and murders are committed, thy selfe be judge, all which thou esteemest not of, so thy own want be supplied”³⁶—he is punished by Mars with the ruin of his city. And the many sermons by Protestant divines cited by Lily Campbell to show ecclesiastical support for a war policy are designed to neutralize the pacifism of the early church advocated by Anabaptists throughout sixteenth-century Europe.³⁷

The claims of war and of peace also remained in tension during royal spectacles. At a “grand triumph in honor of peace” in Lyon celebrating the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis that brought a temporary close to the hostilities among Spain, France, and England in 1559, “journeymen printers erected a colossal god Mars thirty feet high and bristling with arms. As Mars burned, there gradually emerged from within him, safe and sound, the white figure of Minerva reclining with the nine Muses on the rock Parnassus, beneath which spouted a Castalian spring of wine and water, with Pegasus just leaving it: ‘demonstrating that the death of Mars is the resurrection and the life of Minerva, goddess of wisdom and the liberal arts.’ ”³⁸ And similar pageantry graced the triumphal entry of James I through London on his coronation in 1603: “at Temple Bar, James saw Peace at the gates of the Temple of Janus, ‘signifying . . . that Peace alone was better, and more to be coveted then innumerable triumphs . . . for it is a triumph itself. Thus Peace stands with Mars at her feet.’ ”³⁹ The frontispiece of James’s *Workes* displays the same image of the goddess of Peace trampling the war god at her feet. His first speech to Parliament makes James’s outlook explicit: “The first of those blessings which God hath jointly with my person sent unto you is . . . Peace abroad with all foreign neighbors . . . I found the state embarked in a great and tedious war and only by my arrival here and by the Peace in my person is now amity kept where war was before, which is no small blessing to a Christian Commonwealth, for by Peace abroad with their neighbors the towns flourish, the merchants become rich, the trade doth increase

³⁶Line 43off.

³⁷See Campbell, 265ff., and Johnson, 162ff.

³⁸Hutton, 107.

³⁹Goldberg, 43.

and the people of all sorts of the land enjoy free liberty to exercise themselves in their severall vocations without peril or disturbance."⁴⁰

The dominant Stuart mode of expression might be characterized as a culture of pacifism. "The civic pageantry that deliberated the new reign . . . returned rather to the theme of Astraea than to that of Arthur, to imagery of peace and plenty than to the martial mystique of knight errantry," observes Arthur B. Ferguson.⁴¹ And Thomas Middleton's court masque, "The Peacemaker," reverses the political message of the debate between *The Soldier* and *Contempt* in "The Cobler's Prophecy." A character named "Detraction" longs for the heroic past and is answered thus by "Peace": "Were blows more bountiful to thee? Did blood yield thee benefit? War afford thee wealth? Didst thou make that thine own by violence, which was another's by right . . . Has not in foretimes unwilling necessity erected two hospitals? and now most free and willing charity hath . . . raised twenty almshouses . . . Is not the sum of all religion established by [Peace]? Are not the flesh-eating fires quenched and our faggots converted to gentler uses?"⁴² George Herbert devoted several of his public writings to anti-war propaganda: "Here makes Religion, Queen of Peace, her seat / While on our waters, Christ, move thy blest feet."⁴³ And as far away as Poland, James's reputation inspired the pacifists of the Socinian Anabaptist movement to dedicate their "Racovian Catechism" to the British sovereign.⁴⁴

The triumph of peace celebrated in Stuart culture was the outcome of a conflict waged throughout the Tudor century. One of the theatres of that conflict was the drama itself. As Louis Montrose points out, "The Elizabethan playhouse, playwright and player exemplify the contradictions of Elizabethan society and make those contradictions their subject."⁴⁵ In the many plays about war staged in Elizabethan London, the battles that most engaged the audience's attention were those between martial and irenic positions.

⁴⁰James I, 486–87.

⁴¹Ferguson, 140–42.

⁴²In Bullen 8: 328.

⁴³Hovey, 114.

⁴⁴Brock, 143.

⁴⁵Montrose, 57.

The poles of this dispute generate a grid upon which Shakespeare's plots, characters, and themes can be charted—both in individual plays and over the course of his career. That career begins with the Marlovian militarism of the first history tetralogy and the glorification of violence in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, all written during the early 1590s. In the mid-nineties, with *King John* and the four plays of the second history tetralogy, the battlefield remains the arena for the exercise of both individual and collective virtue. But while the articulation of the militarist viewpoint becomes increasingly emphatic and sophisticated by the time of *Henry V* in 1599, its margin of victory over pacifist critiques narrows almost to a standoff.

Troilus and Cressida, written in 1602 or 1603, marks a turning point. In it Shakespeare mounts an attack on classical war heroes and on the very arguments for going to war he had supported earlier, and he undermines the whole set of values and symbols that constitute Renaissance military culture. The plays of Shakespeare's "tragic period" that follows *Troilus and Cressida* continue to focus on the problem of war but with a deepening psychological penetration. Othello, Macbeth, Anthony, Timon, and Coriolanus all are great generals whose martial virtues are shown to be tragically flawed. The plays in which they are protagonists reveal that military power, the highest value of both the hero and his society, is a concomitant of deficiency in power over oneself and finally the loser in a battle with the greater power of love. In the late romances, Shakespeare continues to portray the psychological and ethical deficiencies of military men, but in the final acts of these tragicomedies, he moves from anti-militarist critiques to affirmations of the state of Peace. Whether it is the pastoral landscapes of *Pericles* and the *Winter's Tale*, the plenty and fertility associated with the Goddess Eirene in the pageants of the *Tempest*, the evocation of the Augustan and Christian *pax universalis* in *Cymbeline*, or the reconciliation of rivals in all of them, Shakespeare at the end of his career repeatedly evokes the positive symbolism of the pacifist tradition. In his very last play, armed with powers of wish fulfillment strengthened by his experience writing romance, Shakespeare takes on the more resistant material of history as a vehicle for expressing a pacifist outlook. In an ironic and poignant conclusion to the saga of Erasmian influence on Renaissance culture, the poet recreates Henry VIII, the king who betrayed the hopes of the London

Reformers, in their image of the perfect peacemaking Christian prince.

Despite the centrality of the problem of war in Shakespeare, scholarship has tended to overlook it. In the one book on the subject, *Shakespeare's Military World* (1956), Paul Jorgensen remarks that "few critics have presumed to ask so broad a question as whether the background of the play was war or peace or what difference this made in the drama."⁴⁶ Those who do ask the question—and with the return of interest in historical studies recently, the number is increasing—have with very few exceptions either denied or dismissed the presence of a serious pacifist outlook anywhere in the plays, perhaps following the lead of the historians mentioned earlier. Oscar Campbell, for instance, in his book on *Troilus and Cressida* assumes that the very idea of pacifism is anachronistic: "a close scrutiny of the action fails to reveal advanced humanitarian views. Even if Shakespeare had succeeded in expressing them, they would have been incomprehensible to the audiences of his day. *Troilus and Cressida* when approached without anachronistic predispositions, shows unmistakably that its author is presenting a striking example of an irrationally continued and stupidly managed conflict Only because this war is waged anarchistically, does the author paint it as a black picture of human effort."⁴⁷ And while recognizing the influence of Jacobean pacifism on the later plays, Jorgensen denies that Shakespeare ever could have held that view himself: "When . . . we study the aspects of peace that were available to Shakespeare . . . we must study them as they were conventionally studied in Elizabethan treatises and plays: from the point of view of their corrective counterpart in war. It is war rather than peace that is the clearer, dominant force The philosophy of war and peace that we now refer to as pacifism is espoused by not a single admirable character in Shakespeare."⁴⁸ The mechanisms of denial evident in this passage operate throughout what is otherwise an invaluable book: Jorgensen doesn't consider the possibility that Shakespeare's views may have changed in the course of his career.

More recent criticism acknowledges the influence of Jacobean pacifism on the later plays, but offhandedly trivializes both its po-

⁴⁶Jorgensen, 169.

⁴⁷O. J. Campbell, 228.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 175–76, 197.

litical claims and the notion that Shakespeare could ever have taken them seriously. Thus Frances Yates: "Jacobean peace—and James forever emphasised himself as a peacebringer and peacemaker—was an avoidance of conflict. It carried with it no mission of universal reform or support of European Protestantism Prince Henry wanted to end 'jars in religion' by breaking the intolerant Hapsburg powers by military intervention. This would be a different attitude from James's policy of peace through appeasement."⁴⁹ Or Leah Marcus: "*Cymbeline's* Shakespeare is at least more civilized and gentlemanly, but looks rather too much like an elitist who traffics in Stuart ideology and iconography out of a misguided belief that such a narrow, particularized vision can somehow be made compatible with exalted universals like the Ideal of Human Betterment."⁵⁰ Assertions like these amplify Gary Taylor's remark about an earlier commentator's objections to the militarism of *Henry V*: "For Hazlitt, literary criticism is the continuation of politics by other means." Such objections, claims Taylor, "have more to do with the subsequent history of Europe than with Shakespeare's play."⁵¹ And Taylor concludes his own essay with a characterization of Henry as "a study of human greatness"—a glorifying portrait of "Will" that can be identified with Shakespeare himself.⁵² But surely such a Nietzschean reading is no less anachronistic than the Erasmian readings Taylor dismisses. Similarly, most recent critics who mention James's pacifism tend to see it not as a genuine challenge to the martial outlook, but rather as a tactical stance in the

⁴⁹Yates, 18–21.

⁵⁰Marcus, 145. James's regime has elicited remarkably hostile responses from modern historians and critics. Maurice Lee repeats the standard comparison between James and Neville Chamberlain as "appeasers" (16). However, despite his quirks and limitations, James was neither cowardly nor incompetent. Rather than gain territory, his goal was to bring peace to Britain and Europe. The fact that this goal was not permanently achieved should not obscure his signal successes. Lee himself shows how adroitly James managed to negotiate an alliance with Spain, avoid confrontation with Spain's enemy, France, and provide limited support to the rebels in the Netherlands. This policy strengthened England's international position, confounded her antagonists, kept her out of war, and enhanced his reputation throughout Europe. While much can be made of the contrast between Erasmus' politics—which sought to limit royal prerogatives and deplored autocratic pretensions—and James's theory of Divine Right and his "style of the gods" in ruling, their scholarly, devotional, and peace-oriented outlooks shared much in common.

⁵¹Taylor, 2–3.

⁵²Ibid., 72–74.

monarch's strategy of power. In this they follow the Machiavellian teachings of Michel Foucault: "Power is war, a war continued by other means . . . none of the phenomena in a political system should be interpreted except as the continuation of war. They should, that is to say, be understood as episodes, factions and displacements in that same war. Even when one writes the history of peace and its institutions, it is always the history of this war that one is writing."⁵³ A serviceable assumption, perhaps, but not one supportable with evidence. No more than "subsequent history" does Renaissance history offer any indisputable ground upon which to base political readings. Just as the Foucauldian cynicism expounded in many recent studies is challenged by Marxists and feminists who unearth popular culture and women's voices in the theatre, so can it be challenged by the evidence of a genuine pacifist culture in which Shakespeare himself played a part.⁵⁴

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⁵³Foucault, 90–91.

⁵⁴The larger question of the validity of pacifism in general cannot be adequately considered here. Three parallel studies of its evolution and role in European history—the first two sympathetic, the third hostile—are Johnson's and Brock's and Howard's (1978). It may be appropriate to briefly consider some of Howard's more telling critiques insofar as they are relevant to the present discussion. He identifies pacifism with "Liberalism" and claims that modern European history is dominated by the struggle between liberal and "traditional" approaches to war and peace. Rejecting the existing war system, the liberal searches for higher standards of international conduct and an alternative system of collective security. The "traditional" approach, affiliated with Clausewitz, Metternich, and Machiavelli, accepts international hostility as a norm, war as the inevitable extension of politics, and a balance of power as the closest possible facsimile to peace. Howard calls the history of pacifism "The melancholy story of the efforts of good men to abolish war but only succeeding thereby in making it more terrible" (130). Its essential fallacy, he says, is "the habit, far older even than Erasmus, of seeing war as a distinct and abstract entity about which one can generalise at large." Instead, he claims, "war is simply a generic term for the use of armed force by states or aspirants to statehood for the attainment of their political objectives" (133). Howard's definitions and first principles are vulnerable to several critiques. He explodes the concept of "war," which to many is a clear, distinct, and morally charged idea, into a mere generic term, and elevates "States or aspirants to statehood," a more slippery, context-bound, and morally questionable notion, into an absolute. He offers no justification for believing that *raisons d'état*—the claims of any given state perceived by its ruler at any given time—necessarily outweigh universal humanitarian claims. He also fails to acknowledge that many pacifists or "liberals," including Erasmus and More, accept the use of military force in some circumstances while at the same time opposing war in general rather than perceiving it as a morally neutral and indistinguishable extension of other means to achieve political ends.

War vs. Peace was a central concern of Elizabeth's foreign and domestic policies. Having been educated by a group of Humanist scholars who themselves were students of the London Reformers, the queen was inclined to avoid war for humanitarian as well as economic reasons.⁵⁵ But she didn't hesitate to take a militarist posture to confront the aggressive conduct of foreign rivals or to strengthen her standing with her subjects. Elizabeth adopted a "middle way" in questions of war and peace as well as in religious disputes by containing conflicting forces in dynamic tension and by playing extreme factions against one another to strengthen her own royal authority.⁵⁶ She balanced tempestuous love-hate relationships with Leicester, Raleigh, and Essex—her flamboyant generals—against steady friendships with William and Robert Cecil—her prudent foreign secretaries. In contrast to the appetite for battle that drove the three military men who courted her as mistress, the attitude of the Cecils is summed up in the advice William gave to his son about raising his grandchildren: "Neither by my consent shall thou train them up to the wars. For he that setteth up his rest to live by that profession can hardly be an honest man or good Christian."⁵⁷

During the Elizabethan years, Shakespeare's plays reflect this shifting balance. His earliest and "enormously popular" histories, the three parts of *Henry VI* with their glorification of chivalric battle and of English victory over France, appealed to the public's appetite for what Leah Marcus calls a "bloody palimpsest of past and present militarism." Brought on by the "extreme Francophobia and 'war fever'"⁵⁸ of the years 1590 and 1592, that appetite had been cultivated during the invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588, when the queen, armored as an Amazon warrior, addressed her troops at Tilbury: "I am come among you . . . in the midst and heat of the battle . . . rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field."⁵⁹ This martial performance was memorialized in numerous pictures and poems, among them James

⁵⁵Her tutor, Roger Ascham, attacks "books of Chivalry . . . the whole pleasure of which . . . standeth in two special points, in open manslaughter and bold bawdry" (cited by Adams, 223).

⁵⁶Wernham, 9.

⁵⁷Cited by Jorgensen, 220.

⁵⁸Marcus, 52.

⁵⁹Cited by Neale, 308–09.

Aske's *Elizabethan Triumphans*: "Not like to those who couch on stately downe, / But like to Mars, the God of fearefull Warre, / And heaving oft to skies her warlike hands, / Did make herselfe Bellona-like renowned. / . . . In nought unlike the Amazonian Queene / Who beating downe amaine the bloodie Greekes, / Thereby to grapple with Achillis Stout / Even at the time when Troy was sore besieged."⁶⁰ But after the victory over the Armada, the public's desire for more military glory was frustrated (and perhaps sharpened) by Elizabeth's refusal to provide full support for another war against the Catholics in France. She was pressured into this adventure by her charismatic young general, the earl of Essex, who had a great following among "the impecunious younger sons of the squierarchy" eager for action and plunder.⁶¹ After reluctantly agreeing to let him join forces with the Protestant King Henry IV of France in a siege of Rouen in 1591, she forced Essex to abandon the effort in 1592, when both he and Henry demonstrated frivolous incompetence in battle. This retreat deepened the rift between those Sir Walter Raleigh called "the men of war" and "the scribes"⁶² and provoked an outpouring of popular militarist tracts and anti-pacifist plays of which *1 Henry VI* was the most prominent example.⁶³

A few years later, Shakespeare, like the queen, seems to have shifted ground and to have adopted some controlled ambivalence toward Essex's bellicosity in particular and toward the problem of war in general. The second tetralogy of history plays were written between 1595 and 1599—the years between the second Cadiz expedition, when Essex returned as "this glorious and chivalrous youth . . . the personification of England at war . . . the people's darling, the queen's favorite"⁶⁴ and his expedition to Ireland, when, in the words of Shakespeare's chorus: "the general of our gracious empress— / As in good time he may—from Ireland coming / Bringing rebellion broached on his sword, / How many would the peaceful City quit / To welcome him" (5.0.30–34).

⁶⁰From John Nichols's reprint in *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1823), 2: 545–82, cited by Marcus, 63.

⁶¹Neale, 334.

⁶²Wernham, 82.

⁶³Bevington, 187.

⁶⁴Neale, 355.

This kind of public adulation of a conquering military hero is staged throughout the tetralogy—in Bolingbroke's return in *Richard II*, in the celebration of Prince Hal's victory over the rebels in *1 Henry IV*, in the Coronation scenes following the second victory in *2 Henry IV*, and in the choruses of *Henry V*. Along with these plays' repeated depiction of heroic glory and military victory as the solution to both political and psychological problems, the rhetoric of such scenes heightens the war fever inspired by Essex. On the other hand, these plays introduce a recurrent critique of militarist behavior absent in the previous tetralogy—in Hotspur's exaggerated sense of martial honor and Falstaff's mockery of it, in the cynicism of King Henry's urgings to conduct war abroad to divert attention from problems at home, and in depictions of corruption in recruitment and commissioning of officers.

The queen hoped to share both the booty and the glory of Essex's exploits, and yet her reservations remained. The year 1596 was the third straight year of poor harvests, and Elizabeth had no desire "to increase the financial and human burden of war beyond what was absolutely necessary . . . mixed with cries that 'they must not starve, they will not starve' were more enduring and significant murmurs against the drain of men for foreign wars."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in 1598, when Henry IV invited England to join in a treaty with France and Spain, Elizabeth refused. After prolonged and heated debate in council between Robert Cecil and Essex, who insisted on continuing the war, she finally sided with her general.

This debate in the queen's mind, in which hawkish Essex prevailed over dovish Cecil, provides the context for *Henry V*.⁶⁶ In response to the "creative irritant" of repeated pacifist objections, this play affirms war from two distinct militaristic perspectives: the chivalric and the pragmatic. The choice of this war itself brings with it a double justification. Long before Shakespeare, Henry V's campaign against France enjoyed the reputation of a holy war, like Thermopylae or the Red Sea—a war in which national identity was forged in a violent crucible by the direct intervention of God on the winning side. This implication of divine redemption is emphasized by King Henry's prayers to the "God of Battles" on the eve of the

⁶⁵Ibid., 352.

⁶⁶George Herbert uses "hawk" and "dove" in this metaphorical sense. See Hovey, 118.

encounter and by his humble abjuration of credit on the morning of victory. On another level, this war's triumph over France was perceived as a redemption of two worldly debts saddling the English commonwealth with rebellion and insolvency: Henry IV's usurpation of Richard II's throne and Prince Hal's robbery of the exchequer.

In chivalric celebration of war, Shakespeare aims the full blast of his rhetorical power at the audience of *Henry V*. The choruses inflame us to collaborate with the author in producing a spectacle to sweep away thought in a flood of patriotic passion. Along with the thrills of rockets red glare and bombs bursting in air, he invokes the romantic appeal of battle as an occasion for displaying mettle under fire in the face of bad odds. In addition to its emotional appeal, chivalry also provided ethical rationales for war which this play repeatedly invokes. Since Augustine, the church had evolved a doctrine of "just war" to regulate the military aristocracy and to exempt it from Biblical taboos against killing. Justification resided both in legitimate war aims—*jus ad bellum*—and in legitimate conduct of fighting, *jus in bello*.⁶⁷ Shakespeare's Henry is extremely fastidious about securing these justifications, without which, he avers, his course is one of butchery. Both clergy and council assure him that his territorial claims on France are supported by the ancient Salique Law as well by the book of Numbers. The campaign is presented as an extension of the legal trial by combat whereby God himself adjudicates a dispute. And both sides from the start agree to adhere to its outcome, making war a means to establishing a lasting peace.

In his conduct of fighting, Henry again takes pains to act only, in his own words, according to "right and conscience." Before Harfleur he plays exactly by the rules, expressing his concern for the welfare of non-combatants by offering surrender with no peril to its citizens. He demonstrates pious respect for Church property in the war zone by executing his former crony Bardolph for stealing a pax, asserting the chivalric maxim "When lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is soonest winner" (3.6.111).

The most chivalric of rationales for the war is Henry's knightly quest for the hand of the Princess Katharine. Like Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Henry woos his female antagonist with his

⁶⁷See Johnson, 130; Howard 1986, 13.

sword and then lays the kingdom he has taken at her feet. "We see very often," said the French diplomat, Frances Duaren, "that as of a comedy, so of a war, the final conclusion is marriage."⁶⁸ The generic slide from history to comedy in act five of the play celebrates the procreative and dynastic convergence that war has brought about in the course of events. It also extends the happy ending from realms of politics and love to those aesthetics and epistemology. The serious clatter of battle is replaced by the playful chatter of courtship; the uncertain open-endedness of chronicle achieves closure with the final prospect of sexual consummation, and the barriers to communication and meaning erected by divergences of nationality, gender and language are dissolved in the lingua franca of Katharine's English and Henry's French.

The impression given by this account, however, is remote from the experience of many readers of the play. It ignores the sharply contrasting tonality of passages in which Shakespeare seems to repudiate or undermine the chivalric justifications of war. The choruses and speeches are followed not by the noble deeds they are designed to inspire, but rather by the cynical, self-serving plotting of the Archbishops in act one, the profiteering plans of the Eastcheap rascals in act two, the beating of the footsoldiers into the breach in act three, the questioning of the king's patriotism by Bates and Williams in act four, and the demobilization of Pistol into pick-pocket and beggar in act five.⁶⁹ The legal justifications of war are produced as a quid pro quo for the King's opposition to a bill in Commons that would expropriate church revenues and devote them to "relief of lazars and weak age / Of indigent faint souls past toil / A hundred almshouses right well supplied" (1.1.15-17). Soon after parading his lenity, the "gentler gamester" has the English cut the throats of their prisoners on stage, and then cries foul when the French murder his own luggage carriers in reprisal. And Henry's courtship verges at times on rape. To Katharine's reluctance to love "the ennemie of France," he responds, "I love France so well I will not part with a village of it" (5.2.170), and he kisses her on the mouth before marriage against her protests and in deliberate violation of the customs of her house.

⁶⁸Cited by Hale, 1985, 23.

⁶⁹See Gurr, 72.

Such contradictions of the chivalric vision of war force some to read *Henry V* as anamorphic—having two distinct and contradictory meanings depending on one's vantage⁷⁰—and others to conclude that in it Shakespeare means to criticize militarism with pacifist irony. My own reading, suggested by that of Stephen Greenblatt, is that the play undermines chivalric rationales for war, not to attack militarism itself, but to support it with pragmatic rationales for war that recognize, answer, and contain the pacifist objections that keep cropping up.⁷¹

Thus the discrepancy between the high flights of the chorus and the conniving of the bishops is deliberate; in the words of Gunter Walch, it “shows the official ideology up for what it has become: an illusion effectively used as an instrument of power.”⁷² Rather than showing it up, however, I think this play asks us to admire Henry's effectiveness. It depicts him mobilizing both the chivalric illusions of official ideology and the cynical self-interestedness of all of his subjects, and it shows his success at melding those conflicting interests into the common purpose of making war on France. Most of his subjects believe in chivalric justifications no more and no less than he does, and like his, their resolve is threatened by the anti-war arguments they don't dare to articulate. In act one's recurring debates about whether or not to proceed, only the king can take anti-war positions, in order to generate more pro-war arguments and to tease support from his allies.

Constructed as it is, that support is one Henry can never trust. Act two's chorus trumpets that “honor's thought/reigns solely in the breast of every man” (2.0.3–4). This idea is repeated by Cambridge, Scrope, and Grey immediately before Henry exposes them as traitors. He does so by betraying them more craftily than they betrayed him, declaring before a multitude that their revolt “is like/another fall of man” (2.2.138–39). A politic piety, but also a recognition of the non-chivalric nature of his world, a world in which

⁷⁰See Rabkin, 33–62. Dollimore and Sinfield (1985) also hold that the position of the play is indeterminate, reflecting the difficulties of maintaining ideological consistency: “There may be no way of resolving whether one, or which one of these tendencies (unity versus divergences) overrides the other in a particular play, but in a sense it does not matter: there is here an indeterminacy which alerts us to the complex but always significant process of theatrical representation and, through that, of political and social process” (215).

⁷¹See Greenblatt, 1985, 18–47.

⁷²Walch, 68.

no prince can ever trust in people if he is to be trusted as a prince. Once punished, the traitors give thanks to God that Henry has caught them. People need a devious authority to protect them from themselves. "Trust none," says Pistol to his wife upon departure for battle (2.3.44).

Like trust, the chivalric quality of mercy has only relative value in this context. Henry teaches us this when the traitors deny mercy to a prisoner accused of railing on the king, then beg mercy for their attempt on his life. Mercy so granted would be cruel. And cruelty, we see in act three, the quality explicitly forbidden the chivalric warrior, can be merciful. The bloodcurdling speech at Harfleur, in which Henry hypocritically absolves himself of responsibility for the sadistic mayhem of his soldiers—"your naked infants spitted upon pikes," etc. (3.3.118)—brings about the surrender of the city and spares immeasurable suffering on both sides.

Such pragmatic rationales for behavior supplement the chivalric *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* with the moral imperatives of Realpolitik in a world where success in war is assumed to lead to peace. Thus on the night of the decisive battle, Henry actually is high-minded as he declares his Machiavellian ethos: "There is some soul of goodness in things evil . . . / Thus may we gather honey from the weed / And make a moral of the devil himself" (4.1.1, 12). As he kisses Katharine against her will, against custom, Henry asserts, "nice customs curtsy to great kings We are the makers of manners Kate, and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouth of all find-faults" (5.2.263). Henry makes his own rules in love as well as in war, like the hero of *The Prince*: "I am certainly convinced of this: that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, in order to deep her down, to beat her and to struggle with her. And it is seen that she more often allows herself to be taken over by men who are impetuous than by those who make cold advances; and then, being a woman, she is always the friend of young men, for they are less cautious, more aggressive, and they command her with more audacity."⁷³ And like Machiavelli's *Fortuna*, to this impetuosity and brutality the future queen willingly yields.

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⁷³Machiavelli, 162.

Although the verses from the chorus cited earlier explicitly associate Henry V with Essex, there is no certainty that Shakespeare intended an analogy between act five's courtship and the earl's relationship with Elizabeth. At any rate, Fortuna's wheel brought him down from his crest in 1599, just as the play's epilogue discloses the short-lived and ultimately futile triumph of its hero: "Fortune made his sword/By which the world's best garden he achieved/Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned king/Of France and England, did this king succeed/Whose state so many had the managing/That they lost France and made his England bleed." Essex's nemesis resulted from the outcome of the Irish expedition. Despite his having wrested a huge allocation of troops and money from the queen and her council, victory over the native guerrilla forces eluded him. Instead of bringing home rebellion broached on his sword, he forged a secret plan with his Irish antagonist to seize the throne. He was arrested for treason, but the queen forgave him. A year later, he gathered a new group of desperate followers and again attempted a palace coup, after paying Shakespeare's company to stage a special performance of *Richard II*, presumably to encourage people to identify him with the successful rebel Bolingbroke. But this time the queen had him executed. As Essex fell, Robert Cecil rose. While Elizabeth's health declined, he allied himself with James VI of Scotland, her most likely successor.

Well before her deathbed appointment of James in 1603, Elizabeth knew of his pacifism. In 1599, the year of Essex's triumph and tragedy, James had published *Basilikon Doron*, a guidebook for princes dedicated to his own son and modelled upon Erasmus' *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Like the 1611 edition of his *Works*, the frontispiece of this book prominently featured a picture of Pax carrying an olive branch and treading on a figure of vanity staring in the mirror. Whether or not that figure represents Essex, his brand of swashbuckling militarism went out of favor during the final Tudor years. Shakespeare likewise shifted his point of view toward war and peace between 1599 and 1603, the year *Troilus and Cressida* was entered in the Stationer's Register.

Troilus forms a companion piece to *Henry V*. Instead of glorifying, it condemns war and those who make it. In the earlier play, Shakespeare counters pacifist objections to war with militarist rationales; here, he counters militarist rationales with pacifist objections. In reducing war from a providential tool to an instrument of

chaos, he inverts the rhetorical strategies of *Henry V* and also shrinks the proportions of epic to the distortions of satire. The chorus of *Henry V* apologizes for “confining mighty men” of his story in the “little room” of the theater, implying that the members of the audience are midgets in comparison to the heroes who will be portrayed on stage. The prologue of *Troilus*, on the other hand—“armed, but not in confidence”—introduces us to “Princes orgulous” with “chafed blood” and “ticklish skittish spirits,” whom we may “like or find fault as our pleasures are.” Compared to the self-inflated Lilliputians on stage, we spectators are cast as gods.

The two major sources of the plot, Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde* and Chapman's translation of the *Iliad*, suggest the two militaristic ideologies that the play continually invokes and mocks: medieval Christian chivalry and classical pagan policy. These are usually associated respectively with the Trojans and the Greeks. The question of *jus ad bellum*—what is the just cause of making war?—is deliberated by the Trojan council just as it is by the king's council in *Henry V*. But instead of the legalisms of descent through the female line in marriage, the issue here becomes a laughable notion of the consortium rights of the rapist as an adequate *casus belli*. Paris insists that “the soil of her fair rape” will be “wiped off in honorable keeping of her,” and Troilus, “the Prince of Chivalry,” argues that to let her go back to her husband and thereby end the war would be as disloyal as betraying one's own wife (2.2.146-65). When Priam, Helenus, and Cassandra point out the fallacies in these arguments, and Hector warns against the double evil of violating the laws of marriage and the laws of nations, Troilus rejects reason itself in favor of “manhood and honor”: “Manhood and honor/Should have hare hearts, would they but fat their thoughts/with this crammed reason. Reason and respect/Make livers pale and lustihood deject” (2.2.45-48). Emphasizing the very absence of *jus ad bellum* and the consequent immorality and irrationality of making war, Hector ignores his own reasoning, abruptly reverses his position, and goes off with Troilus to celebrate their coming victory.

The chivalric Trojans do no better when it comes to *jus in bello*, the manner of conducting war. “Humane gentleness” (4.1.22) is forever on their lips; they treat the Greeks with courtly manners during the duels and parties that precede the battle; and Hector graciously refrains from taking advantage of Achilles after getting the

better of him in their first encounter. But in the next moment he hunts a nameless fleeing soldier only “for thy hide,” and kills him for his sumptuous armor. As he curses the corpse and disarms himself, he is immediately butchered by Achilles’ gang of Myrmidons and dies a hideous, ignoble death.

Like Spenser’s knights in *The Faerie Queene*, Henry V fought “fierce wars” for “faithful loves” in pursuit of the romantic ideal also proclaimed by the warriors in *Troilus and Cressida*: “may that soldier a mere recreant prove/That means not, hath not, or is not in love” (I.3.284). But actually, as Thersites observes, “all the argument is for a cuckold and a whore.” Not every woman in the play, but the two over whom men do battle, are accurately thus described. Helen and Cressida must flirt as much Ajax and Achilles must fight. Teasing her new lover Diomedes while her old lover Troilus spies on them, Cressida moralizes against her own treachery much as Hector had done earlier: “The error of our mind directs our mind—O then conclude/Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude” (5.2.108–10). It is this vile behavior of hers that makes Troilus a great warrior—out of despair, not out of love, which at the opening of the play had kept him home at peace.⁷⁴

The justice of the Greeks’ war aims in reclaiming Helen is never mentioned; their militaristic rationales are not chivalric. But their two Machiavellian mechanisms of policy, force and fraud, are set at odds in the struggle between Achilles and Ulysses, the lion and the fox. Thus split, the Greeks are as incapable of achieving their own purely pragmatic purposes for war—morale, prestige, and conquest—as the Trojans are incapable of achieving honor and love. Achilles refuses to exert his strength, not so much because his pride is injured as because no personal wound has yet mobilized his fury. Ulysses’ grand speech against faction slyly promotes faction as the antidote to faction, but unlike the choruses and speeches of *Henry V*, it fails as an ideological strategem. The tactics of robbing robbers or betraying betrayers that Henry used to such advantage backfire in this war, because here human motivations are too irrational and actual situations are too indeterminate to be controlled by such deliberate manipulation. As Thersites again observes: “the policy of these crafty swearing rascals . . . is proved not worth a

⁷⁴For another reading of *Troilus and Cressida* as antichivalric satire, see Ferguson, 148–51.

blackberry, whereupon the Grecians begin to proclaim barbarism and policy grows into an ill opinion" (5.4.10). What finally draws the Greeks together is the "barbarous" fury of Troilus and Hector: "now good or bad," says the prologue, "'tis but the chance of war."

In the religious mythologies of military cultures, war itself is often conceptualized as a cosmic struggle against chance or chaos, the effort to create or protect meaning itself.⁷⁵ So Henry's providential war confers meaning on earlier English history as well as on the confused economic, political, and psychic energies of his own time. Pacifists tend to associate war with just the opposite tendency—the breakdown of meaning, the triumph of the random. This process of metaphysical decomposition is a central preoccupation of *Troilus and Cressida*. It is manifest in the confusion of predator and prey, whereby appetite eventually eats up itself (1.3), in the erosion of satisfaction by sexual desire that is either negated by achievement (1.2.274) or infinite in craving (3.2.75); in the dissolution of moral responsibility by both social pressure (3.3.115) and by solipistic relativism (2.2.199); in the separation of words from their meanings in the long-winded, mutually flattering speeches of the generals; and in the abrogations of the fundamental principles of logic—the laws of identity and of contradiction: "If there be rule in unity itself/ This was not she. O madness of discourse/ That cause sets up with and against itself" (5.2.141).

These abstract depictions of chaos are reflected in the psychological disintegration of all the major characters. In the minds of Troilus, Cressida, Hector, Ulysses, and Achilles, the powers of reason, will, appetite, and action are themselves warring factions that result in inconsistent, driven, self-destructive behavior. "Why should I war without the walls of Troy/ That find such cruel battle here within?" are Troilus' first words. Some critics have seen a positive progression in his development toward a committed fighter at the end of the play, but his last words—"Hope of revenge shall

⁷⁵Aho, 9–11. This idea is provocatively elaborated by Scarry: "The dispute that leads to the war involves a process by which each side calls into question the legitimacy and thereby erodes the reality of the other country's issues, beliefs, ideas, self-conception. Dispute leads relentlessly to war not only because war is an extension and intensification of dispute but because it is a correction and reversal of it. That is the injuring not only provides a means of choosing between disputants but also provides, by its massive opening of human bodies, a way of reconnecting the derealized and disembodied beliefs with the force and power of the material world It is when a country has become to its population a fiction that wars begin" (128–31).

hide our inward woe"—suggest a negative parody of Hal's development from barfly to general. Troilus has succeeded only in projecting his inner disorder outward and inflicting it on the world. This process illustrates Renaissance pacifist theories of the origins of war in psychological disorders: "I failed," says Erasmus' Peace "to discover even one who did not fight within himself. Reason wars with inclinations; inclination struggles with inclination; . . . lust desires one thing, anger another; ambition wants this, covetousness that."⁷⁶

The epilogue of the play expresses the same vengeful need to project inner disorder onto the world, as Pandarus seeks relief from the aches of his venereal illness by bequeathing it to the audience. Shakespeare reinforces the notion that war is a pathology rather than a proving ground for virtue by making the dominant image cluster of *Troilus and Cressida* that of contagious disease infecting both the individual and the society. In his study of this pattern in the play, Eric Mallin has pointed to an underlying similarity between war and epidemic as impasses to understanding. "A proliferating and uncontrollable chaos has the same effect upon interpretation as on authority . . . they summon yet frustrate it."⁷⁷ Both war and disease, he suggests, resemble the turbulent "chaos systems" studied by contemporary mathematicians and physicists. The randomness and indeterminacy of such systems characterize not only the world of war that *Troilus and Cressida* represents but the play's literary form as well. Just as the fight at Troy has no beginning, middle, or end, individual battles and the play's other stories of love and revenge lack both climax and closure, for they embody the incomprehensible futility of human beings trapped in a maze of their own device.⁷⁸

In book I of *Utopia* and in the colloquy, "Charon," More, and Erasmus mock the rationales of militarism with the voices of Hythloday and Polygraphus. Possessed of common sense and sound conscience in a world gone mad, these marginal characters are regarded as fools by their fellows but as prophets by their readers.

⁷⁶*The Complaint of Peace*, 182.

⁷⁷Mallin, 314.

⁷⁸Council concludes his study of the idea of honor in *Troilus and Cressida* with a similar formulation: "His destruction, of course, is demanded by the legend, but Shakespeare justifies it by making Hector a part . . . of this frustrating world in which men create their own standards of value only to become slaves to that creation" (86).

Two such wise fools whose authority is likewise masked appear in *Troilus and Cressida* bearing the same message—Thersites, the Greek slave, and Cassandra, the Trojan woman. Unlike Henry, they need not act, and perhaps because of this they speak a simple truth: he with disgusted rage—“all wars and lechery!”—and she with quiet despair—“yet soft, Hector, I take my leave/thou dost thyself and all our Troy deceive” (5.3.89–90). As he passes from *Henry V* to *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare not only hearkens back to the precedents of More and Erasmus, he represents the unconventional pacifist outlook of a king who was known to one of his contemporaries as “God’s Silly Vassal” and to another as “the wisest fool in Christendom.”⁷⁹

It is the fool’s perspective—the perspective of an outsider critical of assumptions that in general are taken for granted—that marks *Troilus and Cressida*’s genre of satire. A year after the play’s first appearance, another anti-militarist satire called *Don Quixote* was published in the nation that most Englishmen thought of as their “natural enemy.”⁸⁰ That same year King James made a lasting peace treaty with Spain.

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After 1603, the Jacobean theatre took on a strong pacifist slant that reflected “the influence of the king’s assertive political creed.”⁸¹ Most modern scholars insist that this shift in perspective results from the playwrights’ “tactful heed to one of [the] sovereign’s most deeply felt convictions,”⁸² but one might also argue that such a reassertion of Stoic, Christian, and Humanist attitudes about war and peace began to flourish simply because they were no longer repressed or because people had become disillusioned with military heroics after the fall of Essex or because James’s educational pro-

⁷⁹Ashley, 86.

⁸⁰England’s “Natural Enemy” is Oliver Cromwell’s term for Spain (Wernham, 1). Cervantes’ novel ridicules the *miles gloriosus* whose “reckless fanaticism” in the words of Bryant Creel, “can be seen to represent the universal human tendency, whether of individuals or of states, to attempt to render their own internal failings less conspicuous by denouncing and even persecuting an external element as the ‘enemy,’ the success of the deceit or self-deceit being proportionate to the degree of the self-righteousness of the attacker” (44). On Erasmus’ influence on Cervantes, see Bataillon, 777–801.

⁸¹Jorgensen, 200.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 201.

gram as philosopher-king was actually working. Whatever its mechanism, the cultural shift toward pacifism influenced Jacobean plays in a variety of ways.

Anti-war satires went beyond poking fun at the swaggering soldier of traditional comedy and mocked the chivalric traditions that a crisis-ridden hereditary aristocracy revived to bolster morale and that Elizabeth had invoked to muster support for resistance to Spain. Linda Woodbridge notes that in "The Iron Age," the last two plays of his Homeric Cycle, Thomas Heywood "is not less cynical about the Trojan War than was Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*. Hector is killed in an unsportsmanlike manner, Achilles by treachery and guile; the Greek's victory is achieved through a cheap trick conceived by a perjured coward . . . virtually the only survivors of the holocaust are the two characters who, never pretending to courage, refused to fight: Thersites and Synon . . . military values seem utterly repudiated."⁸³ In addition to mocking with satire, Jacobean playwrights also discredited those who expressed hostility to peace by turning them into melodramatic villains. Chapman's Byron, for instance, repudiates the "sensual peace" which "confounds Valour and cowardice, fame and infamy," while in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, a provocateur "politician" manipulates his victim with anti-pacifist demagoguery: "Now all is peace, no danger: now what follows?/Idleness rusts us, since no virtuous labour/Ends ought rewarded" (1.1.32). Another villain in Cyril Tournear's *The Atheist's Tragedy* deceives his nephew into going off to battle with an appeal to "noble warre" as the "first originall Of all man's honour," and with "regrets about how his age has fallen from this ideal." Similarly, the true villain of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Cloten, is condemned as advocate of war against Rome and as an opponent of his king's peacemaking policies.⁸⁴ These villains bear an interesting resemblance to Puritan preachers who agitated against James's rapprochements with the Catholics. For example, one Thomas Scott wrote a widely distributed tract, *Vox Populi*, which claimed to be a translation of the Spanish ambassador's dispatch reporting plans in progress to overthrow the Church of England, though it was, in fact, a complete

⁸³Woodbridge, 166.

⁸⁴Cited by Jorgensen, 203-04.

fabrication.⁸⁵ Just as in the earlier plays like *Henry V* or *Tamburlaine*, pacifist views provided an "irritant" to stimulate militarist rebuttal, so, in the Jacobean theater, militarist sentiments provided an occasion to reaffirm the dominant anti-war position. A more tactful form of pacifist persuasion is found in Ben Jonson's dramatic masque, *Prince Henry's Barriers*, presented at court to James's son, an avid aficionado of chivalry. First "Chevalry" speaks the familiar call to revive the neglected art of war: "Breake you rustie dores/ That have so long beene shut, and from the shores/Of all the world, come knight-hood like a flood/Upon these lists, to make the field, here, good,/ And your owne honours, that are now call'd forth / Against the wish of men to prove your worth." But he is answered by sage Merlin, who takes the final word: "Nay stay your valure, tis a wisdome high/In Princes to use fortuen reverently. /He that in deeds of *Armes* obeyes his blood/Doth often tempt his destinie beyond good./Look on this throne, and in his temper view/ The light of all that must have grace in you:/His equall Iustice, upright Fortitude/And settled Prudence, with that Peace indued/Of face, as minde, always himselfe and even."⁸⁶ Merlin retains some respect for the language and sensibilities of the chivalric revival, but like the London Reformers of the previous century, he deflates its enthusiasm for battle by insisting that "Valure" be stayed, that deeds of arms be restrained, and that the prince concern himself with peace.

If war is no longer validated either by a heroic tradition or by the arguments of Realpolitik, one is forced to confront the question of why human beings continue to wage it and suffer its attendant disasters. By seeking the answer to this question with the analytical and educational approach to social action of the old Christian Humanists, Jacobean writers undertook psychological and political studies of warriors and war-oriented societies in the attempt to understand and reform them. Many of their plays depict the demise

⁸⁵See Wright, "Propaganda against James I's 'Appeasement' of Spain," 149-71. This article, published during World War II, nicely contextualizes itself: "If recent clichés of international politics like 'fifth columnist,' 'collaborationist,' and 'appeaser' were unknown to the seventeenth century, conditions like those which brought forth the words nevertheless existed, and all England rang with warnings of the disasters believed certain to follow in the wake of the King's stubborn and unpopular foreign policy, which sought at any price, to conciliate Spain" (149).

⁸⁶Lines 397-413 in 5: 335. See also Council, 1980, 259-95.

of great military heroes, not through the triumph of superior arms, but through failures of insight, compassion, and self-control attributable to an identity forged in battle.

Othello, for example, though possessing the martial virtues of "the plain soldier," is shown to lack the learning necessary to exert self-mastery and leadership in civil society. His deprecatory self-description turns out ironically accurate when it comes to his inability to communicate with anyone but Iago: "Rude am I in my speech, / And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace . . . And little of the great world can I speak / More than pertains to feats of broils and battles" (I. 3. 81). Following Jorgensen we can contrast the uneasy resonances of this soldierly plain-speaking with that of Henry V, whose protests of ineptitude with language and of inability to deal with women in act five merely disguise a supreme self-confidence in the realms of diplomacy and courtship grounded in battlefield valor.⁸⁷ Othello's confidence too is based on war, but the base is shaky, and the support is portrayed as dependency. His prowess leaves him defenseless against those who prey upon him and dangerous to those he should protect. Even his very identity as a soldier is shattered by his underlying personal, sexual, and social insecurity:

O now forever
 Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
 Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars
 That makes ambition virtue. O Farewell!
 Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
 The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife
 The royal banner, and all 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. (3.3.347)

The weakness underlying his strength is revealed in his responses to his misperceived betrayal by his wife and to his accurately perceived betrayal by his subaltern. "An honorable murderer" he calls himself (5.2.294), and asks that his suicide be remembered as a service to the state.

⁸⁷Jorgensen, 259.

But while the audience of *Troilus and Cressida* regarded Hector's fallacious "honor" as mere self-deception and Troilus' valor as nihilistic rage, our response to Othello's defects is more complex. Even at his blindest and cruelest moments, we, like Desdemona, tend to commiserate with rather than condemn the Moor. And our strongest emotional response, created by the play's rhetoric of suspense, is to call out repeatedly to the character, "Don't do it, don't let yourself be trapped into a stupid game of violence." Just as we warn, so to some degree are we being warned by a monitory and didactic intent that moves us toward a rejection of martial heroism, yet which still acknowledges some of its values. The cost of this shift in values was great for a culture as heavily invested in militarism as seventeenth-century Christendom. Insofar as their "occupation's gone," Shakespeare's Jacobean heroes—Othello, Timon, Macbeth, Anthony, Lear, and Coriolanus—sustain a tragic loss; but insofar as those heroes are shown to be brutal, driven, and anachronistic, Shakespeare displays that loss as an inevitable and progressive sacrifice.

Jorgensen sees the thematic preoccupation with the contradiction between the soldier and society as an expression of Shakespeare's resistance to James: "Jacobean pacifism and the reaction to Essex's rebellion had indeed made the soldier's place in the story a less comfortable one. But . . . the position was by no means indefensible and certainly not ignoble. Soldier citizens of this caliber could no longer claim a political endorsement, but they still exhibited an integrity and largeness of spirit that lifted them above their meaner adversaries as subjects for tragic drama."⁸⁸ In contrast, I see James's influence as liberating. The king's consistent theory and successful practice of peace between 1603 and 1613 encouraged Shakespeare to continue in the direction he was already heading, stimulated his investigations into the pathology of socially sanctioned violence, and motivated him to use the theater to reeducate his audience.

Of all the plays, *Coriolanus* carries forward this effort in the most concerted manner. The satirical aspect of the play has been observed by many. G. B. Shaw called it "the greatest of Shakespeare's comedies,"⁸⁹ while Oscar Campbell classifies it as "tragical sat-

⁸⁸Ibid., 314.

⁸⁹Shaw, cited by O. J. Campbell, 1970, 26.

ire."⁹⁰ The thrust of the satire has been interpreted variously: by right-leaning critics as an attack on the plebeian mob whose self-seeking opportunism brings a principled and noble patrician to destruction, and by left-leaning critics as an attack on the aristocracy for their uncontrollable hatred of the proletariat they exploit. Campbell sees the commons and the patrician hero equally at fault and regards the play as an attack on class conflict itself, a conflict that violates the Tudor myth of degree and hierarchy articulated in Menenius' extended metaphor of the state as organic body.⁹¹ I believe, however, that as political satire, the play makes most sense when it is regarded, like *Troilus and Cressida*, as an attack on the bellicose policies and attitudes that create the war that provides the framework of the play's action.

That war is portrayed not in terms of glamor, glory, or heroism but rather as cruel butchery. In the words of G. Wilson Knight, "War here is violent, metallic, impactuous . . . Here human ambition attains its height by splitting an opponent's body, the final signature of honour is the robe and reeking caparison of blood . . . it is heavy throughout, and strikes a note of harshness peculiar to this play . . . even war's nobility is always a thing of violence, blood, cruelty, bought at the expense of others' misery . . . And the noblest of warriors, Coriolanus, is almost an automaton in fight, a slaying-machine of mechanic excellence . . . His nobility is poisoned by pride . . . his wars are not for Rome; they are an end in themselves."⁹² The play criticizes war by repeatedly showing how military violence takes on a life of its own, severed from its purposes and justifications. The heroic Coriolanus switches from the defender of his city to its attacker because of a personal grievance: "O world thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn . . . on a dissention of a doit, break out/To bitterest enmity: so fellest foes/. . . by some chance/Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends/and interjoin their issues" (4.4.12). And his erstwhile opponents, "patient fools/Whose children he hath slain," ignore their enmity and "their base throats tear/With giving him glory" (5.6.50).

⁹⁰O. J. Campbell, 1970, 26.

⁹¹Ibid., 27.

⁹²Knight, 1961, 157-71.

These Volsicians are cast into the role of warmongers throughout the play. No less than Coriolanus and their own aristocratic general, Aufidius, the proletarians of Antium hate peace and relish battle for its own sake:

2 *Servingman*: Why then we shall have a stirring world again. This peace is nothing but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad makers.

1 *Servingman*: Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night; it's sprightly, waking, audible and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mulled, deaf sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

2 *Servingman*: Tis so: and as war in some sort may be said to be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a great maker of cuckolds.

1 *Servingman*: Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

3 *Servingman*: Reason: because they then less need one another. The wars for my money (4.5.223–38)

Such sentiments, which echo the anti-pacifist pronouncements of Elizabethan military alarmists like Barnabe Rich and Robert Wilson, are strongly discredited by being attributed to characters who, if not villains, evoke the least of the audience's sympathy. By contrast, as Ann Barton observes, the peace-loving Roman commons are presented with approval: "this play is unique in the canon for the tolerance and respect it accords an urban citizenry."⁹³ Their role in the play opens with an airing of legitimate grievances against the war policy of the patricians which links it to economic exploitation: "the object of our misery is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them If the wars eat us not up, they will" (1.1.20–80). Their role concludes with their celebration of the end of hostilities with the Volsicians and their reconciliation with the patricians after Coriolanus has been tamed.

As in his other late tragedies, in *Coriolanus* Shakespeare goes beyond mockery and condemnation to study the causes of war. Following Erasmus' path, he traces the causes of political violence to psychological aggression. Even before Coriolanus' first appearance, a citizen suggests the connection between the general's battlefield heroics and domestic neurosis: "Though soft-conscience'd men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it partly to please his mother and to be proud" (1.1.37). This diagnosis is confirmed by modern psychoanalytic critics like Janet Adelman:

⁹³Barton, 127.

"the whole of his masculine identity depends on his transformation of his vulnerability into an instrument of attack The rigid masculinity that Coriolanus finds in war becomes a defense against acknowledgment of his neediness; . . . in order to avoid being the soft, dependent, feeding parasite, he has to maintain his rigidity as soldier's steel"94 As the play proceeds, the more he seeks to confirm his manhood in battle, the more infantilized he becomes.

Like Macbeth's, Coriolanus' compulsive need to fight results largely from his vulnerability to the influence of a woman's vicarious aggression. His mother, Volumnia, is introduced as a horrifying creature, like Allecto, the Fury, or Bellona, goddess of war: "if my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love . . . had I a dozen sons . . . I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action . . . the breasts of Hecuba/ when she did suckle Hector, looked not lovelier/ than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood/ at Grecian sword, contemning" (I.3.20-80). For such a perverse mother, as Adelman says, "Blood is more beautiful than milk, the wound than the breast, warfare than peaceful feeding" (131). Volumnia's influence bears fruit in the child's as well as the grandchild's upbringing: "O my word the father's son . . . I saw him run after a gilded butterfly . . . caught it again; or whether his fall enraged him, or how twas, he did so set his teeth, and tear it; O I warrant how he mammocked it!" (I.3.58).

In the course of this soldier's rearing, cruelty displaces tenderness. Coriolanus' martial opponent, Aufidius, has had a similar rearing, and the erotic energy displaced in both explodes in their single-sex embrace: "Let me twine/ Mine arms about that body, . . ./. . . here I clip/ The anvil of my sword, and do contest/ as hotly and as nobly with thy love/ as ever in ambitious strength I did/ contend against thy valor that I see thee here/ thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart/ than when I first my wedded mistress saw/ bestride my threshold. . . ./. . . Thou hast beat me out/ Twelve several times, and I have nightly since/ Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;/ we have been down together in my sleep/ unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat . . . and pouring war/ into the bowels of ungrateful Rome/ Like a bold flood

⁹⁴Adelman, 132-33.

o'erbear it" (4.5.109-35). This graphic sado-masochistic fantasy portrays the pathological mixture of pleasure and pain, love and hate, friendship and enmity that constitutes the warrior's inner life. The deficiencies of the military identity are epitomized in Coriolanus' own idea of who he is. Rather than a person who can experience his common "kindness" with other human beings, he conceives of himself at once as a mere fighting machine at their disposal—"make you a sword of me" (1.6.52)—and at the same time as a god—"I'll never/be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand/as if a man were author of himself/and knew no other kin" (5.3.34).

As well as psychologically aberrant, *Coriolanus* portrays the soldier's personality as historically atavistic. This last of the tragedies is not only a satire but also a history play. Its chief source, Plutarch's "Life of Coriolanus," memorializes a past time when "valiantness was honored in Rome above all other virtues."⁹⁵ But, as Barton notes, the tragedy departs significantly from Plutarch's idealized vision of Coriolanus' society. By incorporating elements of Livy's and Machiavelli's historical accounts of Coriolanus' career into the play, Shakespeare depicts Rome's transition from an aristocratic military culture toward an urban republic which eventually will balance the claims of patricians and plebs, of war and peace, in a contained, constructive tension: "Livy makes this clear . . . it is . . . a society which no longer . . . is based . . . primarily upon the ethos of war Whatever the case in the past, or among the Volsicians of the present, valour in this Rome is no longer 'the chiefest virtue,' overriding all the rest . . . the patricians depended upon war as a way of stifling civic dissension, busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels in order to keep them distracted from injustices and inequalities at home Sometimes, this strategy worked, uniting Rome temporarily against a foreign foe. But increasingly, over the years, it did not."⁹⁶

Shakespeare's Volsician society appears primitive and barbarous by contrast to his Rome. The commoners there are neither tradesmen nor citizens but only servants; the senate merely rubberstamps the decision of Aufidius, the strongman general; his henchmen murder Coriolanus with impunity; and women have no voice

⁹⁵Plutarch, cited by Barton, 123-24.

⁹⁶Barton, 131.

whatsoever. In Rome, on the other hand, the commons “would really prefer, in Sicinius’s words, to be ‘singing in their shops and going/About their functions friendly’ (4.6.8–9). For these small shopkeepers and traders, orange sellers, makers of taps for broaching wine-barrels . . . had far rather pursue their normal peacetime occupations than be out slitting Volsician throats.”⁹⁷ Such a preference accords with the more bourgeois, pacific values praised by Jonson’s Merlin in *Prince Henry’s Barriers* when he describes the contributions of King Edward III to the mercantile industry as preferable to a chivalric quest for the golden fleece: “This was he erected first/The trade of clothing, by which art were nursed/Whole millions to his service, and relieved/So many poor, as sinned they have believed/the golden fleece, and need no foreign mine (185–9).”⁹⁸ But like the Volsicians, Coriolanus has nothing but contempt for tailors and balladmakers. Only he, among all the patricians, refuses to acknowledge the growing influence and the changing role of the plebs in the economic and political life of the city.⁹⁹ His rigid subscription to antique military values is portrayed as reactionary blindness rather than principled nobility.

In addition to mocking, criticizing, and analysing militarism, *Coriolanus* demonstrates the possibility of stemming the tides of war and civil strife set in motion by its excesses. Its depiction of Rome’s transformation from a warlike to a more pacific society recapitulates the evolution of England’s foreign policy as well as of Shakespeare’s political position between the early 1590s and 1608. The structure of the play’s plot and its manipulation of dramatic tension induce the audience to move in a parallel direction. When they want to have him elected to political office, both his friends and his mother regret having intensified Coriolanus’ hatred of the commons and the Volsicians. In the third act they belatedly try to teach him the peacetime virtues of tact and compromise: “You are too absolute . . . I have heard you say/honor and policy like unsevered friends/I th’ war do grow together: grant that and tell me/In peace what each of them by th’ other lose/That they combine not there. Throng our large temples with the shows of peace/And not our streets with war” (3.3.36). After having created such

⁹⁷Ibid., 133.

⁹⁸See Council, 1980, 271.

⁹⁹Barton, 133.

a Frankenstein monster, mother Rome and mother Volumnia discover the difficulty of taming it. At first the general acquiesces to the civilians, but provoked by the tribunes of the people, he loses control over himself altogether, insults them so intemperately that he is banished for treason, and ends up joining the enemy Volsicians, allowing his hatred of the plebs to extend to hatred of his own family. As he threatens revenge against the whole city of Rome in the last act, peace is given a second chance. At her son's tent in the camp of the besieging army, Volumnia abjures both force and policy and invokes the agency of mercy: "Our suit/is that you reconcile them: while the Volsces/May say 'this mercy we have showed' the Romans/'This we received'; and each in either side/give the all-hail to thee, and cry 'Be blest/for making up this peace' " (5.3.135–40).

This conversion scene of recognition and reversal displays the mother's ability to pacify her son with the persuasive force of language. The power of her love overcomes his hate, just as the power of her eloquence overcomes his refusal to speak: "*Coriolanus* [holds her by the hand silent]: Mother, mother O/you have won a happy victory to Rome;/But for your son . . ./Most dangerously has thou with him prevailed/If not most mortal to him . . . I'll frame convenient peace . . . Ladies, you deserve/To have a temple built you. All the swords/In Italy, and her confederate arms,/Could not have made this peace" (5.3.183–209). The cruel warrior has been transformed into a merciful emissary of peace who will approach the Volsicians with humility and tact, subordinating his own mixed feelings to the requirements of his diplomatic mission.

This transformation is emphasized by the agonizingly prolonged moment of suspense indicated in the stage direction, a moment which also moves the audience from rejection to affirmation of peace. The same theatrical tactic of suspense is reinforced in the next scene, set back in Rome. Here patricians and plebs reproach one another while awaiting a common death at the hands of the Volsicians, having abandoned hope that Coriolanus will ever relent: "there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger; that shall our poor city find." One messenger brings further bad news that the plebs are turning on their own tribunes. But then comes the word that "the ladies have prevailed," followed by a grand outpouring of celebration. The patrician response of Menenius—"This Volumnia/Is worth of consuls, senators,

patricians, / A city full; of tribunes such as you / A sea and land full” (5.4.52)—is echoed by Sicinius, the tribune of the people: “We’ll meet them / And help the joy” (5.4.63). The class conflict is resolved, for the moment at least, by the glorious outbreak of peace. Thus the dramatic climax of Shakespeare’s play enacts James’s emblem: the triumph of Eirene over Mars.

Had the play ended here, without its short final scene, it clearly would have fallen within the classification of tragicomedy. However, Shakespeare concluded as he did, not only to follow his classical sources but also to deepen the play’s political message. In several respects, the conversion from war to peace is difficult and painful—in a word, tragic. Displaying those tragic costs as worthwhile can enhance rather than negate the value of such a conversion. Harshly contrasting with the brief and sacred social harmony of the fifth scene of act five, the final scene appalls us with the horror of political violence. Irresistible aggression bursts the dikes of Coriolanus’ self-restraint and drives the Volsician populace to shout “kill, kill, kill, kill him”; it cannot be contained by the Second Lord’s attempt to allow the embassy simply to be heard: “Peace ho! no outrage, peace! / The man is noble, and his fame folds in / This orb o’ th’ earth. His last offenses to us / Shall have judicious hearing. Stand, Aufidius, / And trouble not the peace” (123–27). But in fact it is not primarily irrational instinct—the *iras*, or ire of classical epic—that causes the final debacle. Rather, it is Aufidius’ calculated manipulation that pushes both Coriolanus and the mob beyond the breaking point. The conspiracy of his hawkish political “faction” torpedoed the peace process, a process which otherwise might well have completed the conversion of both former anti-pacifist parties. In this concluding scene, then, the playwright doesn’t undermine our newfound sympathy with Coriolanus, as many critics have maintained;¹⁰⁰ rather he makes the protagonist into something of a martyr. But regardless of one’s response to the manner of Coriolanus’ death, its fact signals a positive rather than a negative outcome of the play, a progression to a new kind of society. Had Coriolanus not given in to his mother’s pleading, his “manhood” might have been spared, but only at the expense of the lives of all the men, women, and children in Rome. Had he not lost his com-

¹⁰⁰See O. J. Campbell, 26: “[Shakespeare] mocks and ridicules him [Coriolanus] to the end.”

posure at the final moment, he might have avoided the rage of the Volsician mob, but Aufidius would have had him killed anyway.¹⁰¹ The “sense of pain and anxiety” that Janet Adelman says we are left with at the end¹⁰² is outweighed by our admiration for Coriolanus’ conversion and consequent death, because they usher in a peace between Volsicians and Romans and between patricians and plebs.¹⁰³

* * * * *

Coriolanus’ enactment of the reversal from hate to love and from war to peace foreshadows the conversions and reconciliations of protagonists of the late romances like Leontes and Prospero. The happy endings of these plays expand the festive moment of Volturnia’s return to Rome with masque-like pageantry, and while maintaining a political theme, shift the tonality and setting of the performance to one of spectacle and magic, the typical style of Jacobean court entertainment. Elaborating images of harvest bounty, fertility, and prosperity—iconography traditionally associated with Eirene—the romance plots resolve political tensions in opulent celebrations combining seedtime and harvest in honor of the marriage of offspring of rulers formerly at war. Such hoped-for outcomes guided James’s foreign policy, as he negotiated armistice between the Low Countries and Spain and marriages of his children into both Protestant and Catholic royal families.

Within this framework, Shakespeare’s last plays function as propaganda for peace. James himself might well have written an introduction to any one of them containing sentiments like those in his prefatory note to Middleton’s “The Peacemaker”: “To all our true-loving and Peace-embracing Subjects All that is required of

¹⁰¹See Aufidius’ aside at 5.3.202.

¹⁰²Adelman, 144.

¹⁰³Dollimore, 1989, 222, also offers a cynical interpretation of the ending: “before peace stands a chance of ratification, Coriolanus is killed. The two main political conflicts which open the play—patrician against plebian, Romans against Volsicians—remain.” But it is clear that without Coriolanus, the Volsicians will not succeed in continuing their offensive. This reading ignores the class reconciliation in 5.4 and 5.5. See Barton, 145: “*Coriolanus* is a tragedy in that its protagonist does finally learn certain necessary truths about the world in which he exists, but dies before he has any chance to rebuild his life in accordance with them. Paradoxically, it is only in his belated recognition and acceptance of historical change, of that right of the commons to be taken seriously which the other members of his class in Rome have already conceded, that he achieves genuinely tragic individuality.”

us from you, is a faithful and hearty welcome For peace that hath been a stranger to you, is now become a sister, a dear and natural sister; and to your holiest loves we recommend her."¹⁰⁴ As Linda Woodbridge points out in her recent essay, "Palisading the Body Politic," the twenty-year rule of James forms an "intercalary period" in British history, a respite between the obsessive fear of invasion during Elizabeth's reign and the manic aggression of expansionist imperialism and civil war which was to follow. *Cymbeline* is set during another such intercalary period and glorifies the reconciliation of Britain and Rome—implicitly of Protestant and Catholic—in a treaty embodying James's ideals of kingship: the peace of Augustus and the peace of Christ: "Publish we this peace/ To all our subjects. Set we forward; let/ A Roman and a British ensign wave/ Friendly together. . . . / . . . Never was a war did cease/ Ere bloody hands were washed, with such a peace" (5.5.477–84).

Jonathan Goldberg sees in this conclusion an exemplar of "James's own self-proclaimed style: the 'style of the gods.'"¹⁰⁵ But in addition to the pomposity of his public persona, James had another style which also served his quest for peace. It was that of "the wisest fool in Christendom": coarse, self-indulgent, tolerant, amiable, loving, and self-effacing. In 1621 he confided to Parliament: "I will not say I have governed as well as [Elizabeth] did, but I may say we have had as much peace in our time as in hers."¹⁰⁶ A king who speaks like this may recall the Humanist schoolmaster Duke at the end of *The Tempest* who finds that "the rarer action is/ in virtue than in vengeance," who releases his thralls and enemies, who relinquishes magic, and who acknowledges "this thing of darkness" as his own. A number of modern critics contest any description of Prospero as humane with evidence of the domineering, manipulative, patriarchal, and cruel aspects of this character and of his island regime. All of these traits might also be attributed to James Stuart and his rule of Britain. Nevertheless, at the end of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare takes pains to dramatize Prospero's "conversion" into a self-ironic, merciful and peaceable sovereign who still retains his awesome and irresistible aura. This is a model of the prince after

¹⁰⁴Middleton, 8: 312.

¹⁰⁵Goldberg, 240.

¹⁰⁶McElwee, 227.

which James seems to have fashioned himself; it is also a model for the portrait of the ruler in *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth*.

After the suggestive farewell to the theater that closes *The Tempest*, the last play included in the First Folio has seemed so disappointing to many commentators that they have sought to deny Shakespeare's authorship of it.¹⁰⁷ But in the framework of the emergent pacifist outlook explored here, *Henry VIII* remains an appropriate final work. In it, Shakespeare returns to the genre of history play he abandoned after *Henry V*. But this is prophetic rather than political history, history governed not by violence and chance but rather by reason and purpose—history that has eschewed the Machiavellian improvisations of the second tetralogy, has absorbed the repulsion against war of *Troilus and Cressida*, has purged the military anti-heroes of the late tragedies, and has incorporated the redemptive pattern of romance into a combination that Samuel Schoenbaum calls "festive history."¹⁰⁸ In it, the theatrical spectacles of battle are replaced by those of pageantry.¹⁰⁹

Whereas in the second tetralogy, Shakespeare presented the king as warrior, in *Henry VIII* he portrayed the king as peacemaker. Rather than busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels, this Henry is committed to peace in international relations. The treaty with Francis I which he celebrates in the Field of the Cloth of Gold tournament is abandoned not because of his decision but because of his foreign minister's secret betrayal. As Shakespeare tells it, the Emperor Charles paid Wolsey to breach the peace to allay fears that "England and France might through their amity / Breed him some prejudice" (I. I. 181–82). When this betrayal comes to light, the motive for conducting war is unmasked as Wolsey's private greed rather than the public interest. In addition to accepting Charles's bribe, Wolsey has raked off profits from the defense budget, at

¹⁰⁷For a brief discussion of the authorship controversy, see Samuel Schoenbaum, "Introduction," xxii–xxvii.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, xl.

¹⁰⁹See Tennenhouse, 1985, 109–30. Tennenhouse contrasts the strategies of *HV* and *HVIII* as follows: "Here [*HV*] history is nothing else but the history of forms of disorder, over which Henry can temporarily triumph because he alone embodies the contradictions that can bring disruptions into the service of the state and make a discontinuous political process appear as a coherent moment . . . Henry VIII need not struggle with his opponents because they possess no power except that which he confers on them" (120–24).

harsh cost to the citizenry: "The subject's grief/ Comes through commissions, which compels from each/ The sixth part of his substance, to be levied/ Without delay; and the pretense for this / Is named your wars in France" (1.2. 56–59). The Erasmian equation of militarism, greed, economic injustice, and political instability is pressed farther as Katharine reports rebellion in the provinces in the form of war tax refusals: "This makes bold mouths/ Tongues spit their duties out, and cold hearts freeze/ Allegiance in them. Their curses now/ Live where their prayers did, and it's come to pass/ This tractable obedience is a slave/ To each incensed will" (59–67). Instead of sending a force to punish these rebels as Henry IV might have done, Henry VIII recognizes the justice of the grievance, lifts the tax, and pardons the protestors:

We must not rend our subjects from our laws,
And stick them in our will. Sixth part of each?
A trembling contribution! Why, we take
From every tree lop, bark and part of th'timber,
And though we leave it with a root, thus hacked,
The air will drink the sap. To every county
Where this is question send our letters with
Free pardon to each man that has denied
The force of this commission. (93–101)¹¹⁰

The method of peacemaking rather than warmaking also guides Henry's palace politics. Instead of being decided by bloodshed, conflicts are resolved without violence. The king's antagonists will-

¹¹⁰As mentioned earlier, most modern historians believe that it was Wolsey who was the pacifist, who tried to make peace both with France and Spain, and who was betrayed by the militaristic machinations of the real Henry VIII. Shakespeare's imaginary Henry here acts precisely in the manner that Thomas More's imaginary Hythloday had recommended to the real Henry VIII, disguised in More's text as the French king: "Hythloday: Now in a meeting like this one, where so much is at stake, where so many brilliant men are competing to think up intricate strategies of war, what if an insignificant fellow like myself were to get up and advise going on another tack entirely? Suppose I said the king should leave Italy alone and stay home . . . suppose I told the French king's council that all this war-mongering, by which so many different nations were kept in social turmoil as a result of royal connivings and schemings, would certainly exhaust his treasury and demoralize his people, and yet very probably in the end come to nothing . . . And therefore I would advise the French king to look after his ancestral kingdom, improve it as much as he could, cultivate it every conceivable way. He should love his people and be loved by them; he should live among them, and govern them kindly, and let other kingdoms alone, since his own is big enough, if not too big for him" (24–28).

ingly yield to his authority and he forgives them—as in the cases of Buckingham, Katharine, and Wolsey—and the king produces compromise between competing factions of his supporters—as in the rivalry between them and Archbishop Cranmer.

Such hagiographic tribute to the king has seemed to some modern commentators like a form of kowtowing unworthy of Shakespeare's stature. Others have cited it to proclaim that Shakespeare's lifelong political agenda was to apologize for royal authority and beat the drum for British nationalism.¹¹¹ But on the basis of the evidence presented here, one could also argue that after 1599 Shakespeare's own abhorrence of war became steadily more emphatic and that his enthusiastic support for James stemmed at least partially from his own desire to further the king's peacemaking mission. It is true that after Shakespeare's death, James's continuing endeavors in this cause could not forestall the tragic outbreaks of either the Thirty Years' War in the latter days of his reign or of the English civil war during the reign of his son. Nevertheless, by recovering the early Humanists' rejection of military politics, culture, and ideology, both the mature Shakespeare and his royal benefactor strengthened a fragile tradition that too often remains ignored or denied.

The fullest identification among Henry, James, Shakespeare, and the ideal of peace occurs at the end of the play in Cranmer's prophecy. It links the king through his newborn daughter, Elizabeth Tudor, to his descendant, James I, and claims for the past, present, and future of their dynasty James's own personal motto: *Beati Pacifici*—Blessed are the Peacemakers:

In her days every man shall eat in safety
 Under his own vine what he plants, and sing
 The merry songs of peace to all his neighbors . . .
 So shall she leave her blessedness to one . . .
 Who from the sacred ashes of her honor
 Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was
 And so stand fixed. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror
 That were the servants to this chosen infant
 Shall then be his and like a vine grow to him . . .
 . . . our children's children
 Shall see this and bless heaven. (5.5.33–54)

¹¹¹Knight, 1958, 85.

These words offer their listeners what Henry calls an “oracle of comfort.” Cranmer’s message to the future, echoing the central prophecies of Isaiah and Vergil, ring as the last words left to us by Shakespeare.¹¹²

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¹¹²Knight, *ibid.*, made a similar observation about the resonance of Cranmer’s prophecy: “Shakespeare obeys a fundamental law of the human imagination with analogies in Isaiah, Vergil and Christianity . . . the massive play ends with the christening ceremony of the baby Elizabeth, over whom Cranmer speaks the final prophecy, Shakespeare’s last word to his countrymen” Knight takes this “last word” to be “as fine a statement as we shall find in any literature of that peace which the world craves and for which Great Britain labours.” Earlier versions of the same essay appeared in 1940, when, in a work entitled *This Sceptered Isle: Shakespeare’s Message for England at War*, Knight presented Cranmer’s prophecy as a formulation of England’s war aims: “England has for centuries been at work, consciously and unconsciously, to establish more than a national order. Her empire has already spread beyond the seas, this little island expanding and sending out her sons to make those ‘new nations’ of which Shakespeare’s Cranmer so prophetically speaks . . . one feels a shadowing, a rough forecast, of the sovereign part to be played by the *English-speaking* nations in establishment of world-justice, world-order, and world-peace” (34–35). And in 1982, in a collection of essays entitled *Authors Take Sides on the Falklands*, Knight still further modified and yet reaffirmed this reading: “Our key throughout is Cranmer’s royal prophecy at the conclusion of Shakespeare’s last play *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare’s final words to his countrymen. This I still hold to be our one authoritative statement, every word deeply significant, as forecast of the world-order at which we should aim” (cited by Hawkes, 68). Knight’s superimposition of pacifism with royalism, imperialism, and cultural chauvinism amplifies the ironies in Shakespeare’s depiction of Henry VIII as a Jacobean prince of peace.

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