

Challenging monarchical legacies in *Edward III* and *Henry V*

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To turne to our domesticke hystories [...] what English Prince should hee behold the true portrature of that [f]amous King *Edward* the third, foraging France, taking so great a King captiue in his owne country, quartering the English Lyons with the French Flower-delyce, and would not bee suddenly Inflam'd with so royall a spectacle, being made apt and fit for the like atchieuement. So of *Henry* the fift: but not to be tedious in any thing.

Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*¹

In *An Apology for Actors*, printed in 1612 but written in c.1608, Heywood rehearses the familiar defence about theatre inspiring positive and emulative action in its audience through the personation of famous English worthies. He draws attention to plays featuring two English monarchs – Edward III and Henry V – and although Heywood's reference to Henry V is briefly presented so as 'not to be tedious', his choice of monarchical exempla encourages a connection between the kings and their well-known victories against the French. The plays which Heywood recalls are probably Shakespeare's *Henry V* (performed in 1599; printed in quarto in 1600, 1602, and 1619, and in folio in 1623) and the apocryphal *Edward III* (performed between c.1590 and 1594; printed in quarto in 1596 and 1599).² Heywood's discussion is particularly striking because it features plays that were first performed some ten to twenty years earlier, which implies they created a vivid impression on the stage, and because his account of England's 'domesticke hystories' concentrates on Edward's and Henry's military victories against the French. The reputations of these monarchs and their staged representations seem dependent on their involvement in foreign conquest.

This emphasis can also be seen in the flurry of Elizabethan war manuals that reached the London bookstalls during the last two decades of the sixteenth century. These publications

¹ Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: 1612; STC 13309), Sig. B4r.

² E. Pearlman, 'Edward III in *Henry V*', *Criticism*, 37.4 (1995), 519-36 (pp. 533). While it is not the purpose of this article to address *Edward III*'s authorship, most critics agree that Shakespeare was involved, with general consensus being that he contributed the scenes featuring Edward and the Countess (usually 1.2 and 2.1), and the scene with Prince Edward and Audley before the Battle of Poitiers (usually 4.4). See Richard Proudfoot and Nicola Bennett eds., *King Edward III* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), pp. 49-89.

explore a variety of subjects relating to the conduct and experience of war, and were probably inspired by the continual state of war preparation and engagement that marked the end of the Elizabethan period. Together, the war manuals and stage plays make up an important body of texts that reveal the intertwined popular appeal of Edward III and Henry V and their application to contemporary politics. The ways in which they represent the monarchs are also distinctive. This article argues that, while the war manuals highlight the connections between Edward and Henry (in terms of history and legacy), they are less sustained and critical than the plays, which challenge some of the celebrated aspects of the monarchs' reputations. Although the plays can be seen as patriotic dramatizations of England's victories in France (as Heywood suggests), they also offer potential for radical deconstruction of monarchical authority: questioning a model of kingship that relies on the person of the monarch, as well as the expediency of foreign conquests – two central aspects of Edward's and Henry's popular reputations. Symmetries in the structure of the plays and the histories they represent reveal their capacity for both commemoration and criticism in the post-Armada period: the plays dramatize celebrated conquests, but they also present England on the brink of national disaster (which followed in the reigns of Richard II and Henry VI), therefore compromising the lasting significance of Edward's and Henry's campaigns. By examining the war manuals and stage plays in tandem, this article first draws attention to the importance of these monarchs during the late Elizabethan period, and then shows how the stage representations of the 1590s reappraise their individual legacies and the value of their famous military victories.

'Great worthies, so renown'd in forraine coasts'³

Tudor chroniclers had earlier paired the reputations of these monarchs with their foreign conquests. Works by Grafton, Holinshed, and Stow, who included Edward III on the title page of his *Chronicles* (1580, 1592) as the root of Elizabeth I's family tree, reveal the important position of these monarchs within Tudor historical narratives. As D. A. L. Morgan discusses in relation to Edward III, 'the hallmark of his style in both life and after-life' was that of 'a prince whose active policy is war' – an assessment that equally applies to Henry V.⁴ Shorter (and more affordable) publications featured similar representations. Henry's achievements

³ Samuel Daniel, *The First Fowre Bookes of the ciuile warres* (London: 1595; STC 6244), Sig. S4v.

⁴ D. A. L. Morgan, 'The Political After-Life of Edward III: The Apotheosis of a Warmonger', *EHR* 112.448 (1997), 856-81 (p. 859).

were, for example, invoked in Christopher Watson's English translation of Polybius's *Hystories* in 1568, which contained an account 'of the life & worthy acts, perpetrate by oure puissant Prince king Henry the fift'.⁵ As the text's main subject is the 'warres betwixt the Romanes & Carthaginenses', its inclusion (and title-page advertisement) of the annexed abstract of Henry V's military victories is significant. Henry is positioned as England's ideal monarch, worthy of consideration alongside classical warriors: 'the english Hector', who is 'exempt from al faults', 'vnspotted with obloquie', 'a seing glasse to such as should succede', and 'the glorie of hys countreye'.⁶

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, an influx of war manuals contributed to Edward's and Henry's increasing importance within English print. As Paola Pugliatti discusses, no fewer than forty war manuals were printed in England between 1578 and 1600, a development which is probably connected both to 'the impact of the actual military enterprises of the period' and to 'the renewed chivalric spirit which accompanied them', which was particularly associated with noblemen at Elizabeth I's court, including Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex.⁷ These manuals frequently present Edward and Henry as models of military leadership, whose personal qualities contributed to their victories and brought stability and glory to the nation. Geoffrey Gates's *The defence of militarie profession* (1579) describes how the kings of England were renowned for their 'military feates and prowess', and lists Edward III and Henry V as examples.⁸ Moreover, both monarchs are regularly invoked in close proximity. Robert Barret's *Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* (1598) praises 'Edward the third' and 'our noble Henry the fift' for exhibiting 'constancy and true fortitude of mind in all perillous and daungerous successes' in the 'actions of warre'.⁹ Even George Whetstone's *Honorable Repytation of a Souldier* (1585) includes Edward III and Henry V as the two English exempla within an encomium of classical models.¹⁰

The proliferation of war manuals and their repeated invocation of Edward III and Henry V were probably connected to increasing political tensions in England. The late sixteenth century witnessed a series of destabilizing wars and England was perpetually in a state of

⁵ Polybius, *The Hystories of the most famous and worthy Cronographer Polybius* (London: 1568; STC 20097), Sig. A1r.

⁶ Polybius, Sigs. N8v, O2v-O3r.

⁷ Paola Pugliatti, *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 92. See also Maurice Cockle, *A Bibliography of English Military Books up to 1641* (London: The Holland Press, 1900).

⁸ Geoffrey Gates, *The defence of militarie profession* (London: 1579; STC 11683), Sig. F1r.

⁹ Robert Barret, *The Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* (London: 1598; STC 1500), Sig. Q1r.

¹⁰ George Whetstone, *The Honorable Repytation of a Souldier* (London: 1585; STC 25339), Sig. F1r.

military preparation and engagement. As Nick de Somogyi suggests, ‘fear of invasion seems to have been an almost constant discomfort’ and ‘invasion-scares, forced musters, printed news-reports and word-of-mouth rumours ensured that such anxieties were never allowed to be forgotten’.¹¹ Far from the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 ushering in a period of national optimism, the aftermath was marked by uncertainty, anxiety, and the threat of further invasions. The 1590s involved ongoing overseas wars in Ireland, Spain, the Low Countries, and France; indeed, Barret’s *Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* claims that its publication is needed because of the contemporary ‘brables [i.e. disputes] of Ireland [and] the great preparations of the ambitious Spaniard’.¹² Edward III and Henry V were useful models for encouraging emulative action and for cultivating a sense of national pride. Publications often placed these English kings alongside classical and continental figures. *Of the knowledge and conducte of warres* (1578), for example, compares Henry V to Alexander the Great: ‘mightie and victorious Alexander of Englande, whose most renoumed [sic] battaile of Agincourte, and sundry triumphant conquests in Fraunce, made the whole worlde to shake’.¹³ Anti-Spanish pamphlets, such as Robert Greene’s *The Spanish Masquerado* (1589), also used these monarchs to inspire English resistance and military fortitude by highlighting the success of England’s invasions of France: ‘[not only have we] defended our owne Realme, but made diuers inuasions with greate victories: as Edward the thirde in France and Henrie the fift, who forced the King by armes to proclaime him heire apparant’.¹⁴ These publications, however, reveal a tension between patriotic celebration and the prevalent political anxieties. They enthusiastically support military engagement and the achievements of Edward III and Henry V, but their circulation at times of ongoing and uncertain conflict exposes underlying disquietudes, as do some of the descriptions of the costs of war, including Bertrand de Loque’s account in *Discourses of Warre* (1591), which outlines the ‘great inconueniences and mischiefs that accompany warre’ and ‘soweth the very seedes of all trouble and sedition’.¹⁵

Similar tension can be read in dramatizations of the monarchs’ reigns from the 1590s. Indeed, *Edward III* and *Henry V* may have used some of the war manuals, including William

¹¹ Nick de Somogyi, *Shakespeare’s Theatre of War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 132.

¹² Barret, Sig. A1r.

¹³ T. P. [Thomas Proctor?], *Of the knowledge and conducte of warres* (London: 1578; STC 20403), Sig. ¶4r.

¹⁴ Robert Greene, *The Spanish Masquerado* (London: 1589; STC 12310), Sig. E2v.

¹⁵ Bertrand de Loque, *Discourses of Warre and single Combat*, trans. by J[ohn] Eliot (London: 1591; STC 16810), Sigs. C3v-C4r.

Garrard's *The Art of Warre* (1591), as direct sources.¹⁶ These plays offered the potential for a reappraisal of England's 'great worthies' that challenged their legacies as individual leaders and the significance of their military victories.¹⁷ Although the earlier Tudor chroniclers, such as Bale, Foxe, Hall, and Holinshed, had also exposed deficiencies in the persons of Edward III and Henry V (especially in relation to their Catholicism), the theatre of war (on and off the stage) at the end of the sixteenth century provided a significant forum for reappraisal.¹⁸ De Somogyi observes that the rise of purpose-built London playhouses and theatrical companies coincided with 'a time of active and sustained English involvement in European theatres of war'.¹⁹ While the two developments are not necessarily connected, the professional stages offered a place where topical concerns – including the causes, costs, and practices of war – could be dramatized and used to explore ideas of national identity and difference, as indicated by Heywood in his *Apology*.

Chronicle histories also addressed these issues and their accounts of Edward and Henry were used as sources by professional dramatists; however, they are less reliable indicators of trends in the use of historical exempla. Holinshed's *Chronicles* (printed in 1577 and 1587), for example, features a lengthy account of the life of Henry V; but it is contained within the multi-volume histories of England, Scotland, and Ireland from the time of William the Conqueror to Elizabeth I. The *Chronicles* does not shed light on the popular appeal and application of Henry's reign during the late Elizabethan period to the same extent as topical pamphlets and stage plays which were closely motivated by rapidly shifting contemporary contexts. Theatre reached large and diverse audiences, and pamphlets, manuals, and playbooks were more affordable and current than expansive chronicle histories. *Edward III* and *Henry V* were distinctive in offering two of the most sustained, individual accounts of these monarchs. Given the generic hybridity of the period and the overlaps between 'history' and 'poetry' (including drama), the plays should be evaluated as part of historiographical discourses. Indeed, the printed presentation of both playbooks suggests that their publishers (Cuthbert Burby for

¹⁶ Ros King, "'The Disciplines of War': Elizabethan War Manuals and Shakespeare's Tragicomic Vision', in *Shakespeare and War*, ed. by King and Franssen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 15-29 (pp. 15-16).

¹⁷ As Gary Taylor discusses, there were at least three other plays about Henry V that were performed during the late 1580s and early 1590s: *The Famous Victories of Henry V* from Queen Elizabeth's Men, and two lost plays, one described by Thomas Nashe in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) and the other recorded as 'harey the v' by Henslowe between November 1595 and July 1596. See Taylor ed., *Henry V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ See David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 95-111.

¹⁹ De Somogyi, p. 2.

Edward III and Thomas Millington and John Busby for *Henry V*) were interested in promoting a connection to non-dramatic histories. The title page of *Edward III* (1596 and 1599) describes the play as ‘The Raigne of King Edward the third’, which echoes common chronicle titles. Similarly, Q1 *Henry V* is presented as ‘The Cronicle History of Henry the fift, / With his battell fought at Agin Court in France’, which makes a direct claim for its status as a chronicle history, while also recalling the title page of the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry V*, ‘Containing the Honourable Battell of Agin-court’ (1598).²⁰ Although Shakespeare’s name was being regularly advertised on playbook title pages by 1600, Q1 *Henry V* contains no reference to his authorship.²¹ Instead, the playbook’s presentation encourages a link to the non-dramatic histories and news publications in which Millington specialized.²²

Fracturing the idealized monarch

Both *Edward III* and *Henry V* challenge the celebrated legacies of their monarchs, participating in a reimagining that reached both playhouse audiences and readers of the early quarto editions. As Huw Griffiths suggests, the positioning of Edward and Henry as the perfect models of English kingship can be connected to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century political processes that saw ‘sovereign power become more and more closely associated with the person of the monarch’.²³ The plays, however, question the value of this model of sovereignty by showing how the personal shortcomings of Edward and Henry jeopardized the stability of the nation.

The Countess of Salisbury scenes in *Edward III* – for which ‘Novel 46’ of William Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* is one of the main sources – have sometimes been dismissed as a digression from the play’s political concerns; however, they are integral in exposing the dangers of a model of kingship that places considerable value on the person of the king. Throughout Edward’s infatuation with the Countess, he neglects all matters of state, and the play draws attention to the negative implications of England being governed by a ‘lascivious king’ (3.176) who is ruled by his personal affections. In particular, Edward’s readiness to

²⁰ *The Raigne of King Edward the third* (London: 1596; STC 7501), Sig. A2r; *The Cronicle History of Henry the fift* (London: 1600; STC 22289), Sig. A1r. Further references will be given after quotations.

²¹ See Amy Lidster, ‘At the Sign of the Angel: The influence of Andrew Wise on Shakespeare in print’, *Shakespeare Survey* 71 (2018), 242-54.

²² See, for example, Millington’s *Newes from Brest* (London: 1594; STC 18654) and *Copie of a letter sent by the French king* (London: 1595; STC 13119).

²³ Huw Griffiths, ‘Passports and the Locations of Sovereignty in *The Reign of Edward III*’, *English Studies* 96.7 (2015), 747-771 (p. 748).

arrange the deaths of his queen, Philippa, and the Countess's husband, Salisbury, highlights not only the moral repugnance of his behaviour, but also the danger it poses politically. Edward plots the destruction of a powerful and loyal nobleman, who has 'in Brètagne served so long' (1.133), as well as England's pregnant queen and another royal heir (an apposite concern during the succession crisis of the 1590s).²⁴ Edward renounces his desires only when the Countess makes it clear that she will not obey the king and 'be an actor in his graceless lust' (2.597). She invokes the classical model of Lucretia by threatening to stab herself with 'this sharp-pointed knife' that will 'stain thy earth with that which thou wouldst stain' (3.184), an allusion that positions Edward as Sextus Tarquinius, whose rape of Lucretia precipitated the end of the Roman monarchy and the beginning of the Republic. The Countess's emphasis on 'stain' also suggests a biblical subtext and a connection between Edward and Cain, marking England's king as a perpetrator of violence in a way that recalls the first murder in the Book of Genesis, where Abel's 'blood crieth [out...] from the earth.'²⁵ In this scene, the mythologizing narratives that idealize the person of the monarch are compromised, acting as a catalyst for questioning the suitable location of sovereign authority, such as whether it should be placed in, as Griffiths discusses, the 'more extended functions of an abstracted state', rather than rely on the individual monarch.²⁶

David Womersley claims that *Edward III* 'dramatizes bad and good models of kingly rule, but with the alternatives presented as successive stages in the personality of one character, not simultaneously divided between two'.²⁷ However, the play continues to remind audiences of the Countess of Salisbury scenes and Edward's tendency to be ruled by personal motives above the reasoned advice of his councillors, which suggests that the king we encounter in the latter half of the play is not a reformed individual. During the Battle of Crécy, for example, Edward refuses assistance to his son (Prince Edward) who is 'in danger to be slain' (8.27), despite the pleas of Audley, Artois, and Derby. As Audley claims, it is 'too much wilfulness / To let his blood be spilt, that may be saved' (8.41-42). Edward defends his choice, however, by cynically asserting that 'we have more sons / Than one to comfort our declining age' (8.23-24) – a defence which not only demonstrates a disregard for his son's life but also for the

²⁴ Philippa's pregnancy is discussed during Scene 10 (4.2) when Percy describes that the Queen, 'big with child', has taken King David prisoner, and is shown on stage in Scene 18 (5.1). Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁵ Genesis 4:10 (GNV)

²⁶ Griffiths, p. 759.

²⁷ Womersley, p. 141.

political instability that can follow from the death of the heir apparent (which was eventually the fate of the historical Prince Edward). Indeed, the scene recalls the Countess of Salisbury episodes, during which Edward offered an earlier dismissal of the Prince, when his son reminded him of Queen Philippa, whom he sought to betray: ‘Thy mother is but black, and thou, like her, / Dost put it in my mind how foul she is’ (3.107-08). The parallels between these scenes suggest that the dominance of personal impulses in Edward’s kingship is not diminished following his encounter with the Countess.

A re-evaluation of Edward’s personal character – particularly in relation to the destabilizing potential of his affections – was explored provocatively in other texts from the 1590s, most notoriously by Robert Persons’s *Conference About the Next Succession* (1595). This text debates the (prohibited) issue of Elizabeth I’s successor, suggesting, as Victor Houliston outlines, that “‘proximity of blood’ is not the only, nor even necessarily the most important, consideration in settling the succession’, and that a claimant’s merit should be a factor in their election.²⁸ Persons’s *Conference* aims ‘to redefine or re-invent the monarchy’ (while also offering support for the claim of Isabella, the Spanish Infanta).²⁹ In his discussion, Persons uses Edward III as an example of an English monarch who was unwisely governed by his personal affections: the text claims that John of Gaunt (Edward’s eldest surviving son) should have succeeded his father, but that ‘the old man for the exceeding affection he bare to the dead prince, would heare nothing in that behalf, but appointed Richard the said prince Edwards only sonne and heyre to succed him in the kingdome’.³⁰ Edward is presented ‘not as a chivalric hero but as an elderly tyrant, too tied to his own desires to make the right decision for his country’ – an act that, as Persons outlines, engendered the hatred between Richard II and John of Gaunt and led to the outbreak of civil war.³¹ Although Persons’s *Conference* was written after the first performances of *Edward III*, the publication of the play in 1596 and 1599 may have been partly influenced by it, as the *Conference* made, in the words of Sir Thomas Craig, ‘deep impressions on the minds of men’.³²

The intimate connection between *Edward III* and *Henry V* and their monarchs’ legacies is evident through the way in which Shakespeare’s later play recalls the occasion of Prince

²⁸ Victor Houliston, ‘The hare and the drum: Robert Persons’s writings on the English Succession, 1593-6’, *Renaissance Studies*, 14.2 (2000), 235-250 (p. 239).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

³⁰ Robert Persons, *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of Inland* (London: 1595; STC 19398), Sigs. V2v-V3r.

³¹ Griffiths, p. 751.

³² Thomas Craig, *The right of succession to the kingdom of England* (London: 1703), Sig. B1v.

Edward's near death at Crécy (*Edward III*, Scene 8). It is the play's most sustained allusion to Edward III, drawing attention to the parallels between the plays' representation (and deconstruction) of their central monarchs. In the opening scenes of *Henry V*, the Archbishop of Canterbury offers support for Henry's French campaign and instructs him to 'invoke [Edward III's] warlike spirit' (1.2.104) and to 'unwind your bloody flag' (1.2.101), fashioning a link with two recent theatrical kings – Edward and Tamburlaine (whose famous red flag represented the second stage of a military attack's escalation). Within war manuals, Edward III and Henry V were rarely considered in the same category as Tamburlaine (whose dates, 1336–1405, make him Edward's contemporary). Whetstone's *Honorable Reputation of a Soldier* praises Edward and Henry, but describes Tamburlaine as a 'cruel Tyrant', who was 'neither beloued alieue, nor morned after death'.³³ In *Henry V*, however, Canterbury's instructions suggest a parallel between the actions of Tamburlaine and the English monarchs, which is borne out in the plays' dramatizations of Edward's and Henry's aggressive sieges at Calais (*Edward III*, 18.1-38) and Harfleur (*Henry V*, 3.3.70-127). Canterbury develops the allusion further by describing how Edward witnessed his son, the Black Prince, 'making defeat on the full power of France' at Crécy:

[...] his most mighty father on a hill
 Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp
 Forage in blood of French nobility.
 O noble English, that could entertain
 With half their forces the full pride of France,
 And let another half stand laughing by,
 All out of work, and cold for action.
 (*Henry V*, 1.2.108-14)

Canterbury's account (which appears in both the quarto and folio texts of *Henry V*) is an echo of the theatrical (rather than chronicle) representation of Edward III.³⁴ The description of Edward 'on a hill' revisits the staging of the earlier play, where Edward instructs Audley to, while 'our son is in the chase, / Withdraw our powers unto this little hill, / And here a season let us breathe ourselves' (8.1-3). Strikingly, this allusion recalls one of the most perilous

³³ Whetstone, Sig. D1v.

³⁴ Pearlman, p. 527.

moments from *Edward III* – during which Edward’s impulsive conduct almost results in Prince Edward’s death. Canterbury ‘misremembers’ this moment of (stage) action, describing the English as ‘laughing by’ and ‘all out of work’, an account that is not in the chronicle sources and which adds to *Henry V*’s juxtaposition of exaggerated, celebratory rhetoric alongside the more fraught realities of foreign wars.

Recent readings of *Henry V* have regularly commented on the king’s personal shortcomings. The address to the Governor of Harfleur has come under particular scrutiny: as R. Scott Fraser observes, it presents a version of Henry that ‘is much darker than any previous dramatic or chronicle presentation of him’.³⁵ In this scene, Henry employs violent images of ‘murder, spoil, and villainy’, which depart, in their severity and targets, from the principles of just war conduct explored in the Elizabethan war manuals that featured Henry and Edward as models of English kingship (such as Barret’s *Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres*). Henry threatens Harfleur with destruction unless it surrenders, claiming that his soldiers will ‘defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters’, display ‘your naked infants spitted upon pikes’, and take the town’s elders ‘by the silver beards, / And their most reverend heads [dash] to the walls’ (3.3.104-07). The king’s vivid description of the suffering he will cause, directed at the inhabitants who are less able to defend themselves, incorporates a biblical allusion comparing the experience of Harfleur’s mourning mothers to the howls of ‘the wives of Jewry / At Herod’s bloody-hunting slaughtermen’ (3.3.109-10).³⁶ As with the allusions to Tarquin and Cain in *Edward III*, the reference to Herod frames Henry’s threats as politically and morally unjustified, having the potential to bring both Harfleur and England to the brink of destruction.

The Harfleur address appears in a shorter version in the quarto edition of the play published in 1600 (see Sigs. C2v-C3r). Much critical debate has surrounded the provenance of the quarto and folio versions of *Henry V*, which it is not my aim to evaluate here, although, as Gary Taylor summarizes, ‘modern scholarship agrees that [Q1] represents a *later* stage of the text’.³⁷ The quarto nevertheless deserves particular consideration because, regardless of what was performed on stage, this version of the play (with its 1602 and 1619 derivative editions) was the only one in print until 1623. While critics, such as Fraser, have claimed that the quarto ‘consistently removes negative aspects of Henry’s character’, the brevity and structure of the

³⁵ R. Scott Fraser, ‘*Henry V* and the Performance of War’, in *Shakespeare and War*, ed. by King and Franssen, pp. 71-83 (p. 78).

³⁶ See Matthew 2:16-18.

³⁷ Taylor, p. 26.

text emphasize fast-paced military action and create the impression of a monarch single-mindedly impelled by the desire for foreign conquests.³⁸ Indeed, the quarto contains (with variants) the scenes involving the execution of Bardolph (Sig. D1v in Q1), the killing of the French prisoners (Sig. E4r), the disquiet amongst the soldiers who fear that Henry's 'cause be not good' (Sig. D4r), and the rejection of Falstaff (Sig. F1r). Its short, abrupt scenes fashion a colder and more impersonal Henry, in contrast to the Folio Henry's greater loquaciousness, and serve to undercut the king's chivalric reputation for readers of the play.

By exposing some of the troubling aspects of Henry's and Edward's characters, both plays can be seen as questioning a model of sovereignty that locates authority in the person of the king, a model that is invoked throughout most of the war manuals printed during the late Elizabethan period. The plays are particularly interested in deputizing monarchical power. As Griffiths explores, the use of a passport issued by Prince Charles of France for travel (by the Earl of Salisbury) in *Edward III* extends monarchical authorization to a deputy and locates it in a written and moveable document, rather than depending on the physical presence of the king.³⁹ In *Henry V*, Exeter similarly describes an image of sovereign power contained within the wider functionings of the state:

While that the armed hand doth fight abroad,
Th'advised head defends itself at home.
For government, though high and low and lower,
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
Congruing in a full and natural close,
Like music.
(1.2.178-83; Sig. A3v in Q1)

In outlining the best method for preserving political stability and 'congruing in a full and natural close', Exeter suggests that the effective running of a kingdom depends upon power being 'put into parts' and disseminated through multiple representatives rather than centralizing power in the person of the monarch. During a period of ongoing and costly military engagement, when Elizabeth I's court had become increasingly factionalized and parliament had not been called between 1593 and 1597, the plays offer a topical reflection on a deputized

³⁸ Fraser, p. 71.

³⁹ Griffiths, p. 757.

power structure that wrests a degree of autonomy from the individual monarch and questions the limits of a subject's obedience.⁴⁰

Justifying foreign conquest

Of the influx of war manuals that were published and circulated in England, a significant proportion explore the reasons and justifications for going to war; as they do so, they draw upon the just war tradition and the principles associated with *ius ad bellum* (just causes for waging war) and *ius in bello* (just military conduct) – both had been part of discussions concerning the discipline of war since Augustine in the fifth century.⁴¹ While these manuals frequently feature Edward III and Henry V as England's chivalric exempla, they rarely evaluate the legitimacy of the monarchs' military campaigns in France. Discussions of the causes and aims of war most often draw on classical, biblical, and European examples, as in Matthew Sutcliffe's *The Practice, Proceedings, and Lawes of Armes* (1593).⁴² In contrast, *Edward III* and *Henry V* are particularly interested in the justification and purpose of foreign conquests. Both plays open with Edward and Henry requesting confirmation that they can 'with right and conscience make this claim' to France (*Henry V*, 1.2.96), which draws attention to the symmetries in the plays' structures and the justification strategies they dramatize and challenge.

Writings in the just war tradition do not generally engage with causes of war that relate to succession. As Pugliatti suggests, this may be because issues of succession could be considered under the category of 'wrongs to be redressed' and therefore constitute a defensive war.⁴³ Purely aggressive war was rarely justified in any theoretical statement.⁴⁴ Michael Walzer summarises: 'aggressive wars, wars of conquest, wars to extend spheres of influence and establish satellite states, wars for economic aggrandisement – all these are unjust wars'.⁴⁵ The opening line of *A Myrrour for English Souldiers* (1595), for example, claims that rulers should 'seeke all meanes possible to preuent war' and that it is lawful only when it is 'to defend a mans owne right, or to repulse the enemies of God', thereby legitimizing defensive and

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 749.

⁴¹ Pugliatti, pp. 1-2.

⁴² Sutcliffe, *The Practices, Proceedings, and Lawes of armes* (London: 1593; STC 23468), D1r-E4r.

⁴³ Pugliatti, p. 123.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁵ Michael Walzer, *Arguing About War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. xi.

religious wars.⁴⁶ Similarly, while *Discourses of Warre* (1591) celebrates ‘all valiant warriours’ and is dedicated (in the English translation) to Essex (poster boy for England’s military campaigns during the 1590s), it nevertheless draws attention to the horrors of war and justifies war only for defensive purposes (‘when it commeth to the point of repulsing the violence and iniury of tyrants that giue the onset’) or for ‘the maintenance of Christian Religion’.⁴⁷ It condemns wars of aggression that are designed to expand a nation’s territory:

Euery empire or kingdome enlarged by extorsions and rapines, by encroching vpon the signiories and territories of other Princes, must fall to decay at last, must be ouerthrowen and ruined within it selfe by ciuill warres, dissentions, or other tumultuous broyles.⁴⁸

This condemnation of aggressive war could be applied to the histories (and plays) of Edward III and Henry V – both monarchs expand their territories, but these eventually ‘fall to decay’ and England becomes ‘ruined within it selfe by ciuill warres’ during the reigns of Richard II and Henry VI. Most accounts of the Wars of Roses focus on causes involving the English nobility and the deposition of Richard II, but the plays’ shared interest in the justification of foreign conquest challenges, at least to some extent, the legitimacy of these campaigns, as well as highlighting the costs and consequences of military conflict in relation to soldiers, civilians, and the English succession. Both plays attempt to justify the French campaigns by invoking divine approval and ascribing the victories to God’s assistance, and by framing the wars as defensive measures to redress a successional injustice. However, the representations of the French campaigns, the violent rhetoric employed by both Henry and Edward, and the political machinations involved in defending the monarchs’ claims to France (in the opening scenes of both plays) suggest that the wars are, instead, aggressive and expansionistic.

The quarto and folio texts of *Henry V* immediately introduce the issue of Henry’s claim to France, which Canterbury is called upon to justify. As the folio text makes clear, Canterbury’s sanctioning of the war is for personal gain and is part of his own scheme to protect the church’s ‘temporal lands’ (1.1.9). The way in which Shakespeare arranges the events from the chronicles also implicates Henry in this scheme. In the folio text, Canterbury reveals that he has already ‘made an offer to his majesty’ to support the French wars and ‘to give a greater

⁴⁶ *A Myrrour for English Souldiers* (London: 1595; STC 10418), Sig. B1r-v.

⁴⁷ Loque, Sigs. A2r-v, B2v, B3v.

⁴⁸ Loque, Sig. D2r.

sum' than any provided to Henry's predecessors (1.1.76, 80) – an ordering of events which, as Pugliatti observes, is not reflected in the chronicle sources.⁴⁹ Henry's inquiry into the legitimacy of the claim and the outcome of Canterbury's deliberations in the following scene is revealed as part of a carefully constructed staging of the war's justification, as Henry had already received Canterbury's offer of support. Although the quarto does not contain the scene with Canterbury and Ely, it also creates the impression that Henry's military designs were established before Canterbury's sanction. The quarto opens abruptly: Henry instructs Canterbury to outline 'why the Lawe Salicke which they haue in France, / Or should or should not, stop vs in our clayme' (Sig. A2r). Following Canterbury's labyrinthine assurance of the claim's legality, Henry's intentions are violently crystallized: he declares that 'France being ours, wee le bring it to our awe, / Or breake it all in peeces' (Sig. A4r) – the suddenness and force of which, through the condensed quarto version, encourages a reading of Henry's plans as an aggressive, preconceived campaign. Moreover, at the siege of Harfleur in both Q and F, Henry positions the town's actions as defensive; and he paradoxically condemns it for this response, asking the Governor if the town will 'guilty in defence, be thus destroyed?' (3.3.112; Sig. C3r in Q1). While Henry is ostensibly asking whether the French will persist in a hopeless resistance, the choice of the word 'defence' in both texts is striking within the context of the just war tradition and the play's interest in the legitimation of the French wars; it colours Henry's campaign as aggressive.

Although characters in *Edward III* go to greater lengths to promote the legality of the central monarch's claim to France, many of these efforts can be seen as expedient and self-serving political strategies. The play begins with Artois, a banished Frenchman received by Edward in England and newly created as the Earl of Richmond. Artois claims that his betrayal of France is because 'Jean of Valois indirectly climbs' (1.1.37) into the monarchy, and that Edward is, instead, 'the true shepherd of our commonwealth' (1.1.41). However, as Larry Champion discusses, Artois' insistence on Edward's right immediately follows 'the conferral of his English honours', while his fellow countrymen, including the Duke of Lorraine, describe him as a 'regenerate traitor' and a 'viper' (1.1.105).⁵⁰ As in the opening scene of *Henry V*, the legitimation of England's claim to France is established through a reciprocal exchange of benefits between the monarch and another party (Artois in *Edward III* and Canterbury in *Henry V*).

⁴⁹ Pugliatti, p. 211.

⁵⁰ Larry Champion, "'Answere to this perillous time": Ideological Ambivalence in *The Raigne of King Edward III* and the English Chronicle Plays', *English Studies*, 69.2 (1988), 117-29 (p. 121).

Moreover, Edward's progress throughout the play is marked by a series of broken or forced oaths, involving the Countess, Warwick, and King John of France, which reveals his willingness to manipulate agreements for personal and political advantage. When Edward arrives in France, King John claims that he is breaking his league and covenant by declaring war:

[...] thou hast infringed thy faith,
 Broke league and solemn covenant made with me,
 I hold thee for a false pernicious wretch.
 (6.57-59)

John interprets Edward's actions as a war of aggression, given that a peaceful arrangement had been reached between the two countries. The play's symmetries draw attention to the double standards in Edward's understanding of oath-making and the justification of war: as Champion identifies, Edward presents his own war against France as righteous (1.67-86), but condemns as tyrannical the similar actions of King David of Scotland, who declares war on England (1.136-159).⁵¹ *Edward III* is interested throughout in efforts to justify the instigation of war against another nation, but generally exposes these as strategies of convenience designed to deflect attention away from what are, ultimately, aggressive military actions.

Very few Elizabethan war manuals offer a justification for aggressive war, despite the fact that war during the period was, in reality, a matter of *realpolitik*. As Pugliatti discusses, 'the European, and English, wars of the period had absorbed and adopted the most extreme Machiavellian principles and never hesitated to put them into practice; while, generally, speaking, treatises and plays seem to stick to the doctrinal view of "moral" war waging'. Sutcliffe's *Practice, Proceedings, and Lawes of armes* (1593) is, however, unique in legitimizing a war 'whose object is conquest and expansion'.⁵² In addition to supporting war for the 'defence of our country, true religion, our goodes or liberty', Sutcliffe claims that 'many wise princes haue an eye to their neighbours greatnesse, and perceiuing how preiudiciall their encrochments may proue vnto them, haue iust cause to withstand them'.⁵³ According to Sutcliffe, aggressive war can be justified if other nations are becoming too powerful and a ruler wishes to curtail their influence and strength. However, it remained a contentious issue to

⁵¹ Champion, p. 122.

⁵² Pugliatti, pp. 66, 97.

⁵³ Sutcliffe, Sigs. D2r, D4r.

advocate (especially in a theoretical treatise) for the justification of aggressive wars that aimed to expand a kingdom's territories or destroy a powerful nation that posed a political threat; instead, Elizabethan military discourses largely attempted to publish reasons for war that accorded with the just war doctrine.⁵⁴ *Edward III* and *Henry V* therefore occupy an interesting position between the reality of Elizabethan military conflicts, including the state of readiness that characterized the late Elizabethan period, and the presentation of the just war doctrine found in the military manuals that were published in large numbers at this time. While the plays can be seen as offering patriotic dramatizations of the French wars and the leadership of Edward and Henry, they also present the French campaigns as aggressive and expose the monarchs' self-serving efforts to legitimize military engagement.

Edward III and *Henry V* also explore the limitations of foreign conquest as a means of ensuring political stability and encouraging a sense of national unity. Some war manuals, such as *A Myrroure for English Soldiers*, introduce tension between the desire for military renown (presenting war as 'the beautie of peace, the esteeme of all things, and the first finder out of vertue') and the need to avoid conflict and its extreme costs.⁵⁵ A similar tension can be observed in the two plays: while *Edward III* and *Henry V* commemorate the English victories in France, they also draw attention to the transience of these successes and the consequences of ongoing war. Both plays end by concentrating attention on the sons of Edward and Henry – specifically Prince Edward and the future Henry VI. In the final scene of *Edward III*, the Prince's alleged death is reported by Salisbury, resulting in Edward's impassioned declaration that, as part of his 'sharp unheard-of-dire revenge' (18.165), the French will 'weep out bloody tears' (18.168) and 'an hundred fifty towers shall burning blaze' (18.174) – which, again, reveals the dominance of personal affections in Edward's kingship. Although the audience is aware of Prince Edward's safety, this second account of his imminent death foreshadows the historical prince's premature death in 1376, which led to the accession of the child-king Richard II. Similarly, the folio text of *Henry V* reminds audiences and readers of Henry VI, who was 'in infant bands crowned king', 'whose state so many had the managing / That they lost France and made his England bleed' (Epilogue, 9-12). Both Edward III's and Henry V's efforts to 'busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels' (2 *Henry IV*, 13.342-43) have limited lasting successes, and the plays draw stark attention to the costs of war (through the presentation of the soldiers' and civilians' suffering) and its tendency to divide, not only across

⁵⁴ Pugliatti, p. 98.

⁵⁵ *Myrroure*, Sig. E2r.

conflict lines, but also in relation to ideas of national identity and loyalty (as seen in *Henry V* through the scenes involving the English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh captains, as well as the treasonous actions of Grey, Scrope, and Cambridge).

Conclusions

Performed and printed during a period of ongoing military conflict, *Edward III* and *Henry V* attempt to deconstruct the exemplary status of their monarchs and the value of foreign conquests. A few other texts contributed to a similar reappraisal, such as Persons's *Conference*, but they contained less detailed discussions of the monarchs. Daniel's *Civil Wars* (1595) questioned the utility of Henry V's victories in France, which were 'lost as soone as wonne', as part of a larger narrative poem about the Wars of the Roses.⁵⁶ John Davies' later *Microcosmos* (1603), dedicated to James I, briefly criticized Edward III's French campaigns because they were 'hurtfull to his State / For they the same did but debilitate'.⁵⁷ *Edward III* and *Henry V*, however, provide the most sustained, individual accounts of these monarchs' victories that reached a wide audience of playgoers and readers in the last decade of the Elizabethan period. Alongside the war manuals, they provide an important insight into the popular reputations of these monarchs, but, crucially, the plays also explore the ways in which these reputations could be repositioned. By mediating between celebration and criticism, they suggest that Edward's and Henry's personal fallibilities and the potentially unjustified nature of the costly, foreign campaigns compromised the nation's stability – dangers that were often erased by the mythologizing legacies of the monarchs.

⁵⁶ Daniel, Sig. T1v.

⁵⁷ John Davies, *Microcosmos* (London: 1603; STC 6333), Sig. T3v.