SHAKESPEARE, THE PEACEMAKER: VIEWS FROM THE SIDELINES

BY

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With the growing interest in memory studies, celebrations of Shakespeare anniversaries have recently come in for some attention, in particular where they coincided with wars.[1] A number of articles have investigated the appropriation of Shakespeare's cultural authority by the combatant nations during the 1916 tercentenary. By and large, these have concluded that Shakespeare was often turned into a warmonger, identified with his martial characters like Henry V, and that his plays were stripped of their nuance and used by both sides to stir up hatred and nationalist fervour. In the present article I attempt to redress the balance, arguing that, at least in 1916, Shakespeare was also deployed as an impartial figure who stands above the warring parties. Sometimes, identified with Prospero, he is even envisaged as a peacemaker, whose unique cultural authority provides a meeting ground for the antagonists, as their admiration for him is one of the few things they have in common. Unsurprisingly, the appropriation of Shakespeare for the cause of neutralism or peace is much in evidence in neutral nations, but it can also be found among the combatants. I illustrate my argument by examples from the tercentenary celebrations in three countries: combatant Britain as well as neutral Holland and Denmark.

Studies of the 1916 Shakespeare tercentenary, in the middle of a vehement war raging in Europe and beyond, have stressed the way this cultural event was inevitably overshadowed by political considerations. Werner Habicht and Balz Engler, for instance, have argued that, during the celebrations in Britain and Germany, both sides appropriated Shakespeare's memory for their own patriotic cause.[2] In his account of the tercentenary celebrations in a number of countries, Richard Foulkes, too, gives examples of Shakespeare's authority being appropriated for nationalistic purposes by both sides.[3] For the English, according to Engler, this included a forceful insistence on his Englishness, whereas before the war he had been seen as England's gift to the world, the universal poet.[4] Clara Calvo, by contrast, in a study of British as well as French materials, has concluded that, on the allied side, Shakespeare's memory was appropriated precisely to wallpaper over faultlines in national and international textures: rivalry between London and Stratford, antagonism within the British class-system, tensions between the imperial power and its colonial possessions, and between the British and their French allies, dating back to Agincourt. All these are overcome in the name of Shakespeare. He was, in Calvo's words, represented "as both a national poet for England and a universal genius for mankind, but not for Germany".[5] Whether regarded as a local hero or as a universal genius, therefore, Shakespeare was seen as a patriot, whose *Henry V* could rouse the troops of many nations to join the fray.

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[1] For a concise introduction to the topic of Shakespeare and memory in general, see Ton Hoenselaars and Clara Calvo, "Introduction: Shakespeare and the Cultures of Commemoration", *Critical Survey* 22:2 (2010), 1–10.

[2] Werner Habicht, "Shakespeare Celebrations in Time of War", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52:4 (2001), 441–455; Balz Engler, "Shakespeare in the Trenches", *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1991), 110.

[3] Richard Foulkes, "The Theatre of War: The 1916 Tercentenary", in his *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 180–204; particularly 186–188 and 196–199.

In this argument, both parties frequently used decontextualized Shakespeare quotations to suggest not only that his texts were relevant to the present war, but also that he himself would have given his full support to one of the warring parties had he been alive.[6] As Balz Engler notes, "On both sides, soldiers were sent into battle with the same slogans from Shakespeare; the German Chancellor quoted *Henry V* when German troops stood before Calais".[7] Clara Calvo shows that "Shakespeare's history plays could be easily appropriated to present him as a man who loved his country", and illustrates how even lines from *Twelfth Night* could be used to comment on German submarine policy. She concludes: "The words of Shakespeare are national heritage – they can be wrenched out of their context and may easily acquire a new, appropriate meaning in a new context".[8] Thus, it appears, the 1916 commemorations provided opportunities for jingoistic appropriations of Shakespeare, in which the distinction between the dramatist's own opinions and those of his characters was conveniently overlooked.

According to Monica Smialkowska, a partial exception to the appropriation of Shakespeare for warlike ends in this period is Percy MacKaye's *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*. MacKaye's community masque used characters from Shakespeare's *Tempest* in an allegory of the powers of drama to civilize primitive man, embodied by Caliban. Prospero, identified with Shakespeare, is his mentor. The plot builds up to a climactic episode, in which Prospero keeps Caliban from succumbing to the personification of War. As Smialkowska has argued, in the original New York production of 1916, MacKaye's masque was a plea for American neutrality and peace.[9] However, Smialkowska shows that its impact was different in the second run of performances in Boston in July 1917, after American entry into the war.[10] In this production, the text remained much as it was; but the new context turned the original plea for neutrality into a flag-waving, nationalistic happening. The show was advertised as raising funds not just for the Red Cross but also for the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Besides, it now featured side shows like displays of bayonet practice and military drill, and marches of Canadian war veterans. Smialkowska concludes that in this period, Shakespeare was "seen as malleable and available for appropriation, rather than as the carrier of a single and fixed meaning".[11] My claim is that MacKay's original conception of Shakespeare as a Prospero-like force of forgiveness, peace and neutrality was by no means rare, in other neutral countries but also in Britain itself.

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[4] Engler (1991), 110.

[5] Clara Calvo, "Fighting over Shakespeare: Commemorating the 1916 Tercentenary in Wartime", *Critical Survey* 24:3 (2012), 68.

[6] Habicht (2001), 452–454.

[7] Engler (1991), 111. Some Germans also claimed that "Shakespeare's opinions, as expressed in his plays, were in accordance with the German position in the war" (ibid., 107).

[8] Calvo (2012), 57, 62 and 63 resp.

Britain: The Book of Homage

An enduring monument from the British Tercentenary celebrations of 1916 is the *Book of Homage* edited by Israel Gollancz. This "major English observance of the tercentenary" brought together tributes to Shakespeare from scholars and writers around the world, Germany excepted.[12] So far, *Homage* has mainly been analysed in terms of its representation of Shakespeare as both English and a focal point for British imperial ambitions. Coppélia Kahn has argued that *Homage* was intended to celebrate Shakespeare as the unifying symbol of English imperialism, to which the entire globe, minus Germany, pays tribute.[13] However, this effort was not completely successful. Habicht has called attention to an Irish nationalist contribution that mixed praise for Shakespeare with reflections on his use as a tool of English oppression, and Kahn gives some additional examples from South Africa and Burma, of colonial contributors using the occasion to assert the dignity of their own traditions, thus reversing the hierarchy between metropolitan centre and colonial periphery.[14] Graham Holderness sees this failure as symptomatic of the crisis of Empire, which could no longer uphold the paradoxical view of Shakespeare as both narrowly English and universal.[15]

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[9] Monika Smialkowska, "Conscripting Caliban: Shakespeare, America, and the First World War", *Shakespeare* 7:2 (2011), 192–207. Cf. Foulkes (2002), 192–193.

[10] Smialkowska (2011), passim.

[11] Ibid., 204.

[12] Israel Gollancz (ed.), *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916). The quote is from Coppélia Kahn, "Remembering Shakespeare Imperially: The 1916 Tercentenary", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52:4 (2001), 456.

[13] Kahn (2001), passim.

Yet this imperial debate took place in the middle of a war, which makes its presence felt throughout *Homage*, if only in its "ostentatious exclusion of Germany and her war allies".[16] Admittedly, the German contribution to Shakespeare studies was acknowledged in an article by the English scholar C. H. Herford, which Calvo puts down to British fair play.[17] Yet tensions with Germany and its allies were unmistakable, particularly in Gollancz's own concluding poem, with its invocations of "Armenia's woe", "heroic Serbia's stifled sob" and "widow'd Belge's ne'er-despairing plaint", alluding to atrocities that the Central Powers were accused of in allied propaganda.[18] As Gollancz also wrote a lecture for schoolchildren that year, titled "Notes on Shakespeare the Patriot",[19] it seems plausible that *Homage*, too, was meant as a patriotic effort, with Shakespeare appropriated for the allied cause. Coppélia Kahn, however, argues that the book's "purpose [was] to assert the continuity of a single national identity, 'England,' from the medieval past to the imperial present, by invoking Shakespeare". More pertinently, as the war's disruptive force was already realized, "on the whole *Homage* performs its work of commemoration in disregard of battles and casualties"; only eight contributions out of 166 being centrally concerned with the war.[20] Although Kahn's argument is persuasive on the whole, and largely analogous to my own, it should be pointed out that far more than eight contributions make substantial reference to the war. Besides, of those pieces that do concern the war, Kahn asserts that half of them "imagine Shakespeare as a transcendent figure imparting unity and firmness of purpose to English forces", and illustrates this with G. C. Moore Smith's poem "1916".[21] This, however, overlooks how Moore Smith uses the sestet of his Italian sonnet to qualify the patriotic premise of the octave. After praising Shakespeare as a "Poet divine", he dedicates the second quatrain to his patriotic role:

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[14] Habicht (2001), 450–451; Kahn (2001), 469–478. See also Foulkes (2002), 196–197.

[15] Graham Holderness, "Shakespeare-land", in Willy Maley / Margaret Tudeau-Clayton (eds), *This England, That Shakespeare: New Angles on Englishness and the Bard* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 201–219; esp. 205–208.

[16] Habicht (2001), 450.

[17] Calvo (2012), 55.

[18] Gollancz (1916), 553.

[19] Calvo (2012), 57–59.

[20] Kahn (2001), 458.

[21] Ibid., 458n6.

When to dark doubts our England would resign,
Thy patriot-voice recalls her from her fears;
Shakespeare of England, still thy country rears
Thy pillar and with treasure loads thy shrine![22]

However, the sestet acknowledges Shakespeare's universality, as an author who is no longer exclusively English property, but to whom other nations, even "England's foe", Germany, have some claim as well:

Nor only England's art thou. England's foe
Stoops to thy sway, and thou alone dost bind
When all the bonds of statecraft snap and cease.
O sign of comfort in a sky of woe!
Above the warring waves and shrieking wind
Thy starry Spirit shines and whispers 'Peace'.

Here, Shakespeare is envisaged not as an English patriot but as an impartial demigod who looks down from the sky, forms a rare link between the warring parties and admonishes them to restore peace.

As I shall argue, this view of Shakespeare as universal, impartial and irenic is not so untypical of *Homage* as one might expect. The contributions that make up the commemorative volume do not form a united front backing the war. Faultlines appear, disagreements on what stance to take towards the war, and on Shakespeare's relevance to the international crisis. This may be another example of what Kahn, in a different argument, calls the "familiar paradox [that] runs through *Homage*: Shakespeare is the quintessential English poet, and yet he speaks to all people, of all times and nations".[23] Kahn's argument outlined above, on the failure of the volume's imperialistic intentions in the face of dissidents from the colonies, also applies to the issues of war and peace. Although the intention behind Gollancz's *Homage* presumably was patriotic, the actual voices of the individual contributions are far more diverse.

Some contributions do indeed represent Shakespeare as a unifying force for the British, or for the allied nations. The Russian poet Mikhail Tsetlin, writing under his pseudonym of Amari, stresses the links between Russia and England, and ends on an apostrophe: "O England, we are tied by a common fate, by war's ordeal by fire, and by the common veneration of you, spirit of Shakespeare!"[24] Similarly,

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[22] Gollancz (1916), 237.

[23] Kahn (2001), 460.

[24] My translation of the French version, "Traduction littérale par l'Auteur" (Gollancz [1916], 519):

O, Angleterre, nous sommes liés par le sort commun,
par l'épreuve de feu de la guerre, et par la commune
vénération de toi, esprit de Shakespeare!

Henri Chantavoine celebrates the entente cordiale between Britain and France, working together to save the human species. Echoing Cymbeline's injunction to "let / A Roman and a British ensign wave / Friendly together" (5.6.479–481),[25] he foresees a time when British and French flags shall wave together victoriously, and both nations shall honour Shakespeare anew.[26]

However, just as there were dissenting voices from the Empire, as pointed out by Kahn, not everyone shared this enthusiasm for flag-waving. Some contributors question Shakespeare's support for war in general. Typically, their Shakespeare is a Prospero figure, who calms the storm-tossed waves of war. Romain Rolland, for instance, sketches a picture of Shakespeare, identified with Prospero, as the great force of forgiveness, brotherhood and compassion, who shares Rolland's pacifist principles. Shakespeare pities the innocent Desdemona, Rolland argues, but also the man who murdered her; he realizes that evil people like Shylock are ultimately human, too, and he can see all sides of an issue. Friar Lawrence teaches us that there is good in evil, and the potential for evil in good. Though Shakespeare's sympathies are aristocratic, Rolland claims, it is his ordinary characters that show most pity: the messenger who cries over Caesar's dead body, the servant who tries to stop Cornwall from blinding Gloucester. Rolland ends his piece with a reminder of what Prospero learns from Ariel: that "the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (5.1.27–28). These general observations are made relevant to the international context by Rolland's opening remarks about Shakespeare's putative views on war, which are unfashionable but highly topical:

> About war and peace, […] about the exploitation of the noblest instincts, of heroism, of sacrifice, by hidden interests, – about the sacrilegious mixture of the emotions of hatred with the words of the gospel, – about the participation of the churches and the gods in the people's bloodshed, – about solemn treaties that are no more than pieces of paper, – about the character of nations, of embattled armies, – it has pleased me to bring together a series of thoughts by Shakespeare that, if published without his name, might arouse the susceptibilities of the censorship of our liberal era, which is even more touchy than that of Queen Elizabeth. It is so true that, in spite of the world's turns, everything is always the

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[25] William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

[26] Ibid., 378; my trans. Cf. *Cym,* 5.6.479–481. The original reads:

> Quand nos drapeaux unis seront victorieux,
> Alors nous reviendrons, sous de plus libres cieux,
> Pendre une palme neuve au pied de tes statues.

> same, and that, even if man has found new ways of dominating and of killing, his soul has not changed.[27]

For Rolland, Shakespeare remains relevant to 1916 precisely because, in his view, the poet was not a blinkered patriot, but saw through partisan lies, particularly in times of war.

Evocations of Shakespeare's impartiality can be found throughout the *Book of Homage*. Albert Verwey, a Dutch poet and translator of Shakespeare's sonnets, seems even-handed in his poem with the Italian title "Grato m'è 'l sonno", "Sleep pleases me". The title alludes to Michelangelo's poem about his celebrated sculpture of Night, in which Night personified asks to be allowed to sleep on, oblivious of the political oppression and conflicts of its time.[28] Analogously, Verwey suggests, Shakespeare should be allowed to sleep through modern upheavals:

> Peaceful his sleep!
> Let him sleep on.
> From dream of song
> Why wake him now?
>
> Discordant moans
> O'er land and sea;
> Lute-strings are torn,
> Rack'd by the jarring.
>
> Hearts of the nations
> Attuned to his hand,
> 'Mid anguish and tears
> His music is lost.

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[27] "À mon meilleur ami – Shakespeare", in Gollancz (1916), 411, my trans. The original reads:

> Sur la guerre et la paix, [...] sur l'exploitation des plus nobles instincts, d'héroïsme, de sacrifice, par l'intérêt caché, – sur le mélange sacrilège des passions de haine avec les paroles de l'Évangile, – sur la participation des Églises et des Dieux aux tueries des peoples, – sur les traités solennels qui ne sont que des 'chiffons de papier', – sur le caractère des nations , des armées qui sont aux prises, – je me suis plu à réunir une série de pensées de Shakespeare qui, si elles étaient publiées sans son nom, risqueraient d'éveiller les susceptibilités de la censure de notre époque libérale, plus chatouilleuse encore que celle de la reine Élisabeth. Tant il est vrai qu'en dépit des bouleversements du monde, tout est toujours le même, et que si l'homme a trouvé de nouveaux moyens de dominer et de tuer, il n'a pas changé d'âme.

[28] See James M. Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 419.

Peaceful his sleep!
Let him sleep on.
From dream of song
Why wake him now?[29]

Shakespeare, who once inspired harmony between the nations, is happily unaware of the present strife. Again, he is an impartial, though passive, force – and therefore a fitting counterpart for Verwey's own neutrality. In a 1916 prose treatise, Verwey blamed the existence of nation states for the war. All parties are equally guilty: as the Anglo-Boer war had shown, the English are no more reliable than the Germans, he argues.[30] Undoubtedly Verwey spoke for many in the neutral Netherlands.

A more puzzling case is that of René de Clercq, a Flemish refugee residing in Holland. He, too, contributed a sonnet to *Homage*, with a literal translation on the facing page:

GREAT LIKE THESE TIMES
O darkening of days, wherein for mutual death
Companions in misfortune to each other cling;
When murder forces murder, and noble nations stagger
From famine to fire, from fire to famine!

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[29] Gollancz (1916), 467. The translation appearing on the same page seems to be by the Belgian professor Paul Hamelius, who helped with Dutch and Flemish texts (Gollancz's preface, x). The Dutch version reads:

Slaapt hij nu zoo lang,
Laat hem dan vandaag!
Waartoe uit zijn droom van zang
Hem nopen tot een vraag?

Hoor! Weerbarstig schrijnt
Over land en zee
Stukgebroken snaar en pijnt
Wie waken met haar wee.

Hart van volken, eens
Speeltuig voor zijn hand, –
Nu vol jammer en geweens
Verloort ge 't maatverband

Slaapt hij nu zoo lang,
Laat hem dan vandaag!
Waartoe uit zijn droom van zang
Hem nopen tot een vraag?

[30] Albert Verwey, *Holland en de oorlog* (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor goede en goedkoope lectuur, 1916).

> How often, in this whirl of passions,
> Hoped I for a name mighty like these times.
> Shakespeare! … This fairest world, can it – may it – die,
> While this third century thy death reveres?
>
> Thy darkest creations show fatality, not guilt;
> Humanity and thy heart are deep like the sea;
> Sorrow beats on sorrow, tempestuously, in dire iteration.
>
> One Tempest hast thou turned to miraculous peace.
> Let thy glory burst forth, like sunshine, through these clouds of world-woe,
> So that e'en Goethe's folk may to thy pure might yield homage![31]

Again, Shakespeare is invoked as an impartial arbiter: his plays do not attribute guilt, just show the sadness of human fate. This obviously is a questionable reading of Shakespeare's plays, but De Clercq goes on to identify Shakespeare with Prospero, by italicizing the word Tempest (in the original Flemish, though not in the translation), thereby eliding his own image of the storm raging over the modern world with Shakespeare's play. What is stressed is not that Prospero raised that storm to begin with, but his decision to turn to forgiveness and peace, figured in the end of the tempest and the sun breaking through. Shakespeare, therefore, might be a factor in the restoration of peace, the more so as the Germans, like Goethe, are great admirers of his works. As in Moore Smith's poem, Shakespeare here provides a meeting ground in a world that seems to lack all coherence.

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[31] Gollancz (1916), 465. The original is on page 464:

> O nacht van dagen waar, tot onderling verderven,
> Zich rampgenoot in angst vastklampt aan rampgenoot,
> Waar moord tot moorden dwingt en eedle volkren zwerven
> Van hongersnood in vuur, van vuur in hongersnood!
>
> Wat heb ik, vóor die hoos van driften, menigwerven
> Op éenen naam gehoopt die als deez' tijden groot:
> Shakespeare! .. Mocht dan, kon dan de schoonste wereld sterven,
> Terwijl, ten derden male, een eeuw rouwt om Uw dood?
>
> Uw somberst scheppen toont noodlottigheid, geen schuldigen.
> Het menschlijke en Uw hart zijn diep gelijk de zee;
> Bij storm slaan leed op leed in zwaar vermenigvuldigen.
>
> Een *Storm* heb Gij gekeerd tot wonderklaren vree.
> Breek', zongelijk, Uw glans door 't wolkig wereldwee,
> Zoodat ook Goethes kroost Uw zuivre kracht moog' huldigen.

The translation renders the original "ook", 'also', as "e'en" (line 14), which makes the poem just a shade more hostile towards the Germans. The translator, Paul Hamelius, was considerably more anti-German than De Clercq, as appears from his *The Siege of Liege* (1914).

If the poem's tone of reconciliation sounds rather irenic for a Belgian refugee from German occupation, this is not due to unshakeable pacifism. De Clercq was a prominent Flemish nationalist activist, for whom the real struggle of 1916 was not that against the German invaders, but that between Flemings and Walloons.[32] For many Flemings, the Great War was about Flemish emancipation from the French-speaking minority. To this day, the Belgian battlefields of the war are appropriated by Flemish nationalists as a symbol of the repression suffered by their forebears, when Flemish privates in the trenches were given orders in French by their Walloon commanders. It is in this context that one should see De Clercq's stance on the war. It matters a great deal whether we read "Great like these Times" in Gollancz's *Homage* or in De Clercq's own 1916 volume *De noodhoorn*, 'emergency horn', in which it was reprinted.[33] There it rubs shoulders with "battle songs" celebrating Flanders and dissociating it from the Walloons in terms of blood:

> We are Germanic, not Latin,
> Open hearts, pure blood![34]

For De Clercq, nationhood was rooted in blood and language. Although elsewhere he takes an equal distance from the Germans and the French – claiming Flanders is "neither Frenchified, nor Germanified"[35] – he drifted ever closer to the German enemy. His dismissal as a teacher at a Belgian school in Amsterdam, because of his outspoken criticism and his involvement in an activist journal, made him even more radical.[36] When the so-called Flemish council in the German-occupied parts of Flanders declared Flemish independence from Belgium in 1917, with covert German support, he returned home to join the council, and undertook trips to Germany to lecture on literature and Flemish activism.[37] Consequently, after the war he was condemned to death for treason by the Belgian government. By then he had returned to Holland, where he lived out his life, some twenty-five miles from the residence of that more famous exile, Kaiser Wilhelm, in Doorn.

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[32] Koen Hulpiau, *René de Clercq (1877–1932): Een Monografie* (Gent: Secretariaat van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1986).

[33] René de Clercq, "Als deez' tijden groot", *De noodhoorn: Vaderlandsche liederen* (Utrecht: Dietsche Stemmen, 1916), 24.

[34] Ibid., 13.

[35] Ibid., 11–12.

[36] Hulpiau (1986), 255.

[37] Ibid., 305–309.

The Netherlands: Admonitions to Peace

In the Netherlands itself, which retained its neutrality throughout the war, the tercentenary festivities were low-key because of the international situation, which was never far from people's minds. Around 23 April, Shakespeare translator Edward Koster and the solo-actor cum reserve-officer Albert Vogel teamed up for some literary events dedicated to Shakespeare. In June, during the 150th anniversary of the Dutch Literature Society, Vogel declaimed the Forum scene from *Julius Caesar*, in English, which had long been on his repertoire. His offer to do so in classical garb had been turned down by the society, on account of the place and the circumstances – presumably alluding to the war.[38] Vogel's choice of *Julius Caesar* might seem uncontroversial, but in an introductory speech, he interpreted the play's theme as the conflict between democracy and autocracy.[39] It is in precisely these terms that the play was interpreted at the time by British contemporaries such as Cecil Chisholm, who argued that the conspirators "stood for the democratic ideal as against the autocratic ambitions of Caesar".[40] Chisholm went on to link Caesar's name to the German word Kaiser, and to anachronistically equate Brutus's republicanism with the democratic ideals of modern Britain. Vogel's choice of the Forum scene, therefore, which he had declaimed earlier for British internees,[41] might suggest a similar bias in favour of the allied cause.

Vogel's partner Edward Koster was more careful to remain impartial. His enduring contribution to the tercentenary, his *Gedenkboek* ('commemorative volume'), focused on biography, translations and philology, and seems almost oblivious to the war. Its dedication, however, brings together two of the adversaries in their common enthusiasm for Shakespeare:

> Dedicated to the
> New Shakspere Society
> And to the
> Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft,
> Which have both done so much for the great poet. [42]

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[38] Caroline de Westenholz, *Albert Vogel: Voordrachtskunstenaar (1874–1933)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 194.

[39] Ibid., 194.

[40] Cecil Chisholm, "The Greatest War Play: *Julius Caesar* and the Shakespeare Tercentenary", *Daily Chronicle*, 19 April 1916.

[41] De Westenholz (2003), 190.

[42] "Opgedragen aan de / New Shakspere Society / en aan de / Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, / die beide zooveel voor den grooten dichter gedaan hebben." (Edward B. Koster, *William Shakespeare: Gedenkboek 1616–1916* [The Hague: Kottmann, 1916], 5.)

This is followed by four decontextualized quotations, in English, from the works of Shakespeare, which are meant to suggest that the poet stands above the quarrels of his admirers:

> It is a quarrel most unnatural.
> RICHARD III.
> Confounded be your strife.
> HENRI VI[1].
> For this world frowns, and Edward's sun is clouded.
> HENRI VI[3].
> Work the peace of the present.
> THE TEMPEST.

By using quotations that wholly disregard the context from which they have been taken, and seem to be given an independent authority, Koster suggests that Shakespeare is on the side of a restoration of peace. As we saw earlier, it was by a similar use of decontextualized quotations that Shakespeare's authority was often appropriated to support the war, by both parties. Koster's seemingly irresponsible use of quotations, therefore, is less remarkable for its method than for the irenic message that he puts into Shakespeare's mouth.

Denmark: Shakespeare at Elsinore

If the Dutch celebrations were low-key, in another small neutral nation they were somewhat grander. In Denmark, festivities centred on an open-air production of *Hamlet* at Kronborg castle, at Helsingør, Shakespeare's Elsinore. The Danish author Sophus Michaëlis wrote a report for the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*. The opening evening, attended by the royal family, began with an address by Georg Brandes, followed by a masque by Helge Rode, with music by Carl Nielsen.[43] For both events the texts survive – and they show what Michaëlis tactfully did not mention for his German readers, the link that was forged during the festivities between Shakespeare and Danish neutrality.

Georg Brandes, by then a venerable 74-year-old, praised Shakespeare's work, and compared Hamlet to the Danish national character. He ended on a political note, deploring the times they lived in, defending Danish neutrality, and contrasting art and civilization on the one hand with the power of explosives on the other:

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[43] Sophus Michaëlis, "Eine Hamlet-Aufführung auf Kronborg", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 53 (1917), 131–133.

> What we are gathered for today, is not just a celebration, it is a solemnity. You know that St. John's Day is the old festival of the sun, of fire, of light, of prehistoric times. You know that in ancient Greece drama was a cultic act. So, too, this open air performance […] is for us an artistic divine service. […] It is a protest against those who, in these hard and bloody times, belittle the meaning of art […]. It is, finally, a protest against those who look down on Denmark because it is small, and because it is neutral. Although it is small, Denmark holds a bigger place in civilisation than it is entitled to on account of its size. Although neutral, it is not unfaithful to some of the true ideals of humanity. In international politics, Denmark has no weight. Radium has no weight either. Radium is no explosive, but a small inexhaustible source of energy – Sadly, we live in a time of explosives. Our homage to Shakespeare is an homage to art, an homage to genius, and in this case it is also Denmark's gratitude and homage to England, which brought forth the poet and his work.[44]

Brandes is careful to limit his praise of England to "this case", to its having produced Shakespeare. For some years, Brandes had been involved in public debates with his former friend, the French politician Georges Clemenceau, and with his translator William Archer, who demanded that Brandes throw his moral authority behind the allied cause. Brandes, however, refused to give up his neutral stance, which was also the Danish government's policy.[45] In this speech, he contrasts the homage to Shakespeare, as the epitome of culture and civilization, with the forces of war and neglect of culture.

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[44] Georg Brandes, "Tale paa Kronborg Søbatteri (St. Hansdag 1916)", *Taler* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1920), 237, my trans. I am indebted to Niels Bugge Hansen for tracing this source. The original reads:

> Hvad vi i Dag her er samlede til, det er ikke blot en Fest, det er en Andagt. De véd, at Sanct Hans er den forhistoriske Tids gamle Solfest, Ildfest, Lysfest. De véd, at i det gamle Hellas var Skuespillet en Cultus-Handling. Saaledes er dette Friluftsforsøg […] for os en kunstnerisk Gudstjeneste. […] Det er en Protest mod dem, der i denne blodige og haarde Tid underkender Kunstens Betydning […]. Det er endeling en Protest mod dem, der ser ned paa Danmark, fordi det er lille, og fordi det er neutralt. Skønt lille intager Danmark en meget større Plads i Civilisationen end den, der tilkommer det efter dets Rumfang. Skønt neutralt, er det ikke utro mod noget af Menneskehedens sande Idealer. Danmark er i mellemfolkelig Politik uden Vægt. Men ogsaa Radium er uden Vægt. Radium er ikke et Sprængstof, men en lille Kraftkilde, uudtømmelig. – Vi lever desværre i Sprængstoffernes Tid. Vor Hyldest til Shakespeare er en Hyldest til Kunsten, en Hyldest til Geniet, og i dette Tilfælde fremtræder den som Danmarks Tak of Hyldest til England, der frembragte Digteren og Værket.

[45] Bjarne S. Bendtsen, "Colour-blind or Clear-sighted Neutrality? Georg Brandes and the First World War", in Johan den Hertog / Samuël Kruizinga (eds), *Caught in the Middle: Neutrals, Neutrality, and the First World War* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2011), 121–138.

Festivities continued with a masque by the Danish author Helge Rode, which featured choirs singing Shakespeare's praise and invocations of Shakespearean characters, and culminated in an imaginary visit to Kronborg by the dramatist himself. By the power of the imagination, Rode's choric Prologue conjures up a stranger from the past, who gradually comes to be identified as Shakespeare. Visiting the setting of *Hamlet* reminds Shakespeare of seeing a bad production of the Ur-*Hamlet*, and inspires him to think of writing his own improved version. It is in an echo of Claudius's drinking accompanied by gun salutes that the theme of war is brought in: "Tell me", Shakespeare asks the Prologue,

> This evening when I passed by the castle I heard a warlike noise.
> The blaring of trumpets, the angry roll of drums.
> Canons firing! But the hall of the castle
> was radiant with light, and song and laughter were heard.[46]

The Prologue explains that the king had drunk wine during a feast, and such an occasion deserved to be thundered out to the world. At first Shakespeare is amused, but then he is reminded of the war:

> But just imagine that someone came from the war
> and heard this salute, reminding him
> of dead friends! This wine salute would conjure before his eyes
> pale men, who collapsed and fell on their faces
> and lay on the earth – drunk in all seriousness.
> The red juice that filled their mouths
> was not wine, but blood, that wanted to go out!
> What would these sons of misfortune think,

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[46] Helge Rode, *Shakespeare: Et Lille Festspil* (Copenhagen: Pios Boghandel, 1916), 17–18, my trans. I am indebted to Ton Hoenselaars for providing me with this source.

> Forklar mig nu! – Da jeg iaftes gik
> langs Slottet hørte jeg en krigerisk Larm.
> Skrald af Trompeter, vrede Trommehvirvler.
> Skud af Kanoner! Men i Slottets Sale
> straalede Lys – og Sang og Latter klang.

> and those who groan under the whip of injustice,
> if the wassailing used the voice of death?[47]

Shakespeare asks Horatio's questions, but answers them in Hamlet's voice, too: unlike the Prologue, he is sensitive to the unfitness of feasting in war-time, and to the frivolous use of the sounds of war, for he is aware of its grim reality. Here Rode acknowledges the historical context which frames his happy interlude: he cannot shut out the war altogether, but makes his Shakespeare pity its victims, indiscriminately. Obviously, from the perspective of a neutral nation like Denmark, involvement in the conflict is to be avoided at all costs. Still, a men's choir had earlier praised Shakespeare as an inspiration for the warrior, too:

> Courage and will power you have hardened,
> as in fire we harden steel;
> He whose hand grasped the sword
> he, who fought undaunted,
> knew the flame from your fire.[48]

Though generally peace-loving, Shakespeare as presented by Rode is not against fighting in an emergency. Rode understood that Denmark's neutrality depended on its ability to make the belligerents respect it, by force if necessary. In a poem written in 1914, he had celebrated Denmark's peace-loving nature, but threatened any invader that might try to take advantage of this small nation with everlasting hatred, “which will follow him to God’s throne”. Years afterwards, Rode’s wife Edith explained that the enemy Rode chiefly had in mind here was Germany.[49] Rode in 1916, too, is worried about the war’s inhumanity, but above all wishes to preserve Danish neutrality; hence, once supposes, the even-handedness he puts into Shakespeare’s mouth: deploring bloodshed on both sides, yet not averse to necessary self-defence.

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[47] Ibid., 18, my trans.

> Men tænk jer nu, at nogen kom fra Krigen
> og hørte den Salut, som minded ham
> om døde Venner! – Denne Vinsalut,
> fremmaned for hans Øje blege Mænd,
> som segnede og faldt paa deres Ansigt
> og laa paa Jorden – højst alvorligt fulde.
> Den røde Saft, som fyldte deres Mund,
> var ikke Vin, men Blod, som vilde ud!
> Hvad vilde vel Ulykkens Sønner tænke,
> og de, som stønner under Urets Svøbe,
> naar Svælgeriet brugte Dødens Røst.

[48] Ibid., 13, my trans.

> EN MANDSRØST
> Mod og Vilje har du har [sic] hærdet,
> Som i Ild vi hærder Staal.
> Den, hvis Haand holdt fast om Sværdet,
> Den, som kæmped uforfærdet,
> kendte Flammen fra dit Baal.

Conclusion

If some wartime commemorations of Shakespeare appropriated him as a warmonger, others preferred to see him as impartial, or even as a Prospero-like peacemaker. However, this construction of a peace-loving Shakespeare is not a single, unified one: as the warmonger threw his cultural weight behind Germany or the Entente, behind little England or the Empire as a whole, so the impartial Shakespeare could stand for the neutralism of smaller nations afraid of being drawn into the conflict, the genuine pacifist ideals of Brandes or Rolland, or for De Clercq’s impartiality motivated by a focus on a different struggle, that for Flemish rights. For all these invocations of Shakespeare as the spirit of peace, there is no evidence that they actually contributed to peace. It was not the idea of Shakespeare “whisper[ing] peace” that decided the war, but, as Brandes realized, the more powerful rhetoric of the explosive. Nevertheless, it is good to realize that this counter-appropriation is available; that, even in the middle of one of worst conflicts the world has ever seen, Shakespeare was never quite reduced, in Smialkowksa’s words, to “the carrier of a single and fixed meaning”, that of a propagandist for war.[50]

Zusammenfassung

Die Erinnerung an Shakespeare in Zeiten des Kriegs geht oft einher mit dem Versuch beider Konfliktparteien, seine Autorität für die jeweilige Sache zu vereinnahmen und ihn in einen Patrioten oder einen Kriegstreiber wie Henry V. zu verwandeln. Paul Franssen argumentiert, dass aber immer wieder auch das Gegenteil der Fall war, zumindest 1916, im Kontext der Dreihundertjahrfeierlichkeiten. Die Beispiele kommen aus dem am Krieg beteiligten Großbritannien sowie den neutralen Nationen Holland und Dänemark. Franssen zeigt, dass Shakespeare wiederholt als unparteiische Größe gezeichnet wurde, manchmal gar als Prospero-artiger Friedensstifter, dessen Autorität auf beiden Seiten des Konflikts respektiert wurde.

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[49] See Edith’s preface to *Gyldendals Julebog 1954: Helge Rode* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1954), 13–14.

[50] Smialkowska (2011), 204.