HENRY V AFTER THE WAR ON TERROR

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In the debate around Shakespeare and 9/11, the question of Shakespeare's political uses tends to be addressed only in the most oblique of ways. As Matthew Biberman, the editor of *Shakespeare Yearbook*'s special issue on the theme, notes, criticism typically retreats into a looser discussion of 'the role that canonical texts can play in the development of ethical, philosophical and civic frameworks'.[2] The one exception is the discussion generated by *Henry V*. Critics have noted the way in which *Henry V* is marshalled to support the language of contemporary militarism, with Diana E. Henderson and others citing the controversial manner in which the play was 'issued to US soldiers ... and repeatedly invoked in speeches ... and on websites supporting military actions'.[3] In complementary work, critics have noted the popular comparisons between Henry V and figures such as George W. Bush, Tony Blair and Tim Collins.[4] But what tends to be dramatized most fully in these encounters is the gulf between academia and popular usages of Shakespeare's text. Critical discussion is directed towards demonstrating the inappropriateness of contemporary parallels, and users are encouraged to engage more subtly with the play (undoubtedly good advice for succeeding British and American administrations, but unlikely to be heeded).[5] Hence, while such commentary implicitly acknowledges that *Henry V* has a special resonance inside the discourses of Afghanistan and Iraq, the precise ways in which *Henry V* signifies in the here-and-now remains to be fully considered.

Part of the difficulty is the scant attention afforded in such work to imaginative/creative productions of *Henry V*. As Matthew Woodcock notes, 'the twenty-first century stage has gone much further than academic criticism in drawing comparisons between Henry's campaign and the Iraq War'.[6] In fact, the period since 9/11 has seen unprecedented numbers of *Henry V* productions, as well as the first

[1] Many thanks to Pascale Aebischer, Michael Dobson, Ewan Fernie and Martin Wiggins for invitations to lecture on this theme and for insightful and enabling feedback.

[2] Matthew Biberman, 'Introduction: Shakespeare after 9/11', in *Shakespeare After 9/11: How a Social Trauma Reshapes Interpretation*, ed. Matthew Biberman and Julia Reinhard Lupton (Lewiston, NY, 2011), pp 1–18; p. 8.

[3] Diana E. Henderson, 'Meditations in a time of (displaced) war: *Henry V*, money, and the ethics of performing history', in *Shakespeare and War*, ed. Ros King and Paul J. C. M. Franssen (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 226–42; esp. pp. 226–7.

[4] See Richard Burt, 'Civic ShakesPR: middlebrow multiculturalism, white television, and the color bind', in *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance*, ed. Ayanna Thompson (London, 2006), pp. 157–86; esp. pp. 158–9; Ewan Fernie, 'Action! *Henry V*', in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London, 2007), pp. 96–120; esp. pp. 99–100; David Coleman, 'Ireland and Islam: Henry V and the "War on Terror"', *Shakespeare* 4 (2008), 169–80; pp. 172–6; Emma Smith, '"Freezing the snowman": (how) can we do performance criticism?' in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford, 2008), pp. 280–97; esp. p. 286; Scott Newstok and Harry Berger Jr, 'Harrying after VV', in *Shakespeare After 9/11*, pp. 141–52; p. 141; Hugh Grady, 'Shakespeare and the dialectic of enlightenment: a presentist perspective', in *Shakespeare After 9/11*, pp. 137–40; p. 138.

[5] Newstok and Berger, 'Harrying', p. 150.

[6] Matthew Woodcock, *Shakespeare – Henry V: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 146.

major film in almost thirty years. Thea Sharrock's *Henry V* (2012), starring Tom Hiddleston, was crafted to form the high point of the cultural Olympiad, internationally co-produced (the BBC joined forces with Neal Street Productions, NBC Universal and WNET Thirteen) and distributed to great acclaim.[7] Like most of the theatrical productions of *Henry V* since 2001, the film draws on discursive strategies shaped by the 'War on Terror', the now-defunct term which signifies the international military campaign waged in the aftermath of 9/11, including the Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan.[8] Sharrock's film – the first *Henry V* to be directed by a woman – crystallizes a trend initiated by a number of productions which, in the wake of the successful National Theatre production of *Henry V* directed by Nicholas Hytner in 2003, refract the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in the action on stage.[9]

In reconceiving of Shakespeare's history in a way which is inseparable from contemporary understandings of conflict, Sharrock follows in the footsteps of Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh and their now-canonical film adaptations of the play.[10] In common with these directors, Sharrock also offers a reading of *Henry V* in part determined by the contemporary representational landscape. Recent work in film studies has highlighted 'the way in which ... depictions of war have shifted since the mid-1980s', signalling, in particular, a move away from the anti-war Vietnam films.[11] As exemplary of this development, critics highlight a group of late 20th- and early 21st-century World War II films such as *Saving Private Ryan* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1998), which, revisionist and recuperative in orientation, illuminates the rise of what Andrew J. Bacevich has identified as a 'New American Militarism'.[12] Spotlighting a 'tendency to see military power as the truest measure of national greatness', Bacevich describes a romanticized and nostalgic conception of wars, armies and soldiers that 'pervade[s] the American consciousness' and 'ultimately pervert[s] US [foreign] policy'.[13] Linked to this cultural phenomenon, but distinctive in style and approach, is a more recent and controversial series of films based on the Iraq War experience. Films such as *Generation Kill* (dir. Susanna White and Simon

[7] Sharrock's *Henry V* forms part of *The Hollow Crown* – four television film versions of the Henriad produced by Sam Mendes. For an article on the production context of the series, see Ruth Morse, 'The hollow crown: Shakespeare, the BBC, and the 2012 Olympics', *Linguaculture* 1 (2014), 7–20. More broadly, for a discussion of Shakespeare's place as 'a ubiquitous presence throughout the Cultural Olympiad', see Paul Prescott, 'Shakespeare and the dream of Olympism', in *Shakespeare and the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year*, ed. Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan (London, 2015), pp. 1–37; p. 4. For a discussion of the production contexts of *The Hollow Crown*, see Ramona Wray, 'The Shakespearean auteur and the televisual medium', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 34 (2016), 469–85.

[8] In 2009, the phrase was quietly dropped by the Obama administration. On the problematics of the term, see Marc Redfield, *The Rhetoric of Terror: Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror* (New York, 2009), pp. 51–2.

[9] Subsequent productions of *Henry V* which reference Iraq and/or Afghanistan include those directed by Jonathan Munby at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester (2007); Michael Boyd at the Roundhouse, London (2008); Henry Filloux-Bennett at the Old Red Lion, London (2012); and Michael Grandage at the Noël Coward Theatre, London (2013). For analyses of Hytner's production, see Michael Dobson, 'Shakespeare performance in England, 2003', *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (Cambridge, 2004), 258–89; pp. 278–84; Catherine Silverstone, *Shakespeare, Trauma and Contemporary Performance* (London, 2011), pp. 109–35; Mark Steyn, 'Henry goes to Baghdad', *The New Criterion* 22 (2003), 40–4.

[10] As Emma Smith notes, *Henry V*'s 'topicality' has historically revolved around war 'as it reflects, recalls and participates in military conflicts from the Crimea to the Falklands' – see *Shakespeare in Production: King Henry V* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 1. For a historical survey of the reception of the histories, see Andrew Hiscock, '"More warlike than politique": Shakespeare and the theatre of war – a critical survey', *Shakespeare* 7 (2011), 221–47; pp. 236–9; Ton Hoenselaars, 'Introduction: Shakespeare's history plays in Britain and abroad', in *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 9–34.

[11] H. Louise Davis and Jeffrey Johnson, 'One nation invisible: unveiling the hidden war body on screen', in *The War Body on Screen*, ed. Karen Randell and Sean Redmond (London, 2008), pp. 134–46; esp. p. 136.

[12] Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (Oxford, 2013).

[13] Bacevich, *New American Militarism*, pp. xi, 2.

Callas Jones, 2008), *Redacted* (dir. Brian de Palma, 2007) and *In the Valley of Elah* (dir. Paul Haggis, 2007) are often edgy, uncomfortable and interrogative in their attitudes towards the War on Terror.[14] Guy Westwell notes that the Iraq War films generally proved unpopular, failing 'to find an audience', and the few that did, such as the Oscar-winning *The Hurt Locker* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 2008) and *American Sniper* (dir. Clint Eastwood, 2014), were notably much less political – less critical – in orientation.[15] Typically, the vision of war in the commercially successful Iraq War films embeds a human experience divorced from larger questions of political accountability. Sharrock's *Henry V* begs comparison with this new wave of war films in that it retains a heroic emphasis while largely avoiding engagement with the politics of war – the 'cause' (4.1.133), as Shakespeare's play has it – and it executes this dual manoeuvre through a narrow focus on the bodily experience of a small group of soldiers.[16]

This focus on a trajectory of suffering allows Sharrock to negotiate in a unique way 'the essential doubleness' that critics from Norman Rabkin to Stephen Greenblatt have identified around Shakespeare's Henry V.[17] In particular, the film invokes the associations around post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which Anthony Oliver Scott 'argues ... is the defining feature' of the Iraq War films, to reconcile and explain antithetically opposed images of Henry while connecting with the anxieties of present-day audiences.[18] Situated inside a new – post 9/11 – Shakespearian aesthetic which prioritizes the solider as spectacle, Sharrock's film, energized by a decade of theatrical innovation, realizes a *Henry V* very different in complexion, scale and significance from that of her predecessors – hence, the unfamiliar effects of a film which cuts scenes and soliloquies traditionally regarded as essential, reintroduces episodes conventionally bypassed, invests in daring interpolations and capitalizes on a performative style that overturns received interpretation. Caught in a net of its Olympic contexts, the film has thus far been seen only inside its commemorative paradigms.[19] In arguing that Sharrock's production manifests a fresh conceptual template for Shakespeare's history, this article suggests that the contemporary applications of *Henry V* move beyond the simplistic parallels which have so exercised and animated critical discussion. By prioritizing the fields of debate that surround *Henry V*, it identifies, for the first time, the extent to which the War on Terror has transformed the meanings of Shakespeare's greatest history.

A MODERN OBITUARY

In Sharrock's production, a radical take on the narrative is encapsulated in the scenes of Henry's funeral which open and close the film. Merging the play's prologue and epilogue, the film enables us to *hear* the former (the invocation to the muse) but to *see* the events associated with the latter (the death of the protagonist). The symbolism of the opening

[14] For a general overview, see John Markert, *Post 9/11 Cinema: Through a Lens Darkly* (Lanham, MD, 2011), pp. 209–309; Stephen Prince, *Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism* (New York, 2009), pp. 281–309.

[15] Guy Westwell, 'In country: mapping the Iraq War in recent Hollywood', in *Screens of Terror: Representations of War and Terrorism in Film and Television Since 9/11*, ed. Philip Hammond (Bury St Edmunds, 2011), pp. 19–35; esp. p. 22. *American Sniper* has been described as the highest-grossing war film of all time, the sum of $547 million in global box office earnings being identified – see Johnny Rico, 'Top 10 highest grossing war movies', 30 April 2017, www.thoughtco.com/highest-grossing-war-films-3438701.

[16] Pascale Aebischer writes that Branagh's film adaptation of Henry V 'works to amplify [a] ... concern with the martial male body's precariousness' – see 'Shakespeare, sex, and violence: negotiating masculinities in Branagh's *Henry V* and *Taymor's Titus*', in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, ed. Diana E. Henderson (Oxford, 2006), pp. 112–32; esp. p. 112.

[17] Woodcock, *Shakespeare – Henry V*, p. 112.

[18] Westwell, 'In country', p. 30, citing A. O. Scott, 'Apolitics and the war film', 6 February 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/weekinreview/07aoscott.html.

[19] See David Livingstone, 'Silenced voices: a reactionary streamlined *Henry V* in *The Hollow Crown*', *Multicultural Shakespeare* 12 (2015), 87–100; pp. 87–8; L. Monique Pittman, 'Shakespeare and the cultural Olympiad: contesting gender and the British nation in the BBC's *The Hollow Crown*', *Borrowers and Lenders* 9 (2015).

shot – a dirty-faced child plucking a wild flower (its shape evokes the epilogue's 'star of England' (6)) and running past the Boar's Head (the scene of revelries now eclipsed) – speaks of loss and impermanence. Dark painterly effects, tenebrous lighting and alienating medieval architecture match this mood and confirm the anti-heritage landscape characteristic of many recent Renaissance appropriations. Although the end reveals that he has been in attendance all along (he is finally revealed as Shakespeare's 'Boy' offering a retrospective viewpoint), the Chorus is apprehended at this point only via a gravelly, sombre voiceover. In keeping with the muted emotional contours – and despite the verse's aspiration towards elevation and an upward movement – the slow delivery and downward intonation of the prologue's lines – 'O for a muse of fire, that would ascend / The brightest heaven of invention' (1–2) – strikes a defeatist note, with viewers being invited to imagine great possibilities (not least, ideas of animation and resurrection) in the context of brute mortality (the death/funeral) and communal devastation (the assembled mourners). Bolstering the emotional contours is the score – a doleful Celtic strain characterized by strings and minor chords – that, in contrast to the rousing epic film music of Branagh's and Olivier's adaptations, lends the scene a subdued melancholy and an elegiac air.

For Lindsey Scott, the summoning of different stages in the story of Henry V reminds us of 'how Shakespeare's audiences would have been aware of Henry's short reign from the preceding performances of the *Henry VI* plays'.[20] But the crane-shot of the laid-out corpse covered by a heavy flag invokes 21st-century iconography of soldiers' bodies being brought home from conflict; contrary to the historical record, the effect is to suggest the King as casualty of the war in France.[21] This is confirmed in the voiceover's identification of the corpse as 'war-like Harry' (Prologue, 5), establishing the funeral under way as that of a military combatant. (A choreographed glimpse of the guard of honour stepping forwards reinforces the soldierly associations.) Pointed up in the scene, then, is what Andrew Hill terms 'the hard Real of the body-corpse … the material presence of combat, which … constitutes the incontrovertible detritus of war'.[22] Like contemporary soldiers William James (*The Hurt Locker*) and Chris Kyle (*American Sniper*), Henry, from the start, is limned in terms of a fatal trajectory. By filtering the narrative through the depressive events described by the Chorus at the close, Sharrock's *Henry V* not only prepares an audience for what is to come but also begins the process of elaborating the hero in terms of victimhood. Long before the English army lands on French soil, mourning infuses the endeavour, with viewers recognizing Henry as a 'dead man walking'. The perspective is one that the ensuing narrative never moves beyond, not least because the continuing voiceover keeps us connected to the idea and import of the funeral in what is – by a large margin – the most extended use of the Chorus on screen.[23]

More broadly, the mutedly retrospective method functions to downplay the triumphant associations of what Crystal Bartolovich describes as 'the most overtly "nationalistic" and Anglophilic text in the Shakespearian canon'.[24] The demythologizing

[20] Lindsey Scott, 'Review of *The Hollow Crown*', *Shakespeare* 9 (2013), 108–14; p. 112.

[21] The flag covering Henry's coffin combines the red lion alongside the French *fleur de lis* and illustrates how Sharrock's production deploys signifiers of Welshness to soften the 'Englishness' of Shakespeare's text. All of Henry's 'I am Welsh' asseverations are retained, while the production follows Branagh's lead in amplifying Fluellen's contribution. See Courtney Lehmann, *Shakespeare Remains: Theater to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern* (Ithaca, NY, 2002), p. 206.

In the 2013 live broadcast of the RSC production of *Richard II*, directed by Gregory Doran, the Duchess of Gloucester (Jane Lapotaire) is represented grieving over a draped coffin, a crane-shot emphasizing her hunched posture.

[22] Andrew Hill, 'Hostage videos in the War on Terror', in Randell and Redmond, eds., *War Body*, pp. 251–65; esp. p. 263.

[23] In an adaptation which retains only about one-third (34 per cent) of the lines overall, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of the Chorus's statements are included. The only choric speech to be amputated is Act 5 (only six of the forty-six lines are retained), presumably because of its triumphalist tone.

[24] Crystal Bartolovich, 'Shakespeare's Globe?', in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow (London, 2001), pp. 178–205; esp. p. 179.

tendency is specifically realized in the opening's reference to Agincourt as a traumatic memory. At the Chorus's lines, 'the very casques / That did affright the air at Agincourt' (Prologue, 13–14), overlaid sounds of the clash of swords, men's cries and horses' screams are heard. These combine with a close-up on Exeter, the source of the experience, who blanches, closing his eyes at the inadvertent recollection. This eruption of the past into the film's present looks forward to similar episodes involving psychologically afflicted soldiers. *Henry V*, as Jonathan Baldo notes, is a play deeply engaged in the 'consolidation of the collective memory', but, in Sharrock's adaptation, remembering is, first and foremost, a traumatic endeavour.[25]

The moment prefigures the fantasy of England's remembering celebrated in Henry's St Crispian speech but models instead a contemporary concern with the place of the personal story inside the commemoration of national conflict. Henry's passing is figured simultaneously as a collective loss (the death that makes England and France bleed, as the epilogue has it) and as a private domestic tragedy. The latter is bolstered by the camera's focus on the loving looks bestowed by Katherine on the corpse. Ideas of personal affliction are further emphasized when the corpse is unveiled and a giddy 180° camera pan mimics Katherine's grieving perspective. Via self-conscious camera work, the production constructs the Henry–Katherine relationship as a love match, pre-emptively diffusing the later difficulties of staging Act 5, Scene 1. Re-envisioning a play 'famous for the relative absence of women', the interpolation characteristically amplifies the significance of Katherine (Mélanie Thierry), signalling a felt responsiveness to a world of heroism previously construed – by Olivier, by Branagh and by Shakespeare – almost wholly in masculine terms.[26] The sense that this is a tragedy belonging in the first instance to Henry's nuclear family is strengthened by the appearance here of a character only mentioned in the epilogue – 'Henry the Sixth' – for, behind the spectating widow, a waiting-woman is seen carrying a vulnerable new-born in 'infant bands' (Epilogue, 9). As in Iraq films such as *The Hurt Locker*, Henry here is realized not in terms of the larger political landscape but at the level of the career path characterizing 'the individual soldier'.[27] The method is exemplified as the camera zooms into the exposed corpse and pauses on a close-up of Tom Hiddleston's fine (if fixed and pallid) features. At this moment, the music climaxes and the production title freezes, with title, theme and subject succinctly being brought into union. Made apparent via his lover's gaze, but discovered simultaneously in terms of a soldier's funeral, Henry – and his march towards death – is cemented as subject, object and theme. The effect is to substitute the customary Henrician trajectory of boyhood to manhood with a single focus on manhood cut off in its prime. That generational movement so beloved by adapters of the play is replaced by an arc that begins with the protagonist's death, goes on to his war and circles back to the flag-covered corpse (we return to the same funeral at the end). Bracketing the proceedings thus, Sharrock telescopes the dramatization of warring nations into a modern obituary.

THE MILITARIZED, VULNERABLE BODY

The business of Act 1 proper is jump-started by a match-cut which shifts the audience from a close-up of the exposed corpse to a close-up of Henry alive. The shot which links the two views of Henry – that of eyes being jolted open – implies a Lazarus-like resurrection, self-consciously recalling both the ways in which film is the medium that reanimates Shakespeare's play and the revivifying powers, as described by the Chorus, of the audience's imagination. Moving from death to life, it is appropriate that the first shots of Henry privilege physicality, and, as the scene plays over the

[25] Jonathan Baldo, *Memory in Shakespeare's Histories: Stages of Forgetting in Early Modern England* (London, 2012), p. 103.

[26] Kate Wilkinson, '"A woman's hide": the presentation of female characters in Michael Boyd's *The Histories*', *Shakespeare* 7 (2011), 56–69; p. 56.

[27] Philip Hammond, 'Introduction: screening the War on Terror', in *Screens of Terror*, pp. 7–18; esp. p. 9.

dialogue between Canterbury and Ely, an extended sequence shows Hiddleston – minus the crown – astride a galloping white horse.[28] As Canterbury and Ely discuss his transformation, Henry is realized leaping from his horse and rushing into the palace, stripping off clothes and, as he runs, snatching up the crown.[29] The stress on action contrasts with the earlier stillness of the corpse, while simultaneously – in the words of Yvonne Tasker – providing 'a narrative justification for … physical display'.[30] Sharrock's *Henry V* is seductively oriented, with the pleasures of Hiddleston's gym-honed body being played up throughout.[31] Even when Henry is in armour, the viewer's eye is invited to dwell on the eroticized body because the battle attire is so precisely – unfeasibly – tight-fitting. The designer explains that Hiddleston's armour was 'made … out of rubber, and he was sewn into things … so he could move and look sexy'.[32] For Sharrock, there was an intimate connection between Hiddleston's physique and the production's 'feel': 'I wanted him to have a look that was … [a]ttractive', she notes. 'He's an amazing, beautiful man. It seems crazy to [give him] a bowl haircut or put him in a pair of tights.'[33]

If Sharrock here marks her distance from the traditional stage and screen image of Henry V, the distinction is disingenuous. In fact, Sharrock's sense of Henry's appearance is perfectly aligned with a recent trend in theatre and cinema which has been to highlight – to 'sex up' – the militarism of Shakespeare's male roles. Thus, *Coriolanus*, the 2012 film directed by Ralph Fiennes, *Othello*, the 2013 National Theatre production directed by Nicholas Hytner, and *Othello*, directed by Iqbal Khan for the RSC in 2015, prioritized conflict-zone settings, relying, variously, on the military training undertaken by the casts and such identifiers as hard bodies, replica guns, flak jackets and desert fatigues.[34] In these instances, costuming, in particular, intimately equates the sexuality of the Shakespearian hero with his military identity, bringing to mind the romanticized construction of militarism in the contemporary war film. Unlike the French (who are dressed to appear 'shiny and … mannered'), in Sharrock's film the English mostly wear leather, which costume designer Annie Symons describes as giving the actors 'sexuality and a warrior-likeness'.[35] Caught up in this reification are the intertexts of Hiddleston's earlier parts in Hollywood films such as *Thor* (dir. Kenneth Branagh, 2011) and *Avengers Assemble* (dir. Joss Whedon, 2013).[36] As Loki, brother to Thor, Hiddleston established himself as an ambiguated intergalactic warrior, while his role as Captain Nicholls in *War Horse* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 2011) suggests most strongly the identification of the Shakespearian type as a sexualized military protagonist. In Sharrock's film, the interpolated Agincourt scenes show Henry fighting aggressively and stress how an audience's gaze is directed towards a moving, spectacular property. Minus both horse and crown (the latter shoved dismissively away as battle commences), Henry functions as a summation of innate athleticism

[28] Emblematic of the 'wildness' (1.1.27, 65) that Canterbury claims Henry has now abandoned, the scene points up the wrongness of the ecclesiastical narrative (our first indication that the words of Henry's bishops are not to be relied upon): they don't know of what they speak.

[29] Typical of the cinematography, Henry is placed in centre-shot and allowed to dominate the middle of the frame.

[30] Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London, 1993), p. 2.

[31] See Ramona Wray, 'Franco Zeffirelli', in Mark Thornton Burnett, Courtney Lehmann, Marguerite H. Rippy and Ramona Wray, *Welles, Kurosawa, Kozintsev, Zeffirelli: Great Shakespeareans: Volume XVII* (London, 2013), pp. 141–84; pp. 183–4.

[32] Eliza Kessler, '*Henry IV* and *Henry V*: Q&A with the costume designer', 5 July 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/tv/2012/07/henry-iv-v-shakespeare.shtml.

[33] Phil Harrison and Gabriel Tate, 'Interviews: "The Hollow Crown"', www.timeout.com/london/events/interviews-the-hollow-crown.

[34] On comparisons between *Coriolanus*, *The Hurt Locker* and the James Bond film *Skyfall* (dir. Sam Mendes, 2012), see Graham Holderness, *Tales from Shakespeare: Creative Collisions* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 89–125.

[35] Kessler, 'Costume'.

[36] On intertextuality and Hiddleston's previous roles, see Anna Blackwell, 'Adapting *Coriolanus*: Tom Hiddleston's body and action cinema', *Adaptation* 7 (2014), 344–52; p. 346.

1 Henry V (Tom Hiddleston) with his nobles before the walls of Harfleur. Courtesy of Photofest.

and soldierly accomplishment that collapses boundaries of rank and class. The notion of the contemporary soldier is most stridently enunciated in scenes where, face muddied and shadowed, Henry's appearance recalls the familiar contours of the War on Terror forces; a medieval setting notwithstanding, the visual complexions suggest camouflage, besmirching, nocturnal encounters and a particular enunciation of 21st-century warfare. The so-called 'charred face' (which supersedes the mud-bespattered *mise-en-scène* of Branagh's adaptation) is the signature of the authenticated battle experience.[37]

This fine adjustment in visual detailing sits well with the filmic motif of the victim-soldier. Echoing Iraq War films which delineate the vulnerability of American troops in Baghdad, Henry's campaign in France is marked by a concentration on the beleaguered situation of the English. Characterized by inhospitable wintry terrain and formidable stronghold walls, France is alien territory and the war effort a depressed undertaking – coughing, exhausted men, some carrying compatriots, are the downcast corollaries for what is conjured as a wholly dispirited enterprise. At Harfleur, fearful and defensive camera work establishes the perspective as that of the 'noble English' (3.1.17) (Figure 1). Because screams, images of affliction and shots of burning oil being poured from the battlements are associated with the English experience, the dynamic of the historical siege is reversed, and Henry's army is limned as the

[37] On the 'intertextual and cultural uses' of mud in Branagh's adaptation, see Donald K. Hedrick, 'War is mud: Branagh's *Dirty Harry* and the types of political ambiguity', in *Shakespeare: The Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video, and DVD*, ed. Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose (London, 2003), pp. 213–30; esp. p. 215.

imperilled constituency. Eschewing the Union Jacks which so often accompany theatrical productions, Sharrock's *Henry V* privileges a period-suitable tattered and dirty flag of St George which, fluttering in sorry fashion, emblematizes both the state of Henry's army and its distance from patriotic imperatives. The flag finds a psychic correlative in the ways in which Henry's soldiers, soon after arriving in France, begin to exhibit the 'thousand-yard stare', perhaps the most cinematically recognizable aspect of post-traumatic stress sufferers. Tracing the history of PTSD, Martin Barker notes that discourses around the condition serve as a point of consensus between all sides in American politics, and facilitate a reading of the US military as victims rather than perpetrators.[38] In Sharrock's film, the representation of the pervasiveness of PTSD suggests that the condition is one of soldiering's inexorable effects. The theme is expressed personally at Agincourt via the image of a foetally positioned Pistol who is paralysed and horrified by what he is witnessing – PTSD is triggered by his exposure to atrocity. Discovered in the next scene as crying, shaking and rocking his head, Pistol registers in his behaviour the disorder's pre-eminent symptoms.[39] Interestingly, Pistol's later lines are cut; PTSD, it is suggested, has become his defining story.

Notwithstanding the subtle colour distinction between the armies ('dark congealed bloods for England and beautiful blues, whites and golds for France'), Agincourt is characterized by an overwhelming sense of visceral brutality.[40] Alternately accelerated and slow-motion representations of the battle make prominent the various acts of impaling and skewering in which both forces participate.[41] Thanks to a quasi-documentary style, realist details and hand-held filming techniques, a viewer is quickly immersed in battle scenes which invite comparison with Peter Babakitis's lesser-known 2004 cinematic version of the play, *Henry V*. Sarah Hatchuel notes that, in this adaptation, the 'cinematography ... seems heavily influenced by media footage provided by ... commentators during the 2003 British and American invasion of Iraq'.[42] In the Sharrock adaptation, the interpolated injunction from Henry ('Advance the army thirty paces – now!') and the scene which sees Essex wait for the perfect moment for the arrows to be loosed ('Steady lads!') simultaneously situate military success while allowing for the suspense so integral to contemporary depictions of warfare.[43] As befits this mode of representation, instead of the heavy classical orchestration of Branagh's and Olivier's scores, the soundtrack is merged with the noise of the combatants' pain, anguish and blows in a critical cacophony of violence. Key military moments are backgrounded by a wall of smoke that rises from behind the combatants, and a sense of chaos dominates. When Henry pronounces, 'I know not if the day be ours or no' (4.7.82), the disorientation is absolutely

[38] Martin Barker, '"America hurting": mapping the Iraq War in recent Hollywood', in *Screens of Terror*, pp. 37–50; esp. p. 39.

[39] Ros King similarly accounts for Pistol's 'outbursts of violence ... bragadocchio and ... language' in terms of 'shell shock, post-traumatic stress disorder' – see '"The disciplines of war": Elizabethan war manuals and Shakespeare's tragicomic vision', in *Shakespeare and War*, ed. King and Franssen, pp. 15–29; esp. p. 18.

[40] Kessler, 'Costume'.

[41] Here, Henry's later claim – 'God fought for us' (4.8.120) – is undermined by the film's insistence on accounting for the English victory. If Shakespeare's play 'removed the real, secular reasons for the ... disparity in casualties', the fashion in recent productions has been for recognizing, in the words of one director, 'the decisive role played by [the] archers': Sharrock's film extends the tendency. See Gary Taylor, 'Cry havoc', 5 April 2003, www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/05/theatre.classics; ' The director's cut: interviews with Kenneth Branagh, Edward Hall, Nicholas Hytner and Michael Boyd', in *Henry V*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 176–201; esp. p. 187.

[42] '"Into a thousand parts divide one man": dehumanised metafiction and fragmented documentary in Peter Babakitis' *Henry V*', in *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 146–62; esp. p. 150.

[43] As in *American Sniper*, in which the 'enemy' is held in the rifle's sights in the tense seconds before the trigger is pulled, Sharrock's film deploys shots of taut bowstrings, slow motion and the increasing noise of the horses' hooves to raise the tension of the viewing experience.

convincing, for it is one that is filtered through a distinctly contemporaneous aesthetic.

Inside this contemporary understanding of warfare sits Sharrock's daring re-envisioning of the play's great set-speeches. If, as Linda K. Schubert argues, 'Branagh's choices ... [were] deliberately the opposite of those informing Olivier's movie', then Sharrock, in turn, sets herself against Branagh by avoiding, in her words, 'the huge rhetorical thing'.[44] Playing down excess and working in conversational ways, her *Henry V* utilizes the rhetorical underplay characteristic of the Iraq War film to make its set-speeches the most understatedly delivered in the screen record. 'Once more unto the breach' (3.1.1) is realized instinctively, as evolving spontaneously from the contexts in which the protagonist finds himself, and Henry himself is represented on his knees (debris falling all around). In the 'Feast of Crispian' (4.3.40) address, low-key tones predominate, and most of the speech proceeds without scoring; the suggestion of a private farewell is assisted by emotive sighs and weighty pauses.[45] Recognized in both is an uneasiness with the declamatory mode – what Nicholas Hytner, reflecting on his own stagecraft, has termed a public 'mistrust of ... rhetoric'.[46] Sharrock's *Henry V* is sensitive to the evisceration of rhetoric in the public sphere and, by dampening its force, endeavours to ensure that Henry is never figured in directly political terms.

Crucial to the construction is Henry's participation in a shared experience of vulnerability. Hiddleston, as one reviewer notes, is a 'cerebral actor', and nonverbals – a broken delivery and pained facial expressions – make for a revisionist reading that places emphasis on the King's own fears.[47] Given that the wearisome accoutrements of leadership are already written through Hiddleston's body, the soliloquy on the 'hard condition' (4.1.227–81) of kingship (traditionally regarded as 'central to the complex modern Henry') is cut.[48] Instead of lonely communion, the emphasis is on Henry's connection with a small group of individualized soldiers. Hence, the cropped camerawork of 'Once more unto the breach' underlines the closeness of the encounter, and Shakespearian plurals are suitably contracted – the general 'yeomen' (3.1.25) become a solitary 'yeoman'. Such decisions make sense given the nature of contemporary warfare – no longer fought by large armies but by small detachments.[49] As in the Iraq films in which, as Martin Barker notes, 'soldiers are shown bonding with each other, giving this as their first loyalty', it is the values of the unit (the group whose interests Henry represents and defends) that are accorded the greatest importance.[50] In the St Crispian speech, this change of emphasis is encapsulated in the climactic delivery of the expression, 'band of brothers' (4.3.60), and in the registration of the hero's sentimental mood in the tears of his listening soldiers. Accordingly, a break with performance tradition accents the inclusive 'us' (4.3.67), in contradistinction to the exclusive 'not' – the situation of 'gentlemen' (4.3.64) who do not participate – so that the

[44] Linda K. Schubert, 'Scoring the fields of the dead: musical styles and approaches to postbattle scenes from *Henry V* (1944, 1989)', in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC, 2009), pp. 62–80; esp. p 68; Harrison and Tate, 'Interviews: "The Hollow Crown"'. For a comparative discussion of the speeches in the Olivier and Branagh films, see David Margolies, '*Henry V* and ideology', in *Shakespeare on Screen: 'The Henriad'*, ed. Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin (Rouen, 2008), pp. 147–55.

[45] Only at the reference to the 'good man' who teaches 'his son' (4.3.56) does non-diegetic music feature.

[46] See 'The director's cut', p. 180. In Hytner's production of *Henry V*, the issue is addressed via the self-conscious screening of the speeches as 'spin'.

[47] Ben Lawrence, '*The Hollow Crown*: *Henry V*, BBC Two, Review', 22 July 2012, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/9415849/The-Hollow-Crown-Henry-V-BBC-Two-review.html.

[48] James N. Loehlin, *Shakespeare in Performance: Henry V* (Manchester, 1997), p. 3.

[49] In addition, the English army's camp – wreathed in mist, provisional and populated with green-coloured tents – evokes in its visual language the temporary structures of 'Camp Bastion' and 'Camp Cooke', US military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan respectively.

[50] Martin Barker, *A 'Toxic Genre': The Iraq War Films* (London, 2011), p. 43.

significance of the saint's day becomes about affirming male relations.

More generally, Sharrock's *Henry V* visualizes man-on-man relationships in a way that is unprecedented in the stage and film history of the play. During Henry's night-time meetings, the 'comfort . . . pluck[ed]' (4.0.42) is granted physical exposition, as hands are shook, smiles exchanged, backs patted and hugs welcomed from a singularly tactile protagonist. Consonant with the stress on male bonding, the production omits the discovery of the traitors' conspiracy, eschews mention of the Scottish rebellion (1.2.136–220) and cuts that 'furious repudiation of difference', the four captains' scene.[51] The infamous question – 'What ish my nation?' (3.3.66) – becomes untenable in a production where relations between men take precedence over national affiliation. Distinctively, the development is given a racial inflection through the casting of the black actor Paterson Joseph as York. The mode of representation accords with the 'colour-blind' casting of most contemporary *Henry V* productions, but – complicating Jami Rogers's view that, in *The Hollow Crown*, no 'ethnic minority actors' were cast in 'major roles' – York is a notable presence, with extensions deepening and stretching the part.[52] These, and the fact that York is consistently visualized, mean that Henry's soldierly fraternity appears, as L. Monique Pittman has discussed, as a contemporary, multicultural phenomenon.[53] It is also possible to read York as enacting a symbolic role, not least in the light of Martin Barker's observation that, in the Iraq War film, 'special figures . . . [often] representatives of minorities . . . stand out . . . [to] embody a new kind of soldier: the hero-victim'.[54] York's death is staged as the centre point of the Agincourt scenes, with Surrey's death (4.6) extracted out so as not to blur the solitary focus. Caught in an off-guard moment while comforting the Boy, he is violently stabbed in the back, the reprehensibility of the French Constable's actions brutally realized in York's abject condition and lingering death. York's blood-steeped torso contrasts with the draped and cleansed corpse of Henry at the start, stressing the former's status as a symbolic victim of derelictions in military conduct.

The symbolism is carried forward in the film's most important property – the talismanic flag stained with York's blood and retained by the Boy as an arm-band. A *memento mori* not only of the wounded war body but also of the war crime, the flag makes manifest the film's memorializing strategies. As relic, it newly locates the monarch's predictive claims: in the scrap of material, it is the illegitimacy of York's death that is 'freshly remembered' (4.3.55).

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE SUFFERING SOLDIER

Director Nicholas Hytner has argued that, post-Iraq, any contemporary reworking of Act 1, Scene 2 (in which the justification for war is set out) is 'far more interested in the *ways* our war leaders . . . take us to war than it is in the *rights or wrongs* of the cause'.[55] Sharrock's production similarly prioritizes process. The church's plan to go to war to avoid financial ruin (1.1.7–11, 79–81) is captured in close-up, and Henry's cynicism around ecclesiastics is stressed via a delay in Hiddleston's pentameter. Henry's response to Canterbury's unctuous greeting, 'Sure we thank you' (1.2.8), is ruptured to read, 'Sure', with a notable pause before the subsequent expression of thanks. The meaning is akin to the modern 'whatever', a signal that the protagonist recognizes as insincere the archbishop's

[51] Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation: A Study in English and Irish Drama* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 76.

[52] Jami Rogers, 'The Shakespearean glass ceiling: the state of colorblind casting in contemporary British theatre', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 31 (2013), 405–30; p. 406. For example, York is lent speeches from other nobles, is the first to penetrate the inner sanctum of Harfleur, and tosses his sovereign a sword on the battlefield.

[53] L. Monique Pittman, 'Colour-conscious casting and multicultural Britain in the BBC *Henry V* (2012): historicizing adaptation in an age of digital placelessness', *Adaptation* 10 (2017), 192–209.

[54] Barker, *A 'Toxic Genre'*, p. 43.

[55] 'The director's cut', p. 189.