

Balz Engler

## Shakespeare in the Trenches

In April 1916 the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death was celebrated both in England and Germany, although the two countries had been at war for almost two years. This may just sound like an intriguing story, but it is also of considerable critical interest, because it illustrates how Shakespeare's international reputation survived under pressure, how conflicting views of him were defined by the political situation, and how these views, in turn, shaped the meaning of Shakespeare's texts, and affected the history of literary studies after the war.

In other words, in tracing these developments here Shakespeare will be considered as a public symbol, as myth.<sup>1</sup> But this will be done in a comparative perspective, which may help to remove the national limitations characteristic of most studies in this area.<sup>2</sup>

### I

In England a committee, with the Prime Minister as its honorary president, had prepared elaborate ceremonies.<sup>3</sup> They could not really include 23 April, the day of Shakespeare's birth and death (and significantly for many, St George's Day), because, in 1916, it coincided with Easter Sunday. Officially suggesting a parallel between Christ and Shakespeare would have meant taking things too far. Therefore the celebrations concentrated on the first week of May. On four days great institutions did homage to Shakespeare, on Sunday the Church, on Monday politics, on Tuesday the arts, on Wednesday education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Balz Engler, 'The Classic as a Public Symbol'. *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 6 (1988/9), 217-36, and *Poetry and Community* (Tübingen, 1990); Graham Holderness, ed., *The Shakespeare Myth* (Manchester, 1988); Marion F. O'Connor, 'Theatre of the Empire: "Shakespeare's England" at Earl's Court, 1912', in Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, eds., *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology* (New York and London, 1987), pp. 68-98.

<sup>2</sup> This seems to be a problem with many books on Englishness. Cp. Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London, 1989); Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols. (London, 1989), and its review in *TLS*, 22-8 December 1989, pp. 1407-8.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 29 January 1916, p. 5.

Sunday, 30 April, was declared Shakespeare Sunday. In many churches Shakespeare sermons were preached.<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare and patriotism was the most frequent subject. At Holy Trinity Church in Stratford, for example, it was about the strength that Shakespeare must have gained from his early experience of the Warwickshire countryside - strength 'which heartens our England to strive and endure'.<sup>5</sup> One sermon noted how the wave of patriotism that had recently passed over the land had made people understand Shakespeare better again, after shameful neglect, due to gross materialism; 'we who think of him, who after three hundred years risen from the dead still lives and moves and speaks to us in his marvellous creations, must needs thank Him Who is the bringer of all that is good and gracious...'<sup>6</sup>

On Monday a public meeting was held at Mansion House, with the participation of the Government, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the diplomatic representatives of the Empire and the allied and neutral, but not the axis, countries. Lord Crewe (standing in for the Prime Minister), the American ambassador, the representatives of the South African Union and of Sweden, among others, addressed the meeting.

On Tuesday afternoon a special performance took place at Drury Lane, in the words of the organizing committee 'a tribute to the genius of William Shakespeare, humbly offered by the players and their fellow-workers in the kindred arts of music and painting'. It was to be done 'in the spirit of the Bayreuth festivals; and there can be little question but that the audience will find that, as the occasion is worthier, so is the execution finer'.<sup>7</sup> The King and Queen were present; the proceeds went to joint funds of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John. A programme of Shakespeare music by living composers was followed by a performance of *Julius Caesar* with Frank Benson as Caesar, and a pageant of Shakespeare figures impersonated by well-known actors and actresses (in the tradition of earlier Shakespeare centenaries).<sup>8</sup> It was after this performance that

---

<sup>4</sup> A.J. Carlyle *The Shakespeare Tercentenary. A Sermon Preached in the City Church of Oxford, April 30th 1916* (Oxford, 1916).

<sup>5</sup> Anthony C. Deane, *His own Place. The Tercentenary 'Shakespeare Sermon' preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Stratford-on-Avon, April 30th, 1916* (London, 1916), p.4.

<sup>6</sup> H.D. Rawnsley, *Shakespeare. A Tercentenary Sermon* (London, 1916), p.11. Note also the speech by the Bishop of Birmingham at the Repertory Theatre on 25 April, in which he stated: 'To Shakespeare patriotism and religion were inseparable. Anything less like the real Shakespeare than the one made in Germany had never been seen or dreamed of'. *The Times*, 26 April 1916, p. 9. *The Times*, 21 April 1916, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> *The Times*, 21 April 1916, p.7

<sup>8</sup> The plays represented were *Romeo, Merchant, Merry Wives, Much Ado, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Coriolanus, The Winter's Tale*. A cast list is to be found in J.P. Wearing, *The London Stage 1910-1919*, vol. 1 (Metuchen, 1982), pp. 632-5.

Frank Benson was knighted - the King borrowed a sword from the property-room.

On this occasion a memorial volume was presented to the public, *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, edited again by Israel Gollancz, the indefatigable secretary of the tercentenary. It contained lavish illustrations, the homage of the painters, as well as 166 addresses, poems and critical essays in many languages, from most, but not the axis, countries.<sup>9</sup>

Wednesday, 3 May, was declared Shakespeare Day for the schools and training colleges. In the spirit of Empire Day it was to create 'a bond between the English-speaking children in the United Kingdom, the Dominions and the United States of America'.<sup>10</sup> London schoolchildren were given badges with the Droeshout portrait, offered by the British Empire Shakespeare Society.<sup>11</sup>

The celebrations were to begin with a reading from Ecclesiasticus 44 ('Let us now praise famous men'), followed by the singing of Shakespeare songs, a discourse on the poet, the reading of scenes from his plays, and closing with 'God save the King'. The London Country Council had also set up a committee to devise a 'Shakespeare prayer', which was said in all London schools.<sup>12</sup> The beautiful memorial programme<sup>13</sup> printed for the occasion contains 'Notes on Shakespeare the Patriot', concerning his views on language, patriotism, the fleet, etc., and illustrating them with passages mainly from *Henry V*.

Theatrical activities were few; in London just one Shakespeare season, at His Majesty's, was announced.<sup>14</sup> In particular, one dream once again did not come true in 1916: the foundation of a National Theatre.<sup>15</sup> This had been discussed in the House of Commons in 1913, appropriately on St George's Day.<sup>16</sup> Among the arguments then used for the establishment of

---

<sup>9</sup> Among the essays there is a remarkably generous, but untypical one by C.H. Herford on 'The German Contribution to Shakespeare Criticism', pp. 231-5. Herford, Professor of English at Manchester, had studied in Berlin.

<sup>10</sup> Sir Israel Gollancz in his evidence to the Newbolt Committee. His proposal was taken up favourably by the committee. See *The Teaching of English in England. Report of the Departmental Committee* (London, 1921), p. 319.

<sup>11</sup> The British Empire Shakespeare Society was founded in 1901, with Henry Irving as its first president (Ivor Brown and George Fearon, *Amazing Monument: A History of the Shakespeare Industry* (New York and London, 1939), p. 317.

<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately I have not been able to locate its text. A report in *The Times* on 3 May 1916, p.7, confirms that such 'a special form of prayer' was indeed used.

<sup>13</sup> *Shakespeare Day 1916* (London, 1916).

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 3 May 1916, p.7.

<sup>15</sup> Such plans were old, of course. Cf. Geoffrey Whitworth, *The Making of a National Theatre* (London, 1951).

<sup>16</sup> The debate is well documented in Whitworth, *National Theatre*, pp. 100-13.

such a theatre, two are of particular interest to us: the need for a place where those plays could be adequately performed whose language constituted a bond among the English-speaking people; and, quite explicitly, the model of rival Germany, where much more was being done for Shakespeare on the stage. H.J. McKinder, who moved the resolution, quoted from advance sheets of the *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, indicating the number of Shakespeare performances by professionals in Germany, 1,156 in 1912; and he ventured to think 'that we have nothing in this land of Shakespeare to show which is comparable in the least degree to the facts indicated by these figures'.<sup>17</sup>

By comparison with the official English celebrations in 1916 activities in Germany were modest. Max Reinhardt revived a cycle of Shakespeare plays that he had first put on in 1914. There was nothing like the Shakespeare Week in London. At the meeting of the *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* in Weimar, which was afterwards criticized as dull and uninspiring, Rudolf Brotanek, in his 'Festvortrag', found that Shakespeare's opinions, as expressed in his plays, were in accordance with the German position in the war. He closed by saying:

We are satisfied that we still adhere to notions of duty which Shakespeare laid down three hundred years ago in his works, those statutes of free and noble humanity. We are pleased that in our statesmen the feeling of fellowship with the people and of responsibility towards God is still so strong as in the soul of Henry V, as studied by Shakespeare, that all our leaders may raise their hands and hearts towards the God of battles and may pray, with the victor at Bosworth:

O thou, whose captain I account myself,  
Look on my forces with a gracious eye. (...)  
Make us thy ministers of chastisement,  
That we may praise thee in the victory.

(*Richard III*, 5.5.61-7)<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Whitworth, *National Theatre*, p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> 'Wir sind es zufrieden, noch immer zu Pflichtbegriffen uns zu bekennen, welche Shakespeare vor dreihundert Jahren in seinen Werken, jenem Gesetzbuch freier und hochgemuter Menschlichkeit niederlegte. Wohl uns, dass in unseren Staatsmännern das Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit mit dem Volke und der Verantwortung vor Gott noch so klar ist wie in der von Shakespeare durchleuchteten Seele Heinrichs V., dass ein jeder unserer Führer Hände und Herz zum Gott der Schlachten erheben und mit dem

There were reasons for this relative neglect in 1916 - and we have to move back two years in history to understand them: in 1914 Shakespeare's 350th birthday had been celebrated extensively.<sup>19</sup> This year had been chosen, because the *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* was then also marking its fiftieth anniversary. The festivities, as always, took place at Weimar, the city of Goethe and Schiller, three months before the beginning of the war. They were internationally oriented, in particular reflecting the anglophile attitude of German Shakespearians: Franz Josef I of Austria and Hungary joined the Gesellschaft, but also King George V (the Kaiser had been a member for a long time); Viscount Haldane, the British Lord Chancellor, was made an honorary member.

In England the mood had been similar in 1914. There were few events to mark Shakespeare's birthday in April. But in June a Shakespeare Association was founded, with the purpose of organizing the 1916 centenary. Its thirteen vice-presidents were to include luminaries in English studies from all over the world, among them three representatives from Germany.<sup>20</sup> Beerbohm Tree proposed that, in 1916, an international production of all the history plays should be put on in London, with a cast including Americans, Frenchmen, Germans and Italians.<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare could still be shared with the world.

The outbreak of the war in August almost immediately called in question the high principles extolled on both sides only a few months earlier. In September Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater in Berlin, which had been preparing a grand cycle of Shakespeare plays to mark the anniversary, polled important personalities on whether, under the new circumstances, it was appropriate to perform the works of Shakespeare, a British author. The answers were unanimous: there was no reason to stop performing him: 'Shakespeare gehört der ganzen Welt' (Shakespeare belongs to the whole world), as the chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, put it; moreover, Germany was at war not with the people of Shakespeare's England, but with their mean and degenerated descendants; and finally, in the words of Fürst von Bülow, Bethmann-Hollweg's predecessor, Shakespeare 'is among the oldest and most beautiful conquests of the German mind, which

---

Sieger von Bosworth flehen darf:' etc. (Rudolf Brotanek, 'Shakespeare über den Krieg', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 52 (1916), xvii-xlvi, p. xlvi), Brotanek quoted Shakespeare in German, of course.

<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare had the misfortune to die at fifty-two; for the benefit of future admirers poets should ideally die at twenty-five or at seventy-five.

<sup>20</sup> They were Alois Brandl (Berlin), Max Förster (Leipzig), and Josef Schick (Munich), *The Times*, 19 June 1914, p.13.

<sup>21</sup> *The Times*, 19 June 1914, quoted by Carl Grabau, 'Zeitschriftenschau 1914'. *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 51 (1915), p. 240. Grabau does not always indicate his sources. I have checked these wherever possible, which showed that his reports can be relied on.

we shall defend against all the world, like our other spiritual and material possessions'.<sup>22</sup>

War imagery became common on both sides in the following years, the imagery of territorial possession and conquest, of asylum and internment. In a prologue to a Shakespeare performance delivered at Leipzig, in the autumn of 1914, Feste was given a provocative message from Shakespeare to the audience. A translation of it was soon printed in *The Times*:

Ye unto him have been until today  
His second home; his first and native home  
Was England, but this England of the present  
Is so contrarious in her acts and feelings,  
Yea, so abhorr'd of his pure majesty  
And the proud spirit of his free-born being.  
That he doth find himself quite homeless there.  
A fugitive he seeks his second home,  
This Germany, that loves him most of all,  
To whom before all others he gives thanks,  
And says: Thou wonderful and noble land,  
Remain thou Shakespeare's one and only home.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Grabau, 'Zeitschriftenschau 1914', 242-3. Shakespeare 'gehört zu den ältesten und schönsten Eroberungen des deutschen Geistes, die wir wie unseren sonstigen geistigen und materiellen Besitz gegen alle Welt behaupten wollen. Wir haben Shakespeare längst annektiert und geben ihn nicht wieder her' (243).

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Quiller-Couch, 'Patriotism in English Literature', in his *Studies in Literature* (Cambridge, 1918), 290-322, p. 316. The original runs as follows:

Ihr wäret ihm bisher die zweite Heimat  
Gewesen, seine erste, angeborne: England!  
Doch dieses England, wie es heute sei,  
Sein Handeln und sein Fühlen, sei ihm so zuwider,  
Ja, so verhasst dem redlichen und reinen,  
Dem Königsgeiste seines freien Wesens,  
Dass er sich dort als heimatlos empfände!  
Als solch ein stolz aus eigener Wahl Verbannter,  
Als Flüchtling käm er heut in seine zweite Heimat,  
Ins deutsche Land, das stets vor allen ihn geliebt,  
Dem dankbar er vor allen andern sei,

Ernest de Sélincourt commented: 'Poor Shakespeare! If you want to crystallize the pathetic situation in a phrase you might call it "Shakespeare interned" or "Germany the snapper-up of unconsidered trifles"',<sup>24</sup> and Arthur Quiller-Couch's commentary summarizes many of the prejudices on the English side:

These men do honestly believe our Shakespeare..., whose language they cannot speak, cannot write, can but imperfectly understand....our Shakespeare's spirit - has migrated to a nation whose exploits it benevolently watches in the sack of Louvain, the bestialities of Aerschot, the shelling of Rheims cathedral.<sup>25</sup>

## II

So far I have been anecdotal, and I should now like to bring some order into what I have reported: how does Shakespeare appear in these events on both sides?

In Germany the claim that Shakespeare was *unser*, ours, presented a problem, of course: nobody could seriously deny that Shakespeare was an Englishman. But there were essentially three strategies to deal with this. One could argue that it was mere coincidence that Shakespeare, the poet

---

Käm hin und spräche: Treues, tiefes, edles Land,  
Was Du mir warst, das sei mir fürder zwiefach:  
Des Shakespeare einzige und wahre Heimat (.)

(Ernst Hardt, 'Prolog zu einer Shakespeare-Aufführung im Herbst des Jahres 1914', *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 52 (1916), p.2.) The tone of this prologue is typical Cp. also Gerhart Hauptmann's speech at the meeting of the *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* in 1916: Shakespeare belongs to the whole world, but there is no people in the world, 'auch das englische nicht, das sich ein Anrecht wie das deutsche auf Shakespeare erworben hätte. Shakespeares Gestalten sind ein Teil unserer Welt, seine Seele ist eins mit unserer geworden: und wenn er in England geboren und begraben ist, so ist Deutschland das Land, wo er wahrhaft lebt.' (not even the English, who have earned a right to Shakespeare in the way the Germans have. Shakespeare's figures are part of our world, his soul has merged with ours: and if he was born and buried in England, it is in Germany where he truly lives.) (Gerhart Hauptmann, 'Deutschland and Shakespeare'. *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 51 (1916), vii-xii, p.xii).

<sup>24</sup> Ernest de Sélincourt, *English Poets and the National Ideal* (London, 1915), p.13.

<sup>25</sup> Quiller-Couch, 'Patriotism', p.317.

of all humankind, was born and lived in England.<sup>26</sup> Then there were the climatic and racial theories, which saw Shakespeare as one of the geniuses of the Germanic North, as against those of the Romance South.<sup>27</sup> This opposition goes back to Herder's attempt in the eighteenth century to free German literature from the grip of French classicism, and to create a sense of German nationhood with the help of literature.<sup>28</sup> In this Shakespeare played a crucial role as a genius who, unobstructed by any moral or aesthetic rules, offered direct access to Nature.

Finally, one could claim, as Brotanek and many others did, that Shakespeare had been an English patriot, even an exemplary one. However, his values were no longer upheld by his countrymen, but by the Germans, who had naturalized Shakespeare in a long effort of appropriation. This rhetoric reached its apotheosis with the publication of Friedrich Gundolf's *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* in 1911, one of the most influential books of literary criticism in German.<sup>29</sup>

As such Shakespeare could come to be considered one of the three greatest German authors, along with Goethe and Schiller; and it was no coincidence that the Shakespeare-Gesellschaft established its seat at Weimar. Hamlet, along with Faust, became one of the great myths of German culture,<sup>30</sup> and phrases from Shakespeare's plays permeate the German language as much as those from Goethe and Schiller.

In England, as the tercentenary celebrations indicate, Shakespeare was closely associated both with the idea of England and that of the Empire, according to which English and the English way of life had spread their beneficial influence all over the world.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the two ideas are difficult

---

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Franz Kaibel, 'Dichter und Patriotismus: Die Betrachtung eines Deutschen zum dreihundertsten Todestag eines Engländers', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 52 (1916), 36-63.

<sup>27</sup> Climatic theories of this kind became accepted also in England, partly under German influence, cf. Carlyle's writings or Hyppolite Taine, *History of English Literature*, trans. H. van Laun, second edn (Edinburgh, 1872).

<sup>28</sup> The hidden presence of France also in the early twentieth-century debate is made explicit by Josef Kohler, 'Die Staatsidee Shakespeares in *Richard II*', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 53 (1917), 1-12. Cp. also Jonathan Bate, 'The Politics of Romantic Shakespeare Criticism: Germany, England, France', *European Romantic Review* 1 (1990), 1-26.

<sup>29</sup> Eckhard Heftrich, 'Friedrich Gundolfs Shakespeare-Apotheose', *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West*, 1988, 85-102, p. 86-7.

<sup>30</sup> In the German Hamlet myth, Hamlet, the Northern prince, stands for Germany, brooding and unable to act. In the context of the First World War there were attempts to re-interpret this myth, to turn Hamlet into a warlike hero. See Bernhard Fehr, 'Unser Shakespeare', *Westermanns Monatshefte*, 120, 1 (May 1916), 348-52, one of the most revealing contributions to the Shakespeare tercentenary.

<sup>31</sup> Cp. the Earl's Court exhibition of 1911, as described by O'Connor, 'Theatre of Empire'.



to disentangle: the values that constitute Englishness and those of a world-wide Empire are fused in a complex and ambiguous manner, perhaps best summed up by Rupert Brooke's sonnet 'The Soldier',<sup>32</sup> and we know from more recent European history how national consciousness among the English, under the influence of imperialism, has been only imperfectly developed, unlike that of other nations on British soil. Shakespeare then was both universal, and as such representative of what placed England *above* nationalism, and of what made his own country different from others and placed it *beside* them.

There was nothing as formidable as Gundolf's Shakespeare that could be set against what looked like systematic German attempts to requisition Shakespeare. In this situation, the German challenge to the ownership of Shakespeare was met, at first insecurely, with a more narrowly defined nationalist position, emphasizing borders, denying access to Shakespeare, insisting on what made England and her poet different and difficult to master for other nations.

### III

The struggle for Shakespeare during the First World War was to leave deep traces in the history of Shakespeare studies for decades to come; of these I should only like to mention the reception of German Shakespeare criticism and the development of English as a discipline in England. Before the First World War German Shakespeare criticism, within certain limits set by the image of the philologist as pedant, had been taken seriously, especially in the areas of textual, aesthetic and biographical studies.<sup>33</sup> But

---

<sup>32</sup> Similar ideas were expressed by F.R. Benson at Stratford ('At Shakespeare's Shrine', *The Times*, 20 April 1915, p.12. 'At the shrine on this day comes knowledge, clear and unmistakable, that there is no proper shrine to the Shakespeare memory save the hearts of Englishmen. The altar at Stratford is kindled, and again it grows cold; but on Europe's battlefields ten thousand nobler altars enlighten the world with flames which shall not be extinguished. These are Shakespeare's men, though some of them may scarcely be familiar with the name of Shakespeare.' Cp. also the letter from C.L.D., *TLS*, 4 May 1916, quoting J.R. Seeley's essay on 'Milton's Poetry' in his *Lectures and Essays* (London, 1870), pp.152-3.

<sup>33</sup> The account offered by Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare's Life and Work* (London, (1900, 1907), pp. 193-6, may be typical: 'During the last half-century textual, aesthetic, and biographical criticism has been pursued in Germany with unflagging industry and energy; and although laboured and supersubtle theorising characterises much German aesthetic criticism, its mass and variety testify to the impressiveness of the appeal that Shakespeare's work has made to the German intellect.' Lee specifically mentions

now the English began to neglect, even to reject German criticism, an attitude that has persisted in many places. I remember an eminent English Shakespeare scholar advising me not to use Alexander Schmidt's *Shakespeare Lexicon*: 'Schmidt was German and therefore could not understand Shakespeare properly' - clearly an echo of Quiller-Couch's position. He had failed to notice that the *OED* routinely uses Schmidt's definitions where single occurrences of words in Shakespeare are recorded.<sup>34</sup>

In more general terms, one can also see the effects of this struggle for the possession of Shakespeare as a factor in the establishment of English as an academic discipline after the war.<sup>35</sup> Quiller-Couch, in the essay I have already quoted, went as far as blaming the Germans for the neglect of English literature in English schools.

I do not say, nor do I believe for a moment, in spite of a long malignity now unmasked, the Germans have *of set purpose* treated English literature as a thing of the past or imposed that illusion upon our schools, with design to prove that this particular glory of our birth and state is a dead possession of a decadent race. My whole argument is rather that they have set up this illusion, and industriously, because they could not help it; because the illusion is in them: because this lovely and living art which they can never practise nor even see as an art, to them is, has been, must be for ever, a dead science - *a hortus siccus*; to be tabulated, not to be planted or watered. (p.314)

Such a view, which acknowledges German influence at an unlikely moment, helped to shape the insistence on literature as a vital force, which we associate with the Cambridge tradition of literary studies, as something that may 'once more bring sanctification and joy into the sphere of common life', as the Newbolt Report put it.<sup>36</sup>

---

Nicolaus Delius (textual criticism); Karl Elze (biography and stage history); F.A.T. Kreyssig, *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare* (1858 and 1874), *Shakespeare-Fragen* (1871), Otto Ludwig, *Shakespeare-Studien*, E.W. Sievers, Ulrichi, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art* (1839) and Gervinus's commentaries (1848-9).

<sup>34</sup> Wolfgang Keller thinks that neglect set in at the time of the Boer war (when the two countries for the first time were on opposite sides), but that it really became serious after the First World War (Wolfgang Keller, 'Shakespeare als Dichter der Deutschen', im Paul Meissner, ed., *Shakespeare in Europe* (Stuttgart, 1944), pp. 1-116.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 86-108, 'Literary Critical Consequences of the War' deals with this topic.

<sup>36</sup> *The Teaching of English in England, Report of the Departmental Committee* (London, 1921), p.258.

#### IV

What can we learn for Shakespeare criticism from all this? I should like briefly to mention three points that concern related areas of debate. In 1989 there was a controversy in the *TLS* on whether there were any limits to the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>37</sup> The evidence of the First World War supports the view that this is not the case. On both sides, soldiers were sent into battle with the same slogans from Shakespeare;<sup>38</sup> the German Chancellor quoted *Henry V* when German troops stood before Calais;<sup>39</sup> the play was performed in Germany in 1917, and criticism concerned the question why it was not part of a cycle of histories,<sup>40</sup> rather than why it should have been done at all.

This leads me to my second point: What I have said makes it clear that it is the context in which we perceive Shakespeare and his works, *how we use them*, that determines their meaning. In other words, we have to acknowledge the primacy of pragmatics in the study of Shakespeare. And finally: A comparative perspective may be helpful in the study of this - and in giving up entrenched positions.

---

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Terence Hawkes, 'Wittgenstein's Shakespeare', in Maurice Charney, ed., *'Bad' Shakespeare* (Cranbury, NJ, 1988), reviewed by Robert Hapgood, *TLS*, 25-31 August, p. 927, and Terence Hawkes's letter to the editor (*TLS*, 8-14 September 1989).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London, 1975, 1977), pp. 198-9; and, for example, Alois Brandl, 'Jahresbericht für 1914/15', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 51 (1915), v. quoting Henry V.

<sup>39</sup> *The Times*, 24 April 1915, p.9.

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Raab, '*Heinrich V.* in neuer Bearbeitung am Karlsruher Hoftheater', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 55 (1919), 223-5.

