

Paola Pugliatti. *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition*.

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Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition makes a significant contribution to scholarship by analyzing Shakespeare's plays in the context of debates concerning warfare in the late sixteenth century. Moreover, Pugliatti argues vigorously that "Shakespeare's representations of war . . . pose questions to which the just war doctrine is still trying to give answers" (2).

Part 1 discusses the just war tradition from Augustine through More, Erasmus, and Vives. Augustine developed the foundational doctrine that Christian charity was a spiritual disposition that in certain circumstances — notably the defense of a nation from invasion or threat of invasion — could be expressed through violence. Here as elsewhere, Pugliatti claims that "the just war doctrine was — and still is — primarily a set of ideas and precepts formulated to *justify* (morally as well as legally) rather than to limit war, as is generally argued" (206). For Pugliatti, Augustine's primary motivation is to defend the Roman Empire that had recently become the defender of Christianity. Pugliatti admires the pacifist tendencies in More, Vives, and Erasmus; she is critical of them, however, for their belief that it was necessary to protect Christian Europe from the Turks.

Part 2 argues that Elizabeth and her counselors continually provoked the Spanish and justified these assaults on the basis of a “holy war” doctrine that ignored the rules of *ius ad bellum*. Although Pugliatti’s scholarship is extensive, I believe that in this chapter she relies somewhat too heavily on C. C. Breight’s *Surveillance, Militarism, and Drama in the Elizabethan Era* (1996), a work whose sources emphasize “oppositional discourse, largely written by English Roman Catholic exiles” (Breight, 1, quoted by Pugliatti, 62). The following chapter surveys plays by Marlowe and others, emphasizing that many of them reflect the concerns of the population that suffered the economic costs of the wars, rather than affirming the belligerence of the monarchy and aristocracy. This section concludes with analysis of the vigorous debates on warfare that proliferated in the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

In part 3 Pugliatti compares discussions of various topics in non-dramatic literature on warfare with relevant sections of Shakespearean plays. She acknowledges that some plays dramatize a definite position, as when *Richard III* clearly implies that divine providence favors Richmond over Richard. Typically, however, “Shakespeare’s polyvalence and the way in which he tends to problematize historical issues often makes us doubt the straightforward judgments that we would like to pass” (143). *1 Henry IV*, *Coriolanus*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, effectively question chivalric conceptions of honor, a virtue that was extolled in many war manuals and non-Shakespearean literary works.

In part 4, “*Henry V* and the Wars of Our Time,” Pugliatti demonstrates persuasively that Henry V’s invasion of France is not justified by principles of *ius ad bellum*, in part because the king’s decision to invade France is dramatized as in large part a vengeful response to the Dauphin’s insult. Pugliatti also argues effectively that Henry’s speech at the gates of Harfleur and his order to have all French prisoners killed at Agincourt are violations of the principles of proportionality and discrimination. In other sections, however, she discusses prominent examples of the ways in which the play has been appropriated both by those who oppose warfare and by those who glorify it (including Laurence Olivier).

Henry V frequently asserts the superiority of English culture: the English are portrayed as embodiments of “heroism, boldness, honour, but also fraternity, mercy, and modesty” (213) while the French — especially the Dauphin — are often portrayed as arrogant and effeminate. Similarly, Pugliatti argues, George W. Bush and the neoconservatives who encouraged the invasion of Iraq have rationalized the war in large part on the basis of the need to spread democracy. She decries this return to the view that “certain cultural values should be spread throughout the world and imposed on ‘alien’ populations” (199).

Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition provides thoughtful, sometimes provocative analysis of the just war tradition, especially in early modern England. Its claim that Shakespeare’s works can stimulate reflection upon contemporary problems concerning the justification of warfare is one that I believe many readers will respect.

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