



SHAKESPEARE'S *HENRY V*
MODERN REFLECTIONS ON A MEDIEVAL HERO

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NOTE

Dr. Ismail Serageldin has always liked Shakespeare, finding in him a multi-layered complexity that speaks to us beyond the beauty of words and the power of the poetry.

Being a great admirer of the genius of Shakespeare, he decided, as a trend, that the Bibliotheca Alexandrina would hold an Annual Shakespeare to discuss and analyze one or more of his plays and the different facets of this characters.

The greatness of Shakespeare is attested to by his ability to speak to us through space and time. He is the most universal writer in history.

Henry V is considered, by many, the most nationalistic of Shakespeare's plays, where the young King is shown in the most splendid form, and war itself is glorified; but Shakespeare, sees a much bigger and richer reality. He acknowledges the seductive power of the charismatic monarch and the power of military conqueror, but he also recognizes the scheming and the greed that supports war and the horrors of the murder of captives and unarmed civilians whose humanity he underscores.

Dr Serageldin was requested by many to record these lectures and make them available. Accordingly, he has re-read *Henry V* at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Studio, in Alexandria, Egypt, on 28 July 2013.

THE RELEVANCE OF SHAKESPEARE

Great writers speak to the intricate reality of their societies. Great writers manage to go from the particular to the universal, from the conditions rooted in a particular place and time to the issues of the human condition generally. Shakespeare was such a great writer. He addressed many aspects of the social and human reality that transcend the specifics of Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

Thus the greatness of Shakespeare is attested to by his ability to speak to us through space and time. From all cultures we go back to him for the projection of our dreams, for the unexpected echo of our inhibitions, for the expression of our fears or the articulation of our hopes. He is the most universal writer in history.

Some will say that there are so many new issues today, that our time cannot be compared to past eras of our history. How could writers of times past, centuries ago, such as Shakespeare, have relevance to our times? Think of surrogate motherhood, war crimes, human rights,

bio-ethics, multi-culturalism and myriad challenges to individual behavior that Shakespeare could not ever dream of. Surely the Bard cannot be relevant in this day and age. I believe that he is, and I will demonstrate that by focusing on a specific case that addresses a fairly contemporary question: war crimes! That is not surprising, since we find that Shakespeare addressed many questions that are still of contemporary import, including inter-racial marriage and gender equity.

Gender equity is certainly an issue of our times. It was only in the 1920s that women got the vote, and they remain discriminated against in almost every society to this day. As for inter-racial marriage, it was only in the 1960s that civil rights were attained for blacks in the US and to this day only a very limited percentage of blacks marry whites in the US. It was my intention to cover all that and more. I was going to provide you with examples of Shakespeare's concern for the status of women, where I differ with some of the feminist criticism that sees in him only the patriarchal social structure of his time. I agree with Ryan's new reading that shows the counter voice as present in the very fabric of the plays. Inter-racial marriage and racism is clearly at the heart of *Othello*, as I

have discussed elsewhere¹. But today, let me limit myself to the issue of wars and war crimes! Let me go to one of Shakespeare's most glorious "History Plays", namely his inimitable Henry V.

HENRY V

HISTORY

With the overthrow of Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke (the future Henry IV) the Plantagenet line of kings comes to an end in 1399 and the Lancaster line begins. Henry IV consolidates his rule, and his son, Henry V was to take his power to new heights. But the houses of Lancaster and York (whose heraldic symbols were the red and the white rose, respectively) were to fight for hegemony in what was to be known as the "War of the Roses" in a series of complicated episodes between 1455 and 1485 until Henry Tudor (a remote Lancastrian and the future Henry VII) defeated the last Yorkist King Richard III in 1485. Henry VII was to establish the House of Tudor on the throne. His son and granddaughter, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, were to

¹ Ismail Serageldin, *The Modernity of Shakespeare*. Cairo, Egypt, and Washington, DC.: Cairo University and The Center for the Global South, American University, Washington DC, 1998.

become two of the most famous monarchs in history. Elizabeth was to give her name to the whole Elizabethan age, and it was under her reign and that of her successor that Shakespeare would live and produce his plays.

Henry V is therefore the second of the Lancaster House to rule England and is one of the most illustrious military monarchs in English history. As a young prince he would put down rebellions against his father, and would later claim the throne of France and fight in France a long series of brilliant military campaigns that were part of what was to be known to historians as the hundred years' war between France and England.

Henry's victory at Agincourt is the pinnacle of these campaigns and remains one of the most impressive military engagements where a small English army defeated a French army several times its size, inflicting massive casualties and taking many prisoners while hardly losing any significant number of its own soldiers.

This victory was decisive in paving the way for the treaty of Troyes which came after some five or six years of additional fighting and negotiating. Under that treaty Henry V married Catherine of Valois, daughter of the King of France and thus secured the succession to the

French throne for his future son, Henry VI, who was a mere baby two years later when his father (Henry V) died unexpectedly of dysentery at the age of thirty-five. The baby Henry VI would be king of both France and England for about a year or so, until France's kings resumed their autonomous history, and the wars between France and England continued.

This then is the setting for many of the ten history plays of Shakespeare². The plays have obvious continuity, so we see young Henry V, as young Prince Hal, in the plays about his father Henry IV.

THE PLAY

Henry V is considered by many the most nationalistic of Shakespeare's plays, where the young King is shown in the

² Shakespeare's ten history plays are largely based on Holinshed's chronicles, and cover the history of England from the end of the fourteenth century (Richard II and the accession of Henry IV) to the reign of Henry VIII, father of Elizabeth, the Monarch who gave us the adjective "Elizabethan." Only one of the plays, is set roughly two centuries earlier than the rest, and deals with the hated King John, made famous by the Magna Carta, Robin Hood and his brother Richard the Lionheart. This momentous task, which came out in installments was extremely popular and has contemporary analogue. Some of these plays still remain among the best that Shakespeare has produced.

most splendid form, and war itself is glorified. Yet a closer reading of both the reality of history and the art of the play show a subtler and more nuanced reading as we have come to expect from the multi-layered Shakespeare.

Indeed, the opening of the play is so powerful a passage that we are mesmerized into thinking that this is going to be a patriotic celebration of the great warrior king, for Shakespeare opens with the chorus saying:

*O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire
Crouch for employment.*

[Prologue, 1-8]

But Shakespeare, sees a much bigger and richer reality. He does acknowledge the seductive power of the charismatic monarch and the powerful military conqueror, but he also recognizes the scheming and the greed that supports war, and he sees war from the point of view of the ordinary soldiers to whom he gives presence and voice in his play.

He also recognizes the horrors of the murder of captives and unarmed civilians, whose humanity he underscores. But before discussing the play, let me just mention some facts about the dastardly deed or deeds that cast shadows over Henry V's reputation and historical standing.

FIRST THE FACTS

Henry V was a brilliant but ruthless military commander. When in 1415 at Agincourt he was concerned that his small army had captured many prisoners who might turn on their captors, he had them executed, a revolting act by the standards of his own time. The English knights refused to participate in the deed, and Henry used archers and yeomen soldiers to kill the prisoners. The exact number of murdered prisoners is contested but it was probably between one and two thousand. It was NOT done in a fit of anger because the French had attacked the English camp and killed children and women there, as that event occurred later, and incidentally it was an event for which the Dauphin of France subsequently punished those who committed it.

This was not an isolated event. Two years later, in 1417, Henry was laying siege to the city of Rouen. The population

inside the walls of Rouen, starving and unable to support the women and children of the town, forced them out through the gates, expecting that Henry would give them safe passage through his besieging army. However, Henry refused, and the expelled women and children died of starvation in the ditches surrounding the town. From the perspective of French historians, this siege cast an even darker shadow on the reputation of the king than his order to murder the French prisoners at Agincourt.

Let us now turn to this great play about the warrior king, his military campaigns and his glorious victories. It contains some of the most stirring lines in English dramatic poetry, but also shows how Shakespeare was fully aware of the reality of war.

ON WAR

Elsewhere Shakespeare wrote about the horrors of war with words that have entered the everyday language, such expressions as “cry Havoc” or “let slip the dogs of war!” were first coined by the bard in his play, *Julius Caesar*. Here, after the murder of Caesar, Anthony and Octavian are about to wage war against the conspirators led by Brutus and Cassius,

and Anthony predicts that it shall be terrible. He speaks with words that mesmerize us to this day:

*Blood and destruction shall be so in use
And dreadful objects so familiar
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war;
All pity choked with custom of fell deeds:*

— Julius Caesar, III.i.263–267

Horrors so unimaginable that only the numbness of familiarity will enable us to endure them; “The custom of fell deeds” shall choke out even the pity of mothers watching their children die.

*Cry ‘Havoc,’ and let slip the dogs of war;
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.*

— Julius Caesar, III.i.274–276

“Carrion men, groaning for burial”? Who could have imagined the horrors of the holocaust, the killing fields from the Somme and Verdun in WWI to the wholesale slaughter of WWII to the massacres of Cambodia, Rwanda, Yugoslavia and beyond... Shakespeare’s powerful words, potent images and beautifully crafted phrases echo through the centuries to censure such actions in our midst.

So Shakespeare is fully aware of the terrible reality of war, and he is fully conscious that the price is invariably paid mostly by the poor soldiers who get neither glory nor fame, not to mention the civilians who suffer in such circumstances. In *Henry V*, Shakespeare goes beyond the charisma of his protagonist, and gives space and voice to the ordinary soldiers and their doubts. He shows their concern for their families and for survival, he shows their doubts about the honesty of their leader and value of the cause they are risking their lives to support. In one famous scene, he has Henry mingle with the men incognito.

On the eve of the battle, as Henry is patrolling the troops in his disguise, he is told by Williams, a soldier who is unaware of the real identity of the King:

*“If the cause be not good... I am a’feared there are few
die well that die in battle.”*

And while Henry defends the right of the King to lead his men in battle, we are witness to a suspicion that some of his men harbor doubts about the sincerity of his declarations. Thus when Henry (still incognito) declares:

*I myself heard the king say that he would not
be ransomed.*

Williams retorts:

*Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully: but
when our throats are cut, he may be ransomed, and we
ne'er the wiser.*

IV.i.182–186

Indeed Shakespeare goes further, while celebrating the great victories of Henry V, he casts doubt on the merit of his claim to the throne of France, and to the entire enterprise of war. Even more devastating, however, is the suspicion that Shakespeare casts that the whole enterprise is intended to keep the people focused on foreign enemies rather than the quality of governance at home. It appears in *Henry IV* Part II, when the dying Henry IV advises the future Henry V:

*“Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels.”*

IV.iii.343–344

This then is picked up again in the opening scene of *Henry V*, where Canterbury and Ely discuss the Bill pending in the House of Commons that would cause the loss of half the church's property, and propose to subsidize the king's war in France, so that he would “mitigate” the Bill. As Sutherland and Watts point out, Shakespeare did

not have to provide that opening scene. But he did. And its presence, showing that the Church's support for his claim was a mercenary affair, then has particular relevance to the statements of Williams about "if the cause be not good".

All this is not to say that Shakespeare was a peace activist or anti-militaristic. It is to show that this supreme dramatist and insightful observer of the human condition was not blinded by "glory" or hero-worship, and could see the unpleasant realities and had the courage to show them right alongside the ringing words he gives Henry V, especially in the famous lines he has him deliver to encourage his men to go through a breach, a gap in the wall of the city before Harfleur, held by the French and under siege by the English army. Henry was encouraging his troops to attack the city again and delivers one of the most famous orations in English literature:

*Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;*

III.i.39–45

... [...] *On, on, you noblest English.*
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument:
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeoman,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. ... The game's afoot!
Follow your spirit; and upon this charge,
Cry, "God for Harry, England and saint George!"

III.i.54–71

The eloquence that Shakespeare endows Henry V with is such that his words continue to inspire Englishmen centuries later... As a brilliant leader, Henry knew how to get the best out of his men, and he, the King, promised

those who would fight on St. Crispin's day, no matter if they were of low birth, they would be considered as gentlemen and that they would be his brothers to the end of time...

*This story shall the good man teach his son;
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remember'd;
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition:
 And gentlemen in England now a-bed
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

IV.iii.59-70

Or again on the eve of that same battle of Agincourt, when many of his men are now concerned about their small numbers in facing a far larger army ... He tells his men—that because they are so few, the honor they will gain will be all the greater for it :

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow

*To do our country loss; and if to live,
 The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
 God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
 By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
 Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
 It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
 Such outward things dwell not in my desires.
 But if it be a sin to covet honour,
 I am the most offending soul alive.*

IV.iii.23–31

But can a man who speaks so eloquently of honor and glory actually commit base and wrongful deeds that would even be classified as war crimes? And on that very day of St. Crispin that the Battle of Agincourt would be fought?

WAR CRIMES?

On October 25th, 1415 Henry V had taken many French prisoners and fearing an enemy counter-attack ruthlessly ordered that the prisoners be killed. This act was contrary to the “rules of war” even then, and would without doubt constitute a war crime today. In fact, the English knights refused to carry out the order, and the king had to use the ordinary soldiers to execute the prisoners. The fact that the

French also committed atrocities, including the killing of boys and civilians, was not known to Henry at the time he gave his order, and it cannot be used as an excuse for his order. Furthermore, it is known that the French who participated in this action were subsequently punished by the French, and some served time in prison, and would have been killed by the Dauphin of France had he lived³. This sad blot on the “glorious” campaign of Henry V has been a severe embarrassment to English historians and is seldom known to any but the most specialized of researchers⁴.

Surprisingly, Shakespeare did *not* avoid this incident. It *does* appear in the play. Its presence was difficult for all those who presented the play, and in both the films by Olivier in 1944 and by Branagh in 1989 the directors simply cut it out of the production. The public hardly ever

³ “For this treason,... and for winning of spoil where none to defend it, very many were after committed to prison, and had lost their lives if the Dauphin had longer lived.” Holinshed, Quoted in John R. Brown, *William Shakespeare’s The Life of Henry V*, second revised edition, New York: Signet Classics, 1998, p. 158.

⁴ John Sutherland and Cedric Watts, *Henry V, War Criminal? & Other Shakespeare Puzzles*, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000

gets to see this aspect of the play. A rare exception was the New York production of the play in the mid 1990s⁵!

Indeed Shakespeare recounts the incident in a very special way:

In Act IV scene IV, Pistol, the 'boy' and a French prisoner appear on the stage and proceed to a burlesque dialogue with the boy acting as interpreter, ending in the guarantee of the safety of the Prisoner, a certain Monsieur Le Fer, by Pistol, who promises him safe keeping in exchange for a ransom of 200 crowns.

French Soldier

O, je vous supplie, pour l'amour de Dieu, me pardonner! Je suis gentilhomme de bonne maison: gardez ma vie, et je vous donnerai deux cents ecus.

Pistol

What are his words?

Boy

He prays you to save his life: he is a gentleman of a good house; and for his ransom he will give you two hundred crowns.

Pistol

Tell him my fury shall abate, and I

⁵ Lawrence Weschler, "Take No Prisoners", *The New Yorker*, June 17, 1996, pp.50-56

The crowns will take.

IV.iv.38–45

[...]

French Soldier

*Sur mes genoux je vous donne mille remercimens; et
je m'estime heureux que je suis tombe entre les
mains d'un chevalier, je pense, le plus brave,
vaillant, et tres distingue seigneur d'Angleterre.*

Pistol

Expound unto me, boy.

Boy

*He gives you, upon his knees, a thousand thanks; and
he esteems himself happy that he hath fallen into
the hands of one, as he thinks, the most brave,
valorous, and thrice-worthy signieur of England.*

Pistol

*As I suck blood [extort money], I will some mercy
show!*

Follow me.

Boy

Suivez-vous le grand capitaine.

IV.iv.51–62

This strange device gives pause. Why would Shakespeare introduce this scene? I believe that it is to give a human face to the prisoners, to show their fear, and to establish a link between the captive and the captor. This makes the

subsequent act of murder by royal decree appear truly monstrous.

Indeed in the New York production, the actual killing of le Fer by Pistol (who was not a knight) was shown on stage, behind the King, in response to his order. While some may disagree with carrying this to the extreme opposite from the Olivier/Branagh excision of the scene, a careful reading of the text yields no stage instruction that would contravene this rendering.

But let us return to the construction of the play. Following scene 4 with Pistol, Le Fer and the boy, in scene 5, we see the French concerned about losing the day, but rather than talk of dastardly deeds, they speak of dying with honor. It shows the French talking of committing themselves to die in the field of battle – but no French massacre is shown, nor is the order to commit it given on stage. (It shall be reported on later, but the French order to commit it is not shown).

Bourbon

*The devil take order now! I'll to the throng;
Let life be short, else shame will be too long.*

IV.v.20–24

This, you will concede, are strange lines to give the French if they are to be painted as villains in this affair...

In scene VI, the King enters with prisoners in tow, and it is clear that the day is being won by English arms. Yet the King is aware that the fighting is not done, for the French have not cleared from the field. And then at the end of the scene, the King speaks thus:

*But Hark, what new alarum is this same?
The French have reinforced their scattered men,
Then every soldier kill his prisoners.
Give the word through.*

IV.vi.35–38

Note that Shakespeare shows the King calm and collected, giving this order as a precautionary military decision, not in a fit of anger, as later apologists would try to make it out to be. Indeed, Shakespeare goes further. He explicitly shows that the French atrocities are known only later and used as an excuse by writing in a separate and subtle scene immediately following the order for the slaughter.

In the following scene, Fluellen and Gower report on the atrocities of the French. They then link these atrocities to the act of the king, justifying, ex-post, his monstrous decision.

Fluellen

*Kill the poys and the luggage? 'Tis expressly
against the law of arms; 'tis as arrant a piece of
knavery, mark you know, as can be offert – in your
conscience, now, is it not?*

Gower

*'Tis certain there's not a boy alive, and the
cowardly rascals that ran from the battle ha' done
this slaughter; besides, they have burned and
carried away al that was in the King's tent;
wherefore the King most worthily hath caused every
soldier to cut his prisoner's throat. O, 'tis
a gallant king!*

IV.vii.1–11

Some forty lines later Henry appears to learn of the French atrocities and says that this is the first time that he is truly angry since setting foot in France, and promises that there shall be no quarter given, a battle to the death is to ensue:

*I was not angry since I came to France
Until this instant. Take a trumpet, herald,
Ride thou unto the horsemen on yond hill:
If they will fight with us, bid them come down,
Or void the field: they do offend our sight.*

*If they'll do neither, we will come to them,
 And make them skirr away, as swift as stones
 Enforced from the old Assyrian slings.
 Besides, we'll cut the throats of those we have,
 And not a man of them that we shall take
 Shall taste our mercy. Go and tell them so.*

IV.vii.50-60

It is important to note here that Shakespeare could easily have changed the sequence of the King's order to come after the knowledge of the French atrocities. He chose not to do so. Indeed, by placing the dialogue of Fluellen and Gower after the order and before the anger of the king, he subtly repudiates the English efforts at justification of the act as reprisal. By linking it to the humanity of the prisoner Le Fer, he underscores the full monstrosity of Henry's order.

CONCLUSIONS

This is the multi-layered Shakespeare who speaks to us across space and time. This is the writer who can recognize the attractiveness of the charismatic warrior kings from Alexander to Napoleon, and their ability to capture our imagination, while at the same time reminding us of the horror of war and the ugly side of their enterprises. He

gives us time to see the view from the vantage point of the average soldier concerned with survival, not just the generals bent on “glory”. In this play, he shows us the soldier’s doubts about the value of the cause and the honesty of the King who leads them.

All this is not to say that Shakespeare was a peace activist or anti-militaristic. It is to show that this supreme dramatist and insightful observer of the human condition was not blinded by “glory” or hero-worship, and could see the unpleasant realities and had the courage to show them right alongside the ringing words he gives Henry V before Harfleur: Once more unto the breach...etc.

So we can say that Shakespeare, if he recognizes the seductive power of charismatic military conquerors, and if he gives eloquence to this powerful King, he does not lose sight of the more complex issues at hand. For in a devastating way, Shakespeare also chooses to underscore how fleeting were the results of the campaigns of Henry V. He died early, and though he left his infant son Henry VI as king of both France and England, it was to be short-lived. The gains he made in France were lost, and England was again riven by civil war. Shakespeare gives the play this telling epilogue:

*This star of England. Fortune made his sword;
 By which, the world's best garden he achieved;
 And of it left his son imperial lord.
 Henry the Sixth, in fant bands crowned King
 Of France and England, did this king succeed;
 Whose state so many had the managing,
 That they lost France, and made his England bleed:*

So here it is. A play operating at least on *three levels*:

First, the action at the level of the big battles and historic decisions, which is the standard level at which most audiences see the play, or read of the history of the glorious campaigns of Henry V culminating in the battle of Agincourt where a small English army inflicted a massive defeat on a French army six times larger losing only 400 English against over 7000 French dead (including the murdered prisoners) and another 2000 captured, (after the slaying of the other captives)⁶.

⁶ The exact numbers have been the subject of scholarly debate, but not the lop-sidedness of the outcome. Indeed, ...”One of the most amazing facts about the battle was the extraordinary lopsidedness of the casualties. Shakespeare tells of ten thousand French dead versus 29 English dead (Act 4, Scene 8). More modern estimates put the number of French dead at between 4000 and 11000, with best estimates about 7000 (including the murdered prisoners), plus another 2000 prisoners. Estimates of English dead range from

Second, at the level of the average soldiers, Pistol, Williams and the rest, giving the human level of the drama that is unfolding. Distant from the grand historic events, worried more about survival, these all too human voices are not the ones recorded by historians. Yet it is here that Shakespeare brings out the full impact of war and its horrors, all the more forcefully for being so understated. It is at that level that the prisoners are brought to life with Pistol and Le Fer, and the horror of the killing of civilians is given a human face by the boy, who implicitly was among those murdered by the French in their own attack on the boys and the civilians.

Third, at the level of the underlying designs of the decision makers, where doubt is cast on the entire enterprise by showing (from Act II *Henry IV*) the possibility of the whole adventure being to busy “giddy minds with foreign quarrels”, on to the mercenary motives for the Church’s support for Henry’s claim to France, on to the dismissive final epilogue that shows how short lived these gains were, despite their enormous price in blood.

Shakespeare’s 29 to a high of 1600. (The high number probably represents all deaths for the entire chevauchée, including deaths from dysentery.) The best estimate is about 400. “ (see <http://www.aginc.net/battle/play-comments.htm>), 27 July 2013

What makes this reading of the play so potent is the realization that Shakespeare had to greatly simplify the story line. He summarized the complicated campaign to just three main events: The siege of Harfleur, the battle of Agincourt, and the treaty of Troyes. In the play, the successful negotiations immediately follow the victory at Agincourt, without the abortive negotiations, endless discussions and additional years of fighting reported in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, who most believe was Shakespeare's major historical source⁷. Given this necessary simplification of the major plot, it becomes even more important to recognize what he chose to put in. The scenes we discussed are obviously part of the design of Shakespeare to temper his portrait of the King referred to as "a pattern in prince-hood, a lodestar in honor, and mirror of magnificence" in *Holinshed*.

It is this multi-layered reality of Shakespeare's work that intrigues us to this day. It is the ambiguity, so human, that the supreme craftsman injects into his plays and his characters that have helped his work transcend space and time.

⁷ John R. Brown, *op.cit.* p. 133.

Today as we look at the horrors of wars all around us, as we listen to the War Crimes tribunal in the Hague, as we think of the many horrible acts that need to be censured, as we listen to those who would find excuses to the murder of innocents and talk of collateral damage, as we see jingoistic fervor replace reason and see the courage required to speak of horrors committed by the great powers against the weak... as we see all this, surely, Shakespeare's rendering of the warrior king, is one that deserves a second reading. The scenes we discussed are obviously part of the design of Shakespeare to temper his portrait of the King, a portrait that he painted with his inimitable brushstrokes on the canvas of history.

We could thus usefully study many of Shakespeare's History Plays and the characters he brought to life in them and we will find that...

*Every phrase and every sentence
Is an end and a beginning.*

T.S. Eliot – Four Quartets

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ISMAIL SERAGELDIN, Director, Library of Alexandria, also chairs the Boards of Directors for each of the BA's affiliated research institutes and museums. He serves as Chair and Member of a number of advisory committees for academic, research, scientific and international institutions. He has held many international positions including as Vice President of the World Bank (1993–2000).

Dr. Serageldin has received many awards including: First recipient of Grameen Foundation (USA) Award for a lifetime commitment to combating poverty, (1999); Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters awarded by the government of France (2003); Pablo Neruda Medal of Honor, awarded by the Government of Chile (2004); The Bajaj Award for promoting Gandhian values outside India (2006); Order of the Rising Sun – Gold and Silver Star awarded by the Emperor of Japan (2008); Champion of Youth Award by the World Youth Congress, Quebec (2008); Knight of the French Legion of Honor awarded

by the President of France (2008); The Swaminathan Award for Environmental Protection (Chennai, India, 2010); Millennium Excellence Award for Lifetime Africa Achievement Prize, by the Excellence Awards Foundation, Ghana (2010); The Public Welfare Medal, by the National Academy of Sciences, Washington DC (2011); Commander of the Order of Arts & Letters awarded by the government of France (2011).

He has lectured widely all over the world including delivering the Mandela Lecture (Johannesberg, 2011), the Nexus Lecture (Netherlands, 2011), the Keynote Address to the First International Summit of the Book (Washington DC, 2012). He was distinguished professor at Wageningen University and at the College de France.

He has published over 60 books and monographs and over 200 papers on a variety of topics including biotechnology, rural development, sustainability, and the value of science to society. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from Cairo University and Master's degree and a PhD from Harvard University and has received over 30 honorary doctorates.