Monica Oancă

University of Bucharest

RICHARD II. *FROM CHRONICLE TO DRAMA*

Keywords*: medieval chronicle,* Richard II*, drama, Froissart, Renaissance theatre, Shakespeare's historical plays, narrative approach*

Abstract*: In this paper I intend to discuss* Richard II *as a historical character presented by Froissart in his Chronicles and as a literary character presented by Shakespeare in his historical play. I will focus on the change in the narrative approach from medieval chronicles to Renaissance drama. Besides Froissart's* Chronicles*, I will refer to other contemporary sources, like Thomas Walsingham's* Historia Anglicana*, and visual representations.*

The chroniclers during Richard II's reign were either secular clerks or monks and this fact was echoed by obvious differences in their texts. The secular clerks, like Froissart, needed a rich patron (or patroness), which implied a certain allegiance. The chroniclers who were monks, like Thomas Walsingham, were part of a tradition of writing history and had a religious approach. One of their purposes was to use historical material, or events, retold as anecdotes, to teach their readers moral lessons. From the medieval chroniclers' work, Richard II *emerges as a rather contradictory character.*

Shakespeare acknowledged these facts and tried to solve this puzzle by emphasising Richard's narcissistic personality as an explanation for his changing moods and sudden decisions, and also for his aggressive reactions and his generous unexpected gestures. The Renaissance playwright, following Tudor propaganda, regarded Richard's deposition as part of a larger set of events and his Richard II is only the first part of the tetralogy that ends with Henry V's victorious reign.

Shakespeare and Froissart wrote in totally different milieus and they addressed dissimilar audiences, both in time and in social class, yet they both wanted to entertain. However, I shall show that, as a representative of the dramatic genre, Shakespeare's Richard II *is coherent in its rendering of events which, in a chronicle, do not have an explanatory frame.*