

“Presume not that I am the thing I was”: The Transformation of the Idea of the King and the Concept of Kingship in Shakespeare’s Henriad

Meriç Tutku ÖZMEN

Middle East Technical University, Türkiye

Abstract: From 1584 to 1599, Shakespeare wrote two tetralogies of history plays covering the period from the reign of Richard II to Henry VII. As Elizabeth’s age (she was fifty-seven in 1590), her problematic right to the crown, and the fact that the crown would pass to the Stuart dynasty, whose Catholic members had previously been excluded as potential successors, unless the queen would leave an heir make history plays popular among the theatregoers in Shakespeare’s time. In his history plays, Shakespeare is concerned with the problems of rebellion, the divine right of kings, and the nature of kingship. In his portrayal of kings, the playwright is more concerned with the monarchs’ actions rather than their eloquent speeches. The king in each play, as well as several other characters, provides insight and embodies a different approach to the idea of an ideal monarch. Each king differs from the other in crucial ways and has unique weaknesses and strengths. The hardships of being a king and the responsibility it brings are central to these plays, and the soliloquies delivered by the characters draw attention to what actually makes a king or gives him the right to rule, a question that has been considered at key points throughout the sequence of the history plays. Hence, this paper aims to scrutinize the transformation of the idea of a king and the concept of kingship in Shakespeare’s Henriad, namely *Richard II*, *Henry IV Part 1*, *Henry IV Part 2*, and *Henry V*.

Keywords:

Shakespeare,
History plays,
Henriad,
Concept of kingship,
Henry V

Article History:

Received:
27 July 2022

Accepted:
02 Aug. 2023

“Sanma ki ben artık eski bildiğin benim”:

Shakespeare’in Henriad’ında Kral Fikrinin ve Krallık Kavramının Dönüşümü

Öz: Shakespeare, 1584 ve 1599 yılları arasında II. Richard’dan VII. Henry’ye kadar olan saltanat dönemini kapsayacak şekilde İngiltere tarihini ele alan iki tetraloji kaleme aldı. Elizabeth’in yaşı (1590’de elli yedi yaşındaydı), sorunlu hükümdarlık hakkı ve bir varis bırakmaması ile tahtın, mensupları daha önce olası halefler olarak dışlanmış olan Katolik eğilimli Stuart hanedanına geçeceği gerçeği dikkate alındığında, tarih oyunları Shakespeare döneminin tiyatro severleri arasında çok popülerdi. Shakespeare, tarih oyunlarında isyan sorunları, kralın kutsal varlığı ve krallık kavramının yapısıyla ilgilenir. Yazar, bu oyunlar içerisindeki kralları sunarken kralların süslü konuşmalarından daha ziyade eylemlerine odaklanır. Diğer birkaç karakter gibi, her oyundaki kral, krallık kavramının iç yüzünü anlamayı sağlar ve bu kavrama farklı bir yaklaşım getirir. Her kral

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Shakespeare,
Tarih oyunları,
Henriad,
Krallık kavramı,
V. Henry

bir diğerinden çok farklıdır ve kendine özgü zayıf ve güçlü yanları vardır. Kral olmanın zorlukları ve getirdiği sorumluluk, bu oyunların merkezinde yer almakta ve karakterlerin tiratları, bir kralı gerçekte neyin kral yaptığına veya ona yönetme hakkını neyin verdiğine dikkat çeker; bu, tarih oyunlarının ardıl düzeni boyunca kilit olarak kabul edilen bir sorudur. Bu nedenle, bu makale Shakespeare'in Henriad oyunlarında – *II. Richard*, *Kral IV. Henry: 1*, *Kral IV. Henry: 2* ve *Kral V. Henry*'de – bir tür dönüşüme uğrayan kral ve krallık kavramını incelemeyi amaçlar.

Makale Geçmişi:

Geliş Tarihi:
27 Temmuz 2022

Kabul Tarihi:
02 Ağustos 2023

How to Cite: Özmen, Meriç Tutku. “Presume not that I am the thing I was:’ The Transformation of the Idea of the King and the Concept of Kingship in Shakespeare’s Henriad.” *IDEAS: Journal of English Literary Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2023, pp. 89–104.



In his history plays written between 1584 and 1599, William Shakespeare (bapt. 1564–1616) mostly used historical facts covering the reigns of kings from Richard II to Richard III and the rise of Richmond, who was the grandfather of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) and the first King of the Tudor dynasty, to power as the future King of England. Since Elizabeth’s old age, her problematical right to the throne and the possibility of passing the crown to the Stuart dynasty, previously excluded as successors because of its Catholic identity, were important issues of the period, history plays fascinated the Elizabethan theatregoers. Shakespeare is concerned with political issues like rebellions and the nature of kingship in these plays as the representation of kings in Shakespeare’s histories “is governed by the understanding that it is what kings do rather than what they are or claim to be that is important” (Hadfield 455). Hence, this paper aims to explore the transformation of the idea of a king and the concept of kingship in Shakespeare’s *Richard II* (1597), *Henry IV, Part 1* (1598), *Henry IV, Part 2* (1600), and *Henry V* (1600).

Richard II (1595–1596) is the first in a series of eight plays that trace the story of the English monarchy from the reign of Richard II (r. 1377–1399) to the fall of Richard III (r. 1483–1485). In *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Harold Bloom groups *Richard II* with what he calls “The Major Histories,” along with the two *Henry IV* plays and *Henry V* (247), as distinct from what he identifies as “The First Histories,” *King John*, the three *Henry VI* plays, and *Richard III* (41). *Richard II* is primarily concerned with the questions of the divine right of an anointed king, of the role of a king and how that role with its responsibilities is defined, what a king should be, and what kind of a king Richard was.

The medieval notion of kingship, the notion of kingship in the lifetime of Richard II, involved a divinely ordained ruler who was responsible for protecting his people,

exercising supreme military and judicial power: "the concept of the monarch ruling as the chosen vice-regent of God, independent of the consent of the commons, unfettered by ecclesiastical authority, outside of and prior to the laws of the kingdom – all summed up in the term, 'divine right'" (Carroll 127). In relation to this notion, Richard II became the king in 1377 when he was only 10 years old, at an age when someone cannot be expected to have sovereignty over a country and its people. Furthermore, he was deposed in 1399 at the age of 32, before reaching a mature understanding of kingship which could be observed in his successors portrayed in Shakespeare's *Henriad*. In *Richard II*, Shakespeare presents Richard as the king, as the ruler through such negatives as John of Gaunt and/or through such foils as Henry Bolingbroke. His relationships with other characters and his attitude towards them and towards certain events provide the insight needed to understand what manner of a king he is. John of Gaunt, the uncle of the king, in an indirect manner, blames Richard and his betrayal of the trust his subjects had in him for England's trials. England is in ruins because of Richard's domestic policies and how he handles certain conflicts like the duel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke. The condition of England's financial ruin reflects the deeper condition of Richard's existential or emotional destitution. Gaunt also accuses Richard's advisors of being corrupt: "A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown, / Whose compass is no bigger than thy head" (II.i.100–101). It can be argued that this is a failure on Richard's part, "a lapse that combines bad judgment in advisers with mortal vanity and a poor sense of his divine responsibility as king" (Heims 95). Furthermore, it can be argued that this failure of the king also included him putting his political ambitions above his position as an anointed monarch. The act of anointing is often used by Christians as a symbol of God's grace, as anointing is seen as a sign that someone has been set apart for a special calling or purpose. The monarch is imbued with sacredness by the act of anointing, and it is about changing the monarch's character by consecration. In the play, Richard explains it as such:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord. (III.ii.54–57)

However, as Gaunt also complains, "Richard is the 'landlord of England'" (Heims 93), so he does not act like a king, but rather like a manager. "Richard is not seen as fulfilling the heroic, moral, and metaphysical function of God's steward" (Heims 93), which obviously leads him to failure in fulfilling his duty to protect his land and his subjects.

His defective way of handling the conflict between his subjects needs further scrutiny as another instance of his failure in representing the ideal monarch. At the beginning of the play when he stops the duel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray, Richard seems to be a wise, impartial supporter of reconciliation and a peacemaker. The king stops the duel with gentle words and these words seem to show how considerate and good-hearted he is. However, nothing is as it seems to be and this is made clear later in the play. When news about John of Gaunt's death reaches Richard, he confiscates all of the wealth

which should have been inherited by Gaunt's son, Bolingbroke. This incident shows that Richard is not a benign monarch; rather, he is a tyrant. As Neil Heims states, "Richard does not represent a strong, divinely sanctioned royal and central manifestation of power around which the state can be ordered. His self-involvement makes him the centre of his concern. It usurps the grace of giving himself, of sacrificing himself, in his function as king, potentially placing his nation's concerns above his own" (Heims 95). Moreover, it can be inferred from the play that the reason why he stops the duel is also a selfish one. The reason behind the duel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray is only ever hinted at in the play. In Bolingbroke's words, it is implied that the king himself ordered the Duke of Gloucester's murder. This means that when Richard stops the duel, he is not acting as a benevolent king who does not want his subjects to be at odds with each other. On the contrary, showcasing his self-centredness, he is trying to avoid creating a scandal that might incriminate him in Gloucester's murder.

What Richard lacks in action, he has in abundance in oratory skills and his use of poetical words. He is the most prominent figure in the play when it comes to delivering elaborate lines. His skill as an accomplished orator makes him seem more sympathetic than he actually is. He is more articulate when expressing himself and this makes him more relatable and easier to understand than his rival Bolingbroke. As Bloom aptly puts it,

Richard is a bad king and an interesting metaphysical poet; his two roles are antithetical, so that his kingship diminishes even as his poetry improves. At the close, he is a dead king, first forced to abdicate and then murdered, but what stays in our ears is his mock metaphysical lyricism. A foolish and unfit king, victimized as much by his own psyche and its extraordinary language as he is by Bolingbroke, Richard wins not so much our sympathy as our reluctant aesthetic admiration. . . . He is totally incompetent as a politician, and totally a master of metaphor. (249)

Richard's skill as an articulate, eloquent poet makes him one of the most memorable characters in Shakespeare's history plays. In Richard's illustration, therefore, it is not possible to see his transformation, but his unreliable, conflicting character. As Richard only appears in *Richard II*, he can be taken as a link and a point of comparison to the other kings in the tetralogy. He also provides a starting point for Shakespeare's transformation of the idea of and the conception of ideal kingship. As Lisa Hopkins puts it, "*Richard II* is not only a freestanding drama but also the first play of the second tetralogy, and that at least part of its function is thus to introduce us to the story of Hal" (403). Through the Henriad, Shakespeare takes the readers on a journey, beginning with Richard II who is, in a way, an immature king and could only be judged by how he expresses himself, which contradicts how he behaves/acts.

Henry IV, Part 1 (1597–1598) is the second play in the tetralogy and inherits Bolingbroke as its titular character. The previous play, *Richard II*, deals with Bolingbroke's rise to power and his defeat of Richard, becoming the new king. *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry*

IV, Part 2 focus on Henry IV's reign and his struggle to keep the peace in the country as well as his struggle to keep the throne. King Henry IV's father was John of Gaunt, of the House of Plantagenet, and his mother was of the House of Lancaster. He was born Henry of Bolingbroke and he later became the tenth king of England, the first Lancastrian to hold the throne. He was the one who deposed Richard II. His reign was not a peaceful one as he spent much of his reign dealing with rebellions and plots to dethrone him. His son, Prince Hal of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, succeeded him to become King Henry V.

Although the titles of the plays are *Henry IV*, King Henry is not the main character of these plays but rather serves as the historical focus of the plays. He provides a sense of constancy and a centre of authority: He is the singular character with ties to the happenings in all of the plays in the Henriad. His actions are largely secondary to the plots of *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, and one of his functions in these plays is to act as Shakespeare's spokesperson who voices out some ideas about the notion of kingship. Both parts of *Henry IV* focus mainly on the development of the character of Prince Hal, demonstrating his journey from a seemingly good-for-nothing prince to a competent monarch. However, it is impossible to dismiss the importance Shakespeare seems to attach to King Henry IV. Throughout *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, the king is portrayed in a sympathetic way. He is wise to the ways of war and deeply aware of the cost it might bring to his people: "The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife, / No more shall cut his master" (I.i.17–18). He is depicted as a considerate and peace-loving monarch, trying to avoid any bloodshed by expressing willingness to negotiate peace with the rebels:

He bids you name your griefs, and with all speed
You shall have your desires with interest
And pardon absolute for yourself and these
Herein misled by your suggestion. (IV.iii.48–51)

Regal, proud, and somewhat aloof, his persona as a king is vastly different from the one Prince Hal will adopt once he becomes the king. Whereas Prince Hal expresses a desire to be relatable and close to his subjects, King Henry vehemently denies such an option and reprimands the prince for his foolishness. He states that the presence of a king should be "like a robe pontifical, / Ne'er seen but wonder'd at" and "Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast / And won by rareness such solemnity" (III.ii.56–59). His notion of an ideal monarch seems to be the complete opposite of Prince Hal's, in addition to Shakespeare's as the playwright is evidently in favour of the latter and seems to be criticizing the former.

The setting of the play is a kingdom troubled by treachery and rebellion, which explains why King Henry is plagued with worries. He feels guilty because he won his crown by deposing the former king and through a civil war. Furthermore, he is still haunted by the past as his reign has not brought peace or an end to the unrest within the country. He is troubled by his own uneasy conscience and his feelings of uncertainty about the legitimacy of his rule. Due to these troubling matters burdening his mind, King Henry does not seem to reach the expectations set out for him in *Richard II*. In *Richard II*, he is

obviously the better alternative in place of the young landlord-mannered king. He is depicted as a strong warrior with high morals who can be expected to become an effective ruler. Yet, the political atmosphere and the constant rebellions he has to deal with when he becomes the king beg the question of whether he has truly achieved the potential that he has claimed in *Richard II*. Although King Henry insists he will be mighty and fearsome, his position is tenuous, as some of the characters such as Worcester remind him that although he is the king now, there were others who helped Henry advance to power (Knowles 416–417). As a result, he is unable to rule as competently and as effectively as Prince Hal will, once he becomes the king. Although he is without the moral legitimacy that every ruler needs, as he is the usurper of the throne in a way, he keeps his tight yet tenuous hold on the throne and never loses his sovereignty. But with an ethical sense clouded by his own sense of compromised honour, it is clear that Henry IV can never be a great king or anything more than a caretaker to the throne that awaits his son, Henry V.

In *Henry IV, Part 1*, Prince Hal, the central figure who fully and completely illustrates the transformation of the notion of kingship, is introduced. The prince in his youth is seen spending his time in taverns, drinking and wreaking havoc. Throughout the play, his father, Henry IV, constantly voices his complaints against the prince and wishes that he was more like his rival, Henry Hotspur: “Yea, there thou mak’st me sad and mak’st me sin / In envy that my Lord Northumberland / Should be the father to so blest a son” (I.i.77–79) because Northumberland seemingly has a son with the qualities of an ideal ruler. The king remarks that he sees “riot and dishonour stain the brow” (I.i.84) of Prince Hal, and desires that he had Northumberland’s son, also named Harry, as his own: “That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged / In cradle clothes our children where they lay, / . . . / Then would I have his Harry, and he mine” (I.i.86–89). However, through Hal’s various asides and soliloquies, the prince is clearly not what/who he seems: “Yet herein will I imitate the sun, / Who doth permit the base contagious clouds / To smother up his beauty from the world” (I.ii.189–191). He resembles himself to the sun allowing the clouds to hide its beauty from the world. He implies that when the time comes, “when he please again to be himself” (I.ii.192), he will let the whole world see his true self. Evident in this implication, he is different from his appearance, and his pretence of idleness and frivolity is just an act. For him, this act will allow him to shine much brighter because people will not expect him to be any different/better when he is the king. His logic is sound:

If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents. (I.ii.196–199)

Hal counts on the rarity of his character. He is aware of the fact that nothing is more precious than rare accidents:

So, when this loose behaviour I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,

By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off. (I.ii.200–207)

His cunning and wit cannot be ignored. He states that when he is reformed and ready to accept the responsibilities of kingship, he will seem like a better man than he is. Giving everyone the wrong impressions and creating false expectations, he sets the stage for his ultimate victory. Until then, "I'll so offend, to make offence a skill, / Redeeming time when men think least I will" (I.ii.208–209). Furthermore, the way he expresses himself and his skill as a master orator is definitely reminiscent of Richard II's elaborate and memorable speeches.

Hal is a study in contradictions: rascal yet noble, playful yet authoritative. Although his father and many others dismiss him as a ne'er-do-well wastrel, he is undoubtedly the most compelling character. Capable of befriending anyone whom he encounters, he has charming adaptability that makes him powerful in ways neither the king nor Hotspur can compete with: "I am king of courtesy. . . . I am so good a proficient in one-quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language during my life" (II.iv.10–19). Prince Hal spends a lot of time in taverns and becomes the companion of Sir John Falstaff, joining with his tavern-mates in the Gadshill robbery but uses this time as an opportunity to hone his skills as a politician, a negotiator, and a communicator. His 'disgraceful' behaviour enables him to interact with the part of the population who are generally disregarded by the monarch, although they make up the public majority. Thus, Hal can be argued to become a better ruler than his father as he appears more of an open-minded and calculating young man. The prince begins the play as someone unfit to rule and an embarrassment to his father; however, he becomes the man his father has always wished he would become. In the final scenes, he acts in a way befitting of the heir. Just as he explained at the beginning, his wild lifestyle was just a ruse, proving him to be a devious and extremely skilful ruler, one that can be described as a Machiavellian. Prince Hal uses the Machiavellian strategies of power in the realm of politics as mentioned in Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469–1527) *The Prince* (1532). Machiavelli advises the ruler to be cunning like a fox and be strong like a lion:

It [is] necessary then for a prince to know well how to employ the nature of the beasts, he should be able to assume both that of the fox and that of the lion; for whilst the latter cannot escape the traps laid for him, the former cannot defend himself against the wolves. A prince should be a fox, to know the traps and snares; and a lion, to be able to frighten the wolves; for those who simply hold to the nature of the lion do not understand their business. (67)

Prince Hal is both cunning and strong in his deeds; he has the nature of the fox as well as the lion.

The prince is not the only cunning character in the play. His father, King Henry IV, proves himself to be just as resourceful and manipulative as his son. The only difference between the father and the son is their different approaches to the games which need to be played for the crown. Like Hal, the king is also aware that rare occurrences are more valuable:

By being seldom seen, I could not stir
 But, like a comet, I was wondered at,
 That men would tell their children "This is he!"
 Others would say, "Where? Which is Bolingbroke?"
 And then I stole all courtesy from heaven
 And dressed myself in such humility
 That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
 Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
 Even in the presence of the crowned King.
 Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,
 My presence like a robe pontifical,
 Ne'er seen but wondered at; and so my state,
 Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast
 And won by rareness such solemnity. (III.ii.46–59)

He explains that had he not cultivated an image of himself as a mysterious, aloof figure, he would not have been able to attain the support he needed to accomplish what he had done:

Had I so lavish of my presence been,
 So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men,
 So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
 Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
 Had still kept loyal to possession
 And left me in reputeless banishment,
 A fellow of no mark nor likelihood. (III.ii.39–45)

As can be seen from the king's speech, he is just as manipulative as Hal, but in a different way. Like Hal, he also created an elaborate ruse to appear in a particular way, a way fitting his needs and aims. However, the king's and the prince's different approaches to their public reveal the crucial difference in their understanding of power: The king believes in the need to create a somehow distant, mysterious persona to wield the power necessary to rule. It is clear from his words that he believes that the reason Richard lost the throne was because he

Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,
 Had his great name profaned with their scorns,
 And gave his countenance against his name
 To laugh at gibing boys and stand the push
 Of every beardless vain comparative;
 Grew a companion to the common streets[.] (III.ii.63–68)

He worries that Hal is like Richard: "And in that very line, Harry, standest thou, / For thou has lost thy princely privilege / With vile participation" (III.ii.85–87).

Similar to Prince Hal and King Richard, King Henry is also a decidedly skilled rhetorician and an expert manipulator. Richard II uses his oratory skills to make up for his lack of authoritative ones, and he manipulates people into believing what he chooses for them to see. In a similar vein, Prince Hal embraces his role as a wastrel and hides behind a mask, concealing his true nature and aiming to surprise his enemies and his subjects alike with his 'miraculous' transformation. He toys with other people's perceptions of him and wields power over them by shaping his image in their minds: Everyone sees what he desires for them to see. Not unlike Richard II or Prince Hal, King Henry cultivates an image of himself and protects that image until the last minute. His chosen persona is that of an aloof yet benevolent monarch, and that type of behaviour is definitely not less contriving than the other two. The similar aspects of the father and the son, their duplicity and devious stratagems, are contrasted with "the impetuous, unmediated energy of impulsive ambition and impetuous aggression personified by Hotspur. . . . Whereas Hotspur is naïve, the king and the prince are cunning" (Heims 114). Unlike the king and the prince, Hotspur is simple; he is what you see: "He is transparent in his ambition, in his rebellion, in his displays of anger, pride, and self-assertion" (Heims 114). That is not the case when it comes to Henry and Hal: "They are both politicians. Their speech and their actions are devised to mobilize obedience and support by charming and distracting others, even as the father and son fabricate public images designed to serve a private agenda that has great public consequence" (Heims 114).

The three Henrys in the play (the king, Henry IV; the prince, the Prince of Wales, Henry; and Hotspur, Henry Percy) can also be said to embody a different approach to the concept of kingship. Although they share the same name, they are vastly different from each other and have unique weaknesses and strengths. The king appears to be a considerate monarch who tries very hard to avoid bloodshed. He is willing to negotiate with the rebels even on the battlefield and tries to find a middle ground. Next to him, Hotspur's hot-headedness seems even more childish. Despite being an unquestionably brave soldier, Hotspur is not the ideal warrior he appears to be at the beginning of the play. His pride makes him reckless, causing him to rush into battle and underestimate Hal. His reckless anger, blinding pride, and uncontrollable heedlessness bring his downfall at the end of the play. Of the three Henrys, Hal seems to be the most effective ruler. Especially once he leaves his wild ways in the past and decides to "be more [him]self" (III.ii.93). His maturity process is a proof that he will eventually become the articulate, powerful king of *Henry V*. He is the character whose adaptability is the source of his power and success, and his power as a skilful orator is evident from the beginning, even when he is behaving like a hopelessly unrepentant wastrel. Prince Hal is the only character in the play who has the ability to switch between the language of the court scenes which are in verse and the language of the tavern scenes which are in prose, never losing his eloquence in either scene.

The third play in the tetralogy is *Henry IV, Part 2* (1597–1598) and although each of the four plays that together make up the tetralogy is a complete and independent work

in itself, *Henry IV, Part 2* seems to be the only one not able to stand on its own. The play is directly concerned with what happens after the battle in *Henry IV, Part 1* and before the events of *Henry V*. The change in Hal's attitude starts to become even more apparent in *Henry IV, Part 2* with each passing scene. For the first time since his appearance in *Henry IV, Part 1*, he complains about wasting his time with the likes of Falstaff and expresses his regret:

... I feel me much to blame
 So idly to profane the precious time
 When tempest of commotion, like the south,
 Borne with black vapour, doth begin to melt
 And drop upon our bare unarmed heads. (II.iv.360-364)

His sudden remorse further demonstrates the conflict he is experiencing. He obviously enjoys spending time in the tavern, pulling pranks on others; but he is also aware of the fact that there are more important things afoot. He also refuses to acknowledge Falstaff at the end of *Henry IV, Part 2*. Prince Hal, on his way in the procession for the throne, refuses to acknowledge Falstaff who tries to show his familiarity with the prince in the crowd, calling him "my sweet boy" (V.v.42) and "my heart" (V.v.45). However, Hal's reaction is swift and devoid of any sentimentality: "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers. / How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!" (V.v.46-47). This incident shows that Prince Hal, as the new King of England, is quite conscious of his royal place and his responsibilities. He is becoming more and more aware of his responsibility to his father and country.

The hardships of being a king and the burden of responsibility it brings are central to *Henry IV, Part 2*. Both Henry IV and Henry V have trouble sleeping and both characters soliloquise about the burden the crown brings when they are awake at night. Both the father, Henry IV, and later the son, Henry V, question why the simple pleasure of sleeping is denied to a king and given freely to their subjects. Unable to accomplish his potential as an ideal monarch due to the circumstances surrounding his sovereignty and his guilty conscience rooted in his usurpation, Henry IV, with his answer to the question "[u]neasy lies the head that wears a crown" (III.i.31), appears to evade the realities of his rule, as well as the crimes he has committed. The idea that wearing the crown is a burden which causes its bearer to lose sleep is further emphasized by Hal when he takes the crown from his father's pillow and accuses it of the troubles it causes, for being "so troublesome a bedfellow" (IV.iii.154):

O polished perturbation, golden care,
 That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide
 To many a watchful night, sleep with it now –
 Yet not so sound and half so deeply sweet
 As he whose brow with homely biggen bound
 Snores out the watch of night. (IV.iii.155-160)

The prince is aware of the fact that the crown, and the burden it carries with it, is his now that his father is dead. He mourns for his father's death but also seems to be mourning for

the peaceful sleep he is giving up by accepting the responsibilities that come with being the king:

... The care on thee depending
 Hath fed upon the body of my father;
 Therefore thou best of gold art worse than gold:
 Other, less fine in carat, more precious,
 Preserving life in med'cine potable;
 But thou, most fine, most honoured, most renowned,
 Hath eat thy bearer up. (IV.iii.289–295)

It is implied in the play that the unease of carrying the crown comes from the fact that Henry IV wrongfully usurped the throne from Richard II:

... God knows, my son,
 By what bypaths and indirect, crook'd ways
 I met this crown; and I myself know well
 How troublesome it sat upon my head. (IV.iii.313–316)

It is Henry IV's hope that Hal will not have to go through what he himself has suffered because Hal will be getting the crown as his rightful inheritance: "To thee it shall descend with bitter quiet, / Better opinion, better confirmation, / For all the soil of the achievement goes / With me into the earth" (IV.iii.317–320), "How I came by the crown, O God forgive, / And grant it may with thee in true peace live" (IV.iii.348–349). It can be argued that Hal's response to his father's tirade signals and foreshadows an important idea which is explored in the next and final play of the tetralogy, the idea that there is a difference between a capable ruler and a hereditary one:

You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me;
 Then plain and right must my possession be,
 Which I with more than with a common pain
 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain. (IV.iii.350–353)

The final play of Shakespeare's *Henriad* and the last play of the second tetralogy is *Henry V* (1598–1599). This play is argued to be "Shakespeare's most sophisticated analysis of kingship and forces the audience/reader to reconsider the career of England's most celebrated ruler" (Hadfield 464). It can be argued that the play can be read as a work that does not overlook the probability that a country could be ruled more proficiently by a strong and capable leader than a "hereditary monarch, someone who had no claim to govern apart from his intrinsic merit" (Hadfield 461–462). For instance, one image which appears recurrently throughout *Henry V* is that of the king as a player/actor. This is also mentioned in *Henry IV, Part 2* by Henry IV when he is giving his final advice to his son and heir, Prince Hal: "all my reign hath been but as a scene / Acting that argument" (IV.iii.327–328). This image of the king as an actor claims the focal point throughout the tetralogy, starting with Bolingbroke's ascension to the throne, becoming Henry IV. Richard is a performer too, but he is the rightful king and his authority as a ruler and right to rule is never questioned in the play. With Bolingbroke's move against the rightful king, the natural order is disrupted, and in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2* and *Henry V*, the king has to

prove that he has a right to rule. Henry IV's "need to justify his rule by ceaselessly playing the role of king is a performative burden he bequeaths to his heir" (Hadfield 457). P. Rackin also supports this argument by stating that "[m]onarchs who have no natural right to rule – i.e., no English monarchs after Richard – have to prove themselves worthy of the people's support, endlessly playing a part" (qtd. in Hadfield 457). This idea that a king has to prove himself worthy of the support he is given by the people by tirelessly playing a part is very prominent in these plays. Richard II does not seem to be concerned with playing a part for the sake of his crown or his people. He is more interested in his own agenda and does whatever he sees fit to achieve that. The civil unrest makes it an absolute necessity for Henry IV and Henry V to prove their causes right in changing the royal house and causing the turmoil that ensues. Hence, both Henrys are devoted to their assigned roles as monarchs, and they are willing to keep their public image as benevolent kings to prove their worth in the eyes of their people.

According to Neil Heims, the allure of *Henry V* comes from the "self-conscious theatricality" of the play (154). He explains that the structure of the play draws attention to its fictional nature: Each act opens with Chorus, "who calls attention to the structure and construction of the play, to the fact that it is a work of dramatic writing being acted in a theatre" (154). "Within the context of this overt theatricality," as Heims adds, "the figure of Henry performs himself not just for the audience members but for the characters in the drama, investing himself with his role as king" (154). Henry's oratory skills, his dramatic eloquence, are essential to his portrayal as a king, as well as his success as a monarch. His impressive skill in articulation enables him to charm and impress those around him, winning over nearly every single character in the play. *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, as well as *Henry V*, "reveal subversion/containment as the very model of early modern power production, . . . track a process of internal conquest that progressively incorporates all Others into the unitary political nation-state," and King Henry V alone seems to have a "grasp of these mechanisms, enabling him to exploit them more successfully than anyone else" (Crewe 440). The charms he exudes is evident from the beginning, starting with *Henry IV*. As Neims puts it, his "cunning wit and . . . resourcefulness at playing the kind of tricks that defined Hal's behaviour in the two parts of Henry IV have not disappeared with his ascension to the throne. . . . They have been translated into another realm or mode, revived" in *Henry V* (155).

King Henry of *Henry V* and Prince Hal of *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2* are so very different from each other. The first scene of *Henry V* is a testament to that. In the opening scene, Canterbury and Ely are discussing the changes in Henry, commenting upon Prince Hal's transformation from a 'seeming' irresponsible youth into a more mature sovereign. Ely says:

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality.
And so the Prince obscured his contemplation

Under the veil of wildness, which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crevice in his faculty. (I.i.60–66)

The two men comment on how changed Henry is, praising his dignity, intellect, and maturity. In the previous plays, *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, Henry is merely a fun-loving, unruly Prince Hal, who likes to frequent taverns and interact with common people. In the quotation above, the riotous past of the young king is in a way justified, and the changes in him are recognized by the clergymen. Henry hid his true self, concealing his intelligence and maturity by acting the part of a spoiled prince and appearing wild. This was his plan all along, as he had explained in *Henry IV, Part 1*; the seeming wildness of his youth was a calculated act, a type of performance, intended to make his eventual change seem more impressive.

In the beginning of *Henry V*, it can be clearly observed that Henry is looked down upon by his rivals. This is most evident in the scene where the Dauphin sends Henry a box of tennis balls intending them to serve as a mocking symbol of Henry's childish behaviour in the past. However, the young king's reaction to this gift is entirely different than what is expected of him:

And tell the pleasant Prince this mock of his
Hath turned his balls to gun-stones, and his soul
Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them; for many a thousand widows
Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands,
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down,
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.
But this lies all within the will of God,
To whom I do appeal, and in whose name
Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on
To venge me as I may, and to put forth
My rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause.
So get you hence in peace. And tell the Dauphin
His jest will savour but of shallow wit
When thousands weep more than did laugh at it. (I.ii.282–297)

This speech transforms the symbolism behind the tennis balls: The Dauphin intended them to be an insult towards Henry, carrying the implication that the young king is still the reckless youth of the past, not someone to be taken seriously. However, with Henry's response, the tennis balls turn into a symbol of Henry's new identity, a monarch who has steely resolve and strength.

Although Henry lived a wild and reckless youth, as portrayed in the previous plays, in *Henry V* he is a changed man. His rise to power has turned him into a temperate, honourable, solemn, eloquent monarch who rules with equal parts strength and mercy. He has his moments of weakness in private, when he struggles with the responsibilities of being a king, but publicly he projects the image of a king who is assured of his power

and position, who also inspires his subjects to achieve triumph in war and moral uprightness in their lives. He is also a modest king, always attributing his success to God: "O God, thy arm was here; / And not to us but to thy arm alone / Ascribe we all!" (IV.viii.105–107), "Take it, God, / For it is none but thine" (IV.viii.110–111).

In *Henry V*, Henry is every inch the king his father wanted him to be. On the day of the Battle of Agincourt, he delivers a speech on honour and brotherhood, proving himself once again the consummate orator. He announces that the day of the battle, which also coincides with St. Crispin's Day, will forever be remembered because of the soldier's bravery on the battlefield. Thanks to this rousing speech, the troop disregards the odds stacked against them and charges off in high spirit, overwhelming the French troops. When a herald delivers the casualty report of the day, it is obvious that the English are on the victorious side:

This note doth tell me of ten thousand French
That in the field lie slain. . . .
...
So that in these ten thousand they have lost
There are but sixteen hundred mercenaries;
The rest are princes, barons, lords, knights, squires
And gentlemen of blood and quality.
...
Where is the number of our English dead?
Edward the Duke of York; the Earl of Suffolk;
Sir Richard Keighley; Davy Gam, esquire;
None else of name, and of all other men
But five-and-twenty. O God, thy arm was here;
And not to us but to thy arm alone
Ascribe we all. When, without stratagem,
But in plain shock and even play of battle,
Was ever known so great and little loss
On one part and on th'other? Take it, God,
For it is none but thine. (IV.viii.79–80, 86–89, 101–111)

In the tetralogy, *Henry V* is the one most preoccupied with the concept of kingship. Through Henry's soliloquies, the difficulties of being a king are brought into the light. Like his father, Henry V loses the peaceful sleep over the crown's burden. He carries the responsibility of the whole nation:

Upon the King! "Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children and our sins lay on the King!"
We must bear all. (IV.i.222–225)

He asserts that this responsibility is heavy, painful to carry, and that it comes with being born to greatness. However, he realises that not everybody appreciates his deeds for his people's sake and ponders about his sacrifices due to kingship duties:

... What infinite heart's ease
Must kings neglect that private men enjoy!

And what have kings that privates have not too,
Save ceremony, save general ceremony? (IV.i.228–231)

He questions his own worth, asking why people adore him: “What is thy soul, O adoration? / Art thou aught else but place, degree and form, / Creating awe and fear in other men” (IV.i.237–239). He considers his kingship as an impediment and sees no use in the “ceremony,” which, for him, is the only distinct thing a king has. Henry understands all this because he is a king, and neither the fancy title ‘king’ preceding the name, nor the throne he sits on can provide him with the much-craved peaceful sleep. He argues a “wretched slave” sleeps better than a king; he enjoys the peace without worrying about the vigil of a king:

The slave, a member of the country's peace,
Enjoys it, but in gross brain little wots
What watch the King keeps to maintain the peace,
Whose hours the peasant best advantages. (IV.i.273–276)

This soliloquy is “Shakespeare’s most sophisticated reflection on the problem of kingship” and “[t]here is no historical precedent for this scene or this speech in the chronicle sources or earlier plays” (Hadfield 460). It draws attention to what actually makes a king or gives him the right to rule, a question that has been considered at key points throughout the sequence of the histories. Here, Henry is concentrating on the burdens he must carry as the king and tries to justify his actions as ruler. He admits that only ceremony separates the king from his subjects.

To conclude, it can be argued that Shakespeare’s *Henriad* reflects his beliefs on the concept of kingship, and Prince Hal/Henry V seems to be the ideal ruler/monarch in Shakespeare’s mind. Throughout the tetralogy, the reader is given different leader figures who possess extremely different qualities, but although the reader likes and sympathises with them from time to time, none of them has what it means to be the ‘perfect’ ruler. Richard II is a master orator who is an incredibly likeable character, yet he is a self-centred king who fails in his duties as the anointed king. He is defeated by Bolingbroke/Henry IV, who is a more reserved figure yet a decent ruler. However, he is a usurper and has to deal with the troubles such a situation creates. His qualifications as a king are somewhat shadowed by the way he snatched the throne from Richard II. Henry IV is followed by his son Prince Hal/Henry V, who is a character that combines all the good/desirable qualities of the others in one body. He is as eloquent and charismatic as Richard II. He is a competent ruler who rightfully inherited the throne, unlike his father. Through Henry V, Shakespeare makes the reader realise that neither being the rightful owner of the throne nor possessing the necessary qualities makes one a good ruler; one needs both.

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Disclosure Statements

- ✕ The author of this article confirms that this research does not require a research ethics committee approval.
- ✕ The author of this article confirms that their work complies with the principles of research and publication ethics.
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