"[Bolingbroke] weighs [Richard] down"[1]: The Idea of Perfect Monarch in *Richard II*[2]

"Bolingbroke Karşısında Richard Güçsüz Kalıyor": *II. Richard* Oyununda Kusursuz Hükümdar Düşüncesi

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Abstract

In his history plays Shakespeare presents the idea of perfect monarch who achieves to unite the nation regardless of class distinctions, and demonstrates that if a sovereign violates the laws and disregards common consent, s/he fails to exercise justice, and consequently establishes despotic rule. Hence, the aim of this article is to argue that in *Richard II* Shakespeare puts forth the distinction between a perfect monarch and a tyrant through the comparison of Richard II, the legitimate king, and Bolingbroke, who accedes as King Henry IV after he usurps the throne. Richard is presented as an unjust king who violates the laws and customs, suppresses his people through illegal monetary practices, empowers insufficient counsellors, and loses the love and support of the noblemen and the common men; whereas, Bolingbroke is portrayed as an effective sovereign as he respects the laws and customs, fights injustice and gains the admiration of the nobility and the commoners. Therefore, it will be argued that as Shakespeare presents, being law-abiding and protecting the rights of the people are the qualities of an ideal ruler while flouting the laws and dispossessing the people are the features of an ineffective and a despotic monarch. Accordingly, it will also be demonstrated that through the medieval English history and politics Shakespeare refers to the idea of perfect monarch in the Elizabethan era. He refers to Elizabeth I's abuse of her sovereign authority to entrust her favourites with authority and to suppress her people by corrupt financial practices.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Perfect Monarch, Power, the Elizabethan Era

Öz

Shakespeare, tarihi oyunlarında sınıf farkı gözetmeksizin ulusu birleştirmeyi başaran mükemmel kralı sunar ve hükümdarın yasalara karşı gelmesi ve ortak rızayı dikkate almaması durumunda adaleti sağlayamadığını ve despot bir yönetim sürdürdüğünü gösterir. Bu sebeple, bu makalenin amacı, Shakespeare'in, *II. Richard* oyununda meşru bir hükümdar olan Kral 2. Richard'ı ve tahtı ele geçirerek Kral 4. Henry olan Bolingbroke'u karşılaştırarak mükemmel kral ile zorba hükümdar arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya koyduğunu göstermektir. 2. Richard, yasaları ve gelenekleri yok sayan, usulsüz mali uygulamalarla halka zulmeden, yetersiz danışmanlara yetki veren ve soylu sınıfla birlikte halkın da sevgisini ve desteğini kaybeden adaletsiz bir kral olarak anlatılırken, Bolingbroke, kanunlara ve adetlere saygı gösteren, haksızlıklarla savaşan ve hem soyluların hem orta sınıfın takdirini kazanan etkili bir yönetici olarak tasvir edilir. Shakespeare, yasalara saygılı olmanın ve insanların haklarını korumanın ideal hükümdarın özellikleri olduğunu gösterirken, yasaları tanımamanın ve halkın malına el koymanın güçsüz ve zorba bir yöneticinin özellikleri olduğunu ortaya koyar. Buna bağlı olarak, Shakespeare'in, ortaçağ İngiliz tarihini ve politikasını, Elizabeth döneminde kusursuz hükümdar düşüncesine atıfta bulunmak için kullandığı ortaya konacaktır. Shakespeare, Kraliçe 1. Elizabeth'in gözdelerine yetki vermesine ve halkı kötü mali uygulamalarla ezerek gücünü kötüye kullanmasına gönderme yapar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: William Shakespeare, Kusursuz Hükümdar, Güç, Elizabeth Dönemi

Introduction

Shakespeare's *Richard II* deals with the deposition of a rightful king, Richard II, who ruled England between 1377 and 1399. He was deposed by Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, who was banished by Richard, and whose right to inherit the estates of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was violated. Bolingbroke raised a rebellion with the support of the nobles, usurped his cousin's throne, and became King Henry IV in 1399 (Bevan, 1994, p. 51-67). In this sense, *Richard II* displays not only the dethronement of a legitimate king and his death due to his crimes and follies but also Bolingbroke's political rise as the new monarch. Richard II is the legitimate king with divine right to rule; however, he acts as a weak ruler who abuses power by privileging the authority of the monarch over the authority of the law and fails to exercise justice, which prevents him from having a just government. On the other

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hand, Bolingbroke takes the throne as a stronger and more efficient sovereign as he acts lawfully and has the support of the whole English nation as an ideal ruler. Hence, as Robert Jones (1991) states, the play "dramatizes the forcible replacement of an ineffectual king […] by an apparently abler leader" (p. 69). For Edward Dowden (1879), "[t]he interest of the play centres in […] the personal contrast between the falling and rising kings, and the political action of each […]" (p. 89). In this respect, one of the main concerns of the play is kingship and its requirements. In other words, what it means to be a king, the relationship between the king and his people, and the plight of the country that is weakly governed are the issues that are problematised in the play.

The aim of this article is to argue that Shakespeare presents the features of a bad ruler and the qualities of an ideal monarch through the characters of Richard II and Bolingbroke, respectively, in *Richard II*. He compares the ways that the two men regard the use of power in order to demonstrate that Richard II who abuses laws and customs by an autocratic rule, and consequently fails to exercise justice and loses the support of the nation is a weak monarch while Bolingbroke who is determined to enforce the law and claims his rights, which makes him have the support of the commoners and the nobility by his righteous rebellion, is presented as an ideal ruler. In this sense, it will be emphasised that Shakespeare analyses the characters of Richard and Bolingbroke, "the weak king who could not rule, and the strong king who pressed him from his place" (Dowden, 1998, p. 248), and presents what happens if the royal authority is misused and lost due to illicit acts, and what happens if it is promoted by justice and good government. It will also be argued that Shakespeare associates the past and the present in *Richard II* and interprets the issues of his time by the exemplarity of the past. In a sense, he draws an analogy between King Richard II's rule and Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603), and refers to Elizabeth's competence as an ideal monarch through the presentation of the features of both an ineffective ruler and an efficient sovereign. He shows that there are similarities between Richard and Elizabeth in terms of empowering their favourite nobles and their monetary practices, which makes both monarchs weak. In this respect, first, the common mistakes, replacing the wise counsellors with idle advisers, and oppressing the commoners and the nobles by imposing financial obligations, of Richard II and Elizabeth I will be put forth within the historical and political background. Then, in the play Richard's violation of the feudal customs and the law of inheritance, his failure to choose good counsellors, and his violation of monetary customs will be presented while Bolingbroke's demanding justice and struggle to end Richard's dictatorial rule will be put forth. In this sense, the attitudes of the noblemen and the commoners to Richard and Bolingbroke will be analysed. Last, the gardeners' comparison between Richard and Bolingbroke with regard to the features of a perfect monarch will be dealt with.

Elizabeth I as the Political Reflection of Richard II

In the 1580s and 1590s, comparisons were made between Richard II and Elizabeth I, who was accused of the same follies as those of Richard through the greater part of her reign. So, as in Pearlman's words (1992), *Richard II* displays that "the fall of King Richard has contemporary application" (p. 82), and mirrors the problem of misgovernment which existed during Elizabeth's rule. In other words, the history of Richard's reign had allusions to Elizabeth and her court. As Lily Campbell (1964) also emphasises, "in the play Shakespeare reiterated the charges against Richard that had been so often laid at Queen Elizabeth's door" (p. 211). Richard was criticised for privileging his favourites and letting them have significant influence over affairs of state though they were not experienced. Particularly, in the mid-1390s, the wise councillors were replaced by the ones who were "not insufficiently qualified by status, age, learning, and experience" because they readily agreed to Richard's authoritative rule as long as it served their interest (Goodman, 2008, p. 73). Unlike Edward III

who fairly bestowed honours to the nobility, Richard created knights, earls and dukes without the consent of the Parliament and by violating the established norms of the nobility, which was particularly seen in his promotions of 1385-87. He bestowed new titles to the Earl of Cambridge, the Earl of Buckingham and Robert de Vere, which provoked discontent among the nobles and the members of the Parliament as the high positions were occupied by men who were inexperienced in warfare (Given-Wilson, 2008, p. 117-118). Richard particularly favoured Robert de Vere, "Earl of Oxford, hereditary Great Chamberlain at Court, and five years Richard's senior" (Bevan, 1994, p. 6). Though he was not qualified to guide Richard in politics, he was promoted as Marquis of Dublin in 1385, then 1st Duke of Ireland, which offended the opponents of the king (Bevan, 1994, p. 12). Furthermore, Richard antagonised the nobles as he "had redistributed their estates and local power into the hands of a group of newly created dukes dependent on and loyal to him" (Pollard, 2000, p. 20). Just like Richard II, Elizabeth I was accused of being dominated by her favourites and neglecting the good counsel of the trusty advisers who were experienced in state affairs. Elizabeth surrendered the affairs to Robert Dudley, who was the son of the Duke of Northumberland and was thought to have an intimacy with the Queen. Sir Christopher Hatton was another courtier who was first made a gentleman-pensioner and then appointed to the Office of the Lord of Chamberlain although he was not a lawyer. The accusation that Elizabeth gave her favourites undue power was also repeated in regard to Sir Francis Walsingham and Robert Cecil (Campbell, 1964, p. 174-175). As Chris Given-Wilson (2008) notes, "Richard's attempts to manipulate the property market on his followers' behalf provide a further reason for suspicion between king and magnates" (p. 120). Richard disregarded the principles of wardship and confiscated the lands of Bolingbroke which he inherited from his father, John of Gaunt. Moreover, he rewarded his favourites like William Scrope and Edward Earl of Rutland with the lands he appropriated from the nobles (Given-Wilson, 2008, p. 120-123). Besides seizing the lands of the nobility, Richard violated the monetary customs in order to raise fund for his personal expenses, which received criticism from the public (Ormrod, 2008, p. 183). In Ormrod's words (2008), "[…] 'public' funds were being squandered, as never before, on the 'private' extravagances of the court" (p. 184), and "[…] the system was becoming severely strained and could certainly not sustain either the king's military commitments in Ireland or even his escalating expenditure on diplomacy without injections of extraordinary direct taxation" (p. 183). Though the people were not willing to pay extra taxes during peacetime, Richard obliged them to provide financial support so that he could maintain the royal extravagance (Barron, 2008, p. 136-139). As Caroline Barron (2008) explains, "in the first ten years of Richard's reign the expenditure was much the same at 3,170 pounds per annum. However, in the period of Richard's personal rule, from 1390, the average spending rose to nearly 10,000 pounds per annum" (p. 139-140). Elizabeth was also sharply criticised for not being able to administer the national funds. She was accused of making huge debts and imposing high taxes on people to finance the wars. She fought in Ireland, armed against the Spaniards, and aided the French and the Dutch but this cost Elizabeth much treasure and she "leased out her kingdom" (Campbell, 1964, p. 200). The financial impositions of the monarch to supply funds for military expenditures created social unrest. Though assessment met only a small part of the monetary demands of the nation, it was still felt to be burdensome as the common men were not wealthy and suffered as they were obliged to pay grievous taxes. Moreover, the richest inhabitants were forced to sell their assets to meet the tax demands (Doran, 2000, p. 7).

Moreover, Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which was written in 1594 and published in quarto format in 1597 (Dowden, 1879, p. 87;88), was used by the supporters of the Earl of Essex in the failed Essex Rebellion, and hence it relates to the politics of the Elizabethan era. Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, disappointed Elizabeth with his disobedience and failure during the Irish expedition (Rowse, 1977, p. 78), and raised rebellion against Elizabeth

in 1601 (Levin, 2002, p. 102). The supporters of Essex involved Shakespeare and his theatre company in the revolt as they asked them to perform *Richard II* at the Globe on the eve of the rebellion in order to win the support of the Londoners which they failed to gain (Parsons and Mason, 1925, p. 16). Hence, as Campbell (1964) states, the play "was used by Essex's friends as a curtain-raiser to his rebellion" (p. 189). The play was also performed before Elizabeth at Whitehall Palace on the eve of Essex's execution (Frye, 1925, n.p.). Hence, a parallel may be drawn between Essex's revolt and the play, which "dramatizes the deposition and murder of the last King of England whose claim to legitimacy rested on divine right" (Hodgdon, 1991, p. 129). The conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke in the play was interpreted by both the monarch and the rebels as the reflection of the conflict between Elizabeth and Essex. As Campbell (1964) discusses, "the crowning recognition of the historical parallel came from Elizabeth herself" (p. 191) as she identified herself with the fallen king when she faced the insurrection. In this regard, "[a]t the time of Essex's execution she complains that 'this tragedy had been played 40 times in open streets and houses,' and she carried her self-identification with the title character so far as to exclaim: 'I am Richard II, know ye not that?'" (Kantorowicz, 1973, p. 183). In other words, Elizabeth saw herself in Shakespeare's portrayal of a legitimate king who is opposed by one of his powerful subjects and eventually deposed. Dowden (1879) points to the association between Richard and Elizabeth as he notes that in the third edition of the play which was published in 1608 some lines were added in Act IV, scene i. The lines, which referred to the dethronement of Richard and probably belonged to the original version of the play, had been omitted in order not to offend Elizabeth whose kingship was also threatened by the Pope and Catholic princes (p. 87).

"From Richard's night, to Bolingbroke's fair day"[3]

When analysed within this historical and political context, it may be argued that Shakespeare's *Richard II* reflects the political questions aroused on the use of the absolute power, the privileges of monarchy and the necessity of a strong sovereign in the Elizabethan era. Moreover, Shakespeare reflects the contemporary concerns, that is, the severe consequences that may arise if the authority of the crown is weakened by unjust practices. In a sense, he deals with the history of Richard to present the political principles of the Elizabethan era with reference to the rights and duties of the monarch. Shakespeare uses history as a political mirror as he "believed that history could teach moral and political lessons" (Cubeta, 1971, p. 2), and warns the English people, Elizabeth and her court that the royal authority, though legitimate, may be forced to abdicate just like Richard whose follies led to his deposition and murder. In this respect, Shakespeare argues Richard's deposition in the play through his absolute authority, which is misused, and consequently, leads to his tyrannical administration along with his inability to maintain the national unity as he does not enforce the law. As Bryan Bevan (1996) states, he "had ruled according to his will, instead of accepting the laws and customs of the country" (p. 159). In a sense, Richard imposes harsh rule disregarding the laws and customs, which leads to his fall from power.

Richard establishes despotic rule as he transgresses laws and customs. In this respect, he rejects the feudal traditions as he disregards the chivalrous ethics of his age and violates the law of inheritance. The play opens with the judicial quarrel between Mowbray, who is the first Duke of Norfolk, and Bolingbroke as the two men accuse each other of treachery to the country and to the king. For Bolingbroke, Mowbray appropriated the wealth which should be given to the soldiers at Calais and "hath detain'd for lewd employments, / Like a false traitor, and injurious villain" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 9). Thus, Bolingbroke claims "[t]hat Mowbray hath receiv'd eight thousand nobles / In name of lendings for [Richard's] soldiers" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 9). Moreover, Bolingbroke accuses Mowbray of killing the Duke of Gloucester, who is the king's uncle: "Further I say, and further will maintain / Upon his bad

life to make all this good, / That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 9). However, Mowbray strongly rejects Bolingbroke's accusations and asserts that Bolingbroke is the traitor who is disloyal to the king in the following words: "[…] as for the rest appeal'd, / It issues from the rancour of a villain, / A recreant and most degenerate traitor" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 12). The two nobles confront each other in front of the royal authority that is the king, Richard II, who will make the final decision as the administrator of justice, so that the righteous side, whose claims have validity, will be revealed. Accordingly, as in Graham Holderness's words (2000), "the two knights, who confront one another in this antique quarrel, stand squarely in the heroic tradition of military manliness" (p. 176), and represent the established nobility. They challenge each other courageously and want to confront in a combat. In this sense, Bolingbroke, as a gallant and honourable chivalric knight, challenges Mowbray and calls him to a duel to prove the validity of his claims as follows:

> If guilty dread have left thee so much strength
> As to take up mine honour's pawn, then stoop.
> By that, and all the rites of knighthood else,
> Will I make good against thee, arm to arm,
> What I have spoke, or thou canst worse device. (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 8)

These lines clearly demonstrate that the two men will confront each other in a single combat within the codes of chivalric tradition and defend their honour. In response, Mowbray asks for trial by combat and says: "[…] by that sword I swear, / Which gently laid my knighthood on my shoulder, / I'll answer thee in any fair degree / Or chivalrous design of knightly trial" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 8). However, Richard abuses his royal power and fails to exercise justice during the dispute. First, he tries to conciliate Bolingbroke and Mowbray by his absolute power: "Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed: / Our doctors say this is no month to bleed" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 13). Hence, it can be clearly seen that he wants both combatants to renounce their accusations and excuse each other. It may be argued that he does not want either of the noblemen to be triumphant and declared as the rightful party at a chivalrous duel. And, Richard, in fact, violates the practice of feudal traditions and interferes with the course of justice through such an intervention. For Bolingbroke, Richard's act is "such deep sin" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 15). Mowbray says that Richard abuses his kingly power to besmirch his honour, and though he depends on the king's authority as his subject, his allegiance to Richard is not more powerful than his wish to defend his honour because "[his] life […] shalt command, but not [his] shame" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 13). Accordingly, when both Bolingbroke and Mowbray decisively refuse to reconcile, Richard sets a day for the trial but he, once more, violates the feudal tradition and subordinates the principle of honour to tyrannical authority as he commands the warriors to "lay by their helmets and their spears, / And both return back to their chairs again" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 28) as the ritual joust is about to begin. In this sense, Larry Champion (1990) considers Richard's attitude as the practice of his autocratic rule and further expresses that "the play depicts a monarchy methodically attempting to consolidate its absolutist powers by stripping away the rights from an aristocracy that is struggling to retain its privileged position within a feudal hierarchy" (p. 104). Last, Richard abuses his absolute power and obstructs the exercise of justice as he banishes Bolingbroke from England for a period of ten years while Mowbray is punished with a perpetual exile. For Mowbray, Richard's decision is "[a] heavy sentence" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 31) and "deep a maim / As to be cast forth in the common air" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 31). It may be deduced that Richard inflicts unjust punishment on Bolingbroke and Mowbray without explaining explicitly what they are exactly charged with.

Richard, once again, violates the feudal traditions, breaks the laws and fails to exercise justice when he confiscates Bolingbroke's rightful inheritance. In other words, as Pearlman (1992) states, Richard "violates feudal norms a second time when he undertakes Gaunt's

lands, which should properly descend to the Lancastrian heir, Bolingbroke" (p. 75). He claims the Lancastrian inheritance on behalf of the exiled Bolingbroke after John of Gaunt dies. Upon the news that Gaunt is dying, he clearly declares his intention as follows: "Now put it, God, in the physician's mind / To help him to his grave immediately! / The lining of his coffers shall make coats / To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 45). In the feudal tradition, although all the land belongs to the sovereign, the king has to admit the heir to his predecessor's tenancy (Myers, 1991, p. 69). Hence, the tenure is hereditary, and the land passes on from father to son. As Myers (1991) notes, "without forgetting his own rights, he [the king] ha[s] no wish to override those of others. We have here, therefore, a sort of social contract" (p. 277). In a sense, there is a bond of loyalty between the king and his subjects: the king should respect people's rights and dispense justice while the subjects should show allegiance to the king. In this case, though the title and estate of Gaunt should rightly pass to the exiled heir, Richard denies Bolingbroke his rights and illegally seizes Gaunt's lands to finance his military campaigns in Ireland and France. Lord Ross, who is well aware of Richard's aim, says: "He hath not money for these Irish wars, / His burthenous taxations notwithstanding, / But by the robbing of the banish'd Duke" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 66). Richard wants to put down the revolt in Ireland and punish the rebels, yet he disregards the laws and confiscates Gaunt's lands with a dictatorial authority. Thus, "from being the means of protecting person and property, government in [Richard's] hands has become the most potent engine of their destruction" (Snider, 1998, p. 262). For the Earl of Northumberland, who is Bolingbroke's cousin and supporter, Richard is the "most degenerate king" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 66). The Duke of York, who is Richard's uncle, recognises Richard's seizure of Bolingbroke's lands as lawless and warns him that he will not only lose many loyal supporters but he will also destroy York's faith in his rule: "You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts, / And prick my tender patience to those thoughts / Which honour and allegiance cannot think (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 63). In a sense, both York and the men who support Richard will side with Bolingbroke because they are deeply offended by Richard's unjust practice. Ornstein (1972) states that York's words "sound a dangerous warning because they intimate the breaking point of loyalty" (p. 112), which indicates Richard's impending loneliness as will be dealt with.

Besides violating the law of inheritance and feudal customs and abusing his royal power, Richard is also accused of relying too readily on the evil counsel of the self-interested young favourites, "completely inexperienced in weighty decisions" (Bevan, 1996, p. 161). The Earl of Northumberland expresses how Richard fails to be an effective ruler as he "has handed power to his favourites" (Devlin, 1989, p. 69), and says: "The king is not himself, but basely led / By flatterers […]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 64). York, referring to Bushy, Bagot and Greene, complains about Richard's dependence on the flatterers: "No, it is stopp'd with other flattering sounds" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 48). Richard is constantly informed by his young courtiers about "fashions in proud Italy" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 48), and he is interested in fashionable but frivolous issues which only give pleasure rather than politics and state affairs. On his deathbed Gaunt wants Richard to follow his advice rather than the counsel of the young and indifferent favourites as his advice will be more didactic and instruct him for a better rule: "He that no more must say is listened more / Than they whom youth and ease have taught to glose" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 47). It may be argued that besides his authoritarian rule, Richard also allows the flatterers to involve in government and deceitfully advise him. His leave for the Irish expedition while Bolingbroke wins the support of powerful lords to rebel demonstrates that he is misled by the young courtiers and makes wrong decisions in military matters. The rebels take the opportunity of Richard's absence and wait until Richard leaves for Ireland to start a revolt, which is presented in Northumberland's words: "With eight tall ships, three thousand men of war, / Are making hither with all due

expedience, […] / Perhaps they had ere this, but that they stay / The first departing of the king for Ireland (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 68). Greene assures Richard on the urgency of the Irish expedition and emphasises that Bolingbroke can no longer endanger Richard's kingship during his absence as Bolingbroke already left England: "Well, he is gone; and with him go these thoughts. / Now for the rebels which stand out in Ireland, / Expedient manage must be made, my liege" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 43). In a sense, Green convinces Richard that the fear of Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne by the public consent disappeared when Bolingbroke was banished. However, it may be argued that Richard's going away from England in the face of such a serious rebellion leaves his kingship defenceless, which leaves England vulnerable to the attacks of the rebels. "[Bolingbroke and other rebellious lords] come to make [Richard] lose at home" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 75), that is, they return to England in order to seek justice. Therefore, as Bevan (1996) points out, "at this moment so pregnant with danger, Richard would have been well advised to postpone his expedition to Ireland" (p. 141).

Moreover, Richard violates the monetary customs of England. He imposes grievous burdens on his people as he collects unparliamentary taxes from the common people and extorts blank cheques from the rich people to raise additional revenues for the Irish wars, which demonstrates his disregard for both the commoners and the nobles. In a sense, he breaches the regular economic practices by illegal means of raising money from his subjects. As Pearlman (1992) notes, Richard's practice "is based not on traditional […] customary procedures but on practical and perhaps impious legalistic and monetary rules" (p. 76). Lord Ross tells how Richard, who is "grown bankrout like a broken man" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 66), financially exploits the commoners and the noblemen as follows: "The commons hath he pill'd with grievous taxes, / And quite lost their hearts. The nobles hath he fin'd / For ancient quarrels, and quite lost their hearts" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 64-65). Moreover, Willoughby expresses that the nobles suffer the misery of being robbed by the king: "And daily new exactions are devis'd. / As blanks, benevolences […]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 65). Also Richard manifests that "[they] are inforc'd to farm [their] royal realm" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 43), yet "[i]f that come short" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 44), then "[…] substitutes at home shall have blank charters; / Whereto, when they shall know what men are rich, / They shall subscribe them for large sums of gold, / And send them after to supply [their] wants" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 44). Therefore, Richard plans to raise money to afford the Irish campaign by robbing the people by illicit taxes and forcing them to lose their wealth to Richard. In this sense, as Bevan (1996) states, "Richard's methods of raising money were entirely arbitrary, oppressive and consequently illegal" (p. 136), which arouses uneasiness among the people. As in Lord Ross's words which were quoted above, Richard loses the love and support of the whole nation as he exploits both the commoners and the noblemen by unlawful means of raising money. The nobles withdraw their support from Richard over whom "[r]eproach and dissolution hangeth" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 66). They recognise Bolingbroke as "[…] the true king" (Ornstein, 1972, p. 124), and "[t]he lord Northumberland, his son young Henry Percy, / The lords of Ross, Beaumond, and Willoughby, / With all their powerful friends, are fled to [Bolingbroke]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 73). Moreover, "[…] the earl of Worcester / Hath broken his staff, resign'd his stewardship, / And all the household servants fled with him / To Bolingbroke" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 74). The Duke of York, who shifts his allegiance from Richard to Bolingbroke, declares his loyalty to Bolingbroke with the following words: "To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now, / Whose state and honour I for aye allow" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 155). Northumberland calls the nobles to meet Bolingbroke, the saviour of the nation, in Ravenspurgh so that "[…] [they] shall shake off [their] slavish yoke, / Imp out [their] drooping country's broken wing, / Redeem from broking pawn the blemish'd crown" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 68). Ross calls Bolingbroke "most noble

lord" and expresses that "[his] presence makes [them] rich" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 82). Therefore, in the eyes of the nobles, Richard is replaced by Bolingbroke as an effective ruler, and Richard loses the respect of the nobility; instead, he turns into a hated tyrant. Richard not only antagonises the noblemen but also gains hatred of the commoners due to his improper acts as "the commons cold," (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 75) will "revolt on Herford's side" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 76). The commoners are filled with rage at Richard's injustices as they are ready to "tear [Richard and his flatterers] all to pieces" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 78). Along with Bolingbroke, the people of all ages make preparations to rebel against Richard as "[w]hite-beards have arm'd their thin and hairless scalps / […] boys, with women's voices, / […] clap their female joints / In stiff unwieldy arms against [Richard's] crown" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 99).

Accordingly, the different attitudes of the English people to Richard and Bolingbroke, during "of our two cousins' coming into London" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 152) after Richard surrendered to Bolingbroke and his supporters, display the choice of the English nation as an ideal ruler. While Richard is insulted as "[…] rude misgoverned hands from windows' tops / Threw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 153), Bolingbroke is welcomed with respect and love. The people shouted, "'God save thee, Bolingbroke!'" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 153), and "[u]pon his visage; and that all the walls / With painted imagery had said at once / 'Jesu preserve thee! Welcome, Bolingbroke'" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 153), which shows that Bolingbroke, the potent and determined leader, is welcomed by the people as the new monarch and ensures public appreciation while Richard becomes the deposed king and turns into a hate figure. In other words, the people compare the reigning weak monarch and rebellious strong usurper, and they vividly demonstrate that they prefer to support a powerful sovereign who does not abuse his power by unfair practices and sits in judgement.

In the face of Richard's unfair practices which result in misrule, Bolingbroke rises as a wronged subject and manifests that he fights against tyranny. He endeavours for the restoration of his ancestral estates and the Lancastrian title which have been illegally confiscated. In Pearlman's words (1992), "the banished Bolingbroke has returned from abroad to assert his claim to the lands and title of John of Gaunt" (p. 77). Northumberland emphasises Bolingbroke's aim to rebel as follows: "The noble Duke hath sworn his coming is / But for his own; […]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 86). Bolingbroke plans to prevent Richard from encroaching upon his rights and resolutely withstands his oppressive acts. He not only reveals Richard's injustices as he says, "I am denied to sue my livery here, / And yet my letters patents give me leave" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 85), but also emphasises the justness of his rebellion through the following question to the Duke of York: "What would you have me do?" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 85). Hence, Bolingbroke justifies his righteous resistance as he implies that he is well aware of his lawful rights and Richard cannot take over Gaunt's lands which should rightly pass to himself. Barbara Jean Coffman (1979) states that "[i]t is too early to say that [Bolingbroke] aims at the crown, but he had demonstrated from the first a desire to right Richard's injustices" (p. 38). He reveals that he is only after his legal rights when he meets Richard, who is abandoned by his soldiers and noble supporters, in Wales. Bolingbroke "[o]n both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand, / And sends allegiance and true faith of heart / To his most royal person" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 108). He asserts that he will lay down arms "[p]rovided that [his] banishment repeal'd / And lands restor'd again be freely granted" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 108). Thus, by his rebellion, Bolingbroke shows his determination to cease Richard's wilful rule and uphold justice and laws as an effective ruler. He believes that Richard's kingly power does not give him the right to act like a tyrant and to commit wrongs upon his subjects. As Bolingbroke cannot vindicate his claim by judicial

process, which is obstructed by Richard, the only way to defend his rights is to rebel: "[…] I am a subject, / And I challenge law; attorneys are denied me, / And therefore personally I lay my claim / To my inheritance of free descent (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 85-86). Therefore, it may be deduced that as a subordinate who is prevented from seeking his legal rights by judicial means, Bolingbroke has no option but to start an individual resistance to claim his heritage. In this respect, a significant cause of Bolingbroke's rebellion and Richard's final loss of the throne is the wrong done to the subject who seeks for his constitutional rights. Furthermore, as in William Scott's words (2002), "[i]t is evident that *Richard II* takes for granted an analogy between succession to the kingship and succession to at least the lands and titles of nobility" (p. 275). Bolingbroke asserts that his claim rests upon the same basis as that of Richard to be the king of England, which Richard recklessly undermines: "If that my cousin king be King in England, / It must be granted I am Duke of Lancaster" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 85). As indicated in these lines, if the law of inheritance is applied to Richard, then it must also be valid for Bolingbroke because as a countryman of England, he has the right to claim his title and lands as much as the king of England claims the throne. Hence, he believes that he has the prerogative to challenge the king and defend his rights, "which is the right of the nation against the sovereign" (Snider, 1998, p. 265).

Moreover, Richard's political inefficiency and violation of the established norms of monarchy subvert the hereditary monarchy. As Spiekerman (2001) queries, "[i]f hereditary monarchy cannot produce either good government or stable government, then, Shakespeare seems to ask in this play, why hereditary monarchy?" (p. 89). Shakespeare himself answers the question by presenting the rise of Bolingbroke as a new, powerful and determined monarch, as an efficient ruler, superior to the legitimate but weak king Richard II. Bolingbroke's usurpation of power hardly complies with the law; however, the illegitimacy of his act of usurpation no longer needs to be questioned. In other words, an illegitimate but efficient king is preferred to a legitimate but weak monarch. Despite his legitimacy, Richard makes the nation suffer; whereas, the usurper Bolingbroke ends the unjust practices. In this sense, though illegitimate, Bolingbroke rises as the monarch who is expected to accomplish "the restoration of things as they were and should be" (Jones, 1991, p. 72). In other words, as opposed to Richard, Bolingbroke will follow the feudal traditions and regard the laws of England. The point is stressed metaphorically by Northumberland: "[…] even through the hollow eyes of death / I spy life peering […]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 67). Despite all the sufferings of grievances under Richard's rule, Bolingbroke represents the glimmer of hope for the English people for a better administration where the laws are executed and the subjects are not suppressed by tyrannical attitudes. In a sense, Bolingbroke is seen as the leader who will end the captivity of the subjects under the despotic practices.

Accordingly, the quarrel between Aumerle and Bagot on the murder of Gloucester which was adjudicated by Bolingbroke demonstrates that Bolingbroke, contrary to Richard, achieves to exercise justice among his subjects. The two lords accuse each other of taking part in the murder of Gloucester, and Bolingbroke, just like Richard at the beginning of the play, stands as the judicial power to find out the rightful party. In this respect, as Campbell (1964) notes, this scene "clearly intended to act as a foil to the first scene of the play, in which Richard presides over the quarrel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray" (p. 205) and fails to secure the justice. Bolingbroke first maintains justice as he permits all the lords to declare their accusations. He allows Bagot to "freely speak [his] mind" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 125) and to raise the charges against Aumerle. However, as Mowbray, one of the parties of the accusations, is not present at the time of the quarrel, Bolingbroke postpones his decision in order to be objective and to make a fair decision. He wants to hear the charges of the two sides to decide on the righteous party and says: "These differences shall all rest under gage /

Till Norfolk be repeal'd" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 129), and "[w]hen he's return'd, / Against Aumerle [they] will inforce his trial" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 129). Hence, Bolingbroke wants to exercise justice after he hears how Mowbray will defend himself against the accusations. Moreover, as Bolingbroke says, "though [his] enemy, restor'd again / To all [Mowbray's] lands and signories" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 129). In other words, contrary to Richard, Bolingbroke acts impartial as the supreme authority, regards the law of inheritance, and declares that he does not violate Mowbray's property rights.

In *Richard II* the scene of the gardeners is one of the most significant and symbolic scenes in order to present the "ideas of the proper management of a realm" (Moseley, 1989, p. 100). Though the gardeners are lower class people, they are not portrayed as ordinary gardeners. As Pearlman (1992) states, "they do not jibe or jest, they do not quibble, and they do not give way to foolery... the gardeners speak like no gardeners who have ever dwelt on the face of the earth; they discuss the political situation in England" (p. 81). They handle the political chaos created by Richard's absolute rule and unjust practices with a highly serious tone. They argue the desperate political situation in England not as fools, joking and satirising, but as sensible subjects who are aware of the corruption in the country and the ways to fight it. First, the gardeners glorify England, and as Diana Devlin (1989) argues, "this scene is one of the most extended, graphic similes in all Shakespeare's works, and since it too is about the image of England and of earth" (p. 67). In this extended metaphor of England, the country is identified with soil, which the gardeners cultivate, and the garden is established as a similitude of the contemporary English kingdom. And the principles of an effective rule of a country are discussed in terms of managing a garden. The two gardeners compare their roles to that of a ruler in the sense that they should support and trim the growing plants and uproot the weeds which harm the other plants in the garden as the king should be legal, just and avoid the flatterers in his country: "All must be even in our government. / You thus employed, I will go root away / The noisome weeds which without profit suck / The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 119-120). In this sense, the gardeners compare Richard and Bolingbroke as to the qualities of an ideal monarch. They criticise Richard's careless administration of his kingdom and describe the consequences of his failure to be an efficient ruler. They liken Richard to a bad gardener whose kingdom "[i]s full of weeds, her fairest flowers chok'd up, / Her fruit-trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd, / Her knots disordered, […]" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 120). They present the current disorder in England due to Richard's indifference to laws and customs when they point to the destruction in the garden out of lack of good care. In this sense, the gardeners vividly assert that Richard has "showed no sense of good management. He has not been a good gardener" (Potter, 1989, p. 27). The gardeners end their symbolic speech by weighting the fortunes of Richard and Bolingbroke as ideal monarchs. By this comparison, they not only display the suitability of both leaders to be good rulers but also conclude that despite his illegitimate title Bolingbroke deserves the English throne more than Richard by his powerful, decisive and courageous character. In this sense, they express how Bolingbroke gets stronger by the support of the whole English nation while Richard falls due to his follies: "[…] [t]heir fortunes both are weigh'd; / […] / But in the balance of great Bolingbroke, / Besides himself, are all the English peers, / And with that odds he weighs King Richard down" (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 122). As indicated in these lines, when Richard and Bolingbroke are compared at the end of the play, it is seen that Richard is completely alone without any loyal supporters and is destined to a tragic fall due to his errors; whereas, Bolingbroke rises as an ideal monarch by the love and respect of the whole nation. It is asserted that Richard wastes his legitimate and divinely sanctioned right to rule by his tyrannical administration, but Bolingbroke takes the advantage of Richard's follies and takes the throne as the new monarch by his power, determination and admiration of the English nation.

Conclusion

In *Richard II* the attributes of a perfect monarch are presented through the comparison between Richard, the former king, and Bolingbroke, the succeeding sovereign. While the play displays in the person of Bolingbroke the characteristics of an ideal ruler, it shows that Richard has the qualities of a weak sovereign. Richard loses his throne because he establishes a tyrannical rule where he abuses his royal power and oppresses his subjects by his unjust and despotic practices. Accordingly, he not only places his own will over the will of law and turns into a self-absorbed king but also causes unrest among the noblemen and the commoners due to his unconstitutional taxation and seizure of property. As James Phillips (2012) notes, "Richard is a tyrant not because he does not respect any rights, but because he respects none but his own" (p. 167). On the other hand, Bolingbroke, who is "the product of [Richard's] misrule" (Elliott, 1968, p. 263), is presented as an excellent ruler who regards laws and customs, exercises justice and maintains the national unity as he attracts the respect and affection of the whole nation. Both the commoners and the noblemen demonstrate that they protest against Richard's injustices as they attribute Bolingbroke kingly qualities and acknowledge him as their new leader with great enthusiasm. They treat Bolingbroke with esteem and love while they offend Richard. For them, Bolingbroke, despite his illegitimate accession, is the only man who can end Richard's tyrannical rule. In a sense, both the commoners and the nobles choose to be ruled by a usurper rather than a legitimate tyrant. In this regard, Shakespeare poses in this play political questions such as whether a king might be deposed for lawless rule, and what a virtuous nation should do when it confronts a tyrannical ruler who abuses his royal power and violates laws and customs. The use of absolute power and exercise of justice are extensively discussed, and the necessity of a just sovereign for an efficient administration is emphasised in the play. Shakespeare shows that "what kind of king [a sovereign] [is] depends entirely upon his use of power and power's use of him" (Cohen, 2002, p. 297). In the light of these challenging questions and crucial issues, Shakespeare demonstrates that a weak monarch, who is domineering and not supported by the people, should be replaced by a strong ruler, who complies with the laws and customs, and wins the support of the whole nation, for national welfare. In this respect, Shakespeare alludes to the politics of his own time and refers to Queen Elizabeth I's misuse of her authority during her reign. He, in a way, warns both his audience and Elizabeth of the dangers arising from the monarch's abuse of absolute power and wish to have authoritarian rule.

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[1] (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 122)

[2] This article is an abridged version of the first chapter of my unpublished M.A. thesis entitled "Nationalism, Englishness and Nation Building in Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry V*".

[3] (Shakespeare, 1956, p. 105)