

BASIC IDEAS OF KINGSHIP IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

Shakespeare enjoys universal recognition as an artist. His contribution to English literature is unparalleled, since his plays and sonnets represent the pinnacle of aesthetic expression. The world holds him in high esteem as a dramatist. Whenever and wherever people on Earth discuss dramatic art, they will always mention William Shakespeare with special emphasis. His spectacular designs won't "wither" due to time or custom. Elizabethan England was a state of repression and Shakespeare could not write his plays freely and he could not oppose Elizabeth and her government openly. So he had to use allegory and every one of his plays is an act of rebellion. This paper deals with Shakespeare's history plays which are symbols of resistance to the rule of force and war politics, and that message is implicit in the way of presenting kings. This paper deals with the question of legitimate sovereignty and the basic ideas of kingship in Shakespeare's history plays, showing how Shakespeare dealt with English history in order to express his resistance to the rule of force and war, and to criticize contemporary rulership, pointing out its internal contradictions and conflicts.

Key words: history plays, kings, politics, power, Shakespeare

INTRODUCTION

In the eighties, there were a number of new approaches that interpreted Shakespeare's history plays from different positions of poststructuralist theories. According to the representative of new historicism Steven Greenblatt (1988:2-21), Shakespeare's history plays, although they largely reproduce the ruling ideology and even represent an integral part of the power of Tudor monarchy, they also include an opposite opinion. The texts of the history plays are therefore interpreted as places where one could follow the dynamics of effects of authority and the subversion directed against that same authority. However, that subversion does not endanger the dominant ideology but helps it to be maintained. The provocation, the challenge and the defeat of subversion are strategies that make the dominant power and its ideology secure. The British version of poststructuralist historicism is cultural materialism. Representatives of cultural materialism Dollimore and Sinfield (1985:211-216), in the text about Henry V, show that in Shakespeare's plays one can see how ideology and the state are characterized by internal contradictions and conflicts. Ideology can provide an apparent solution to social conflict only if it deals with its own internal conflicts. And if it deals with them, they must be revealed and not hidden. Henry V can be read as an ideological apology for Henry V and his conquest of France, but also as a subversive questioning of the whole dubious legitimacy of the enterprise.

The current investigation operates under the assumption that Shakespeare's History Plays are fundamentally political works in which his political views are expressed (Tillyard Shakespeare's 7). Nine plays from the First Folio that are concerned with the subject of English history have been selected for the purpose of discussion. Due to the fact that King Henry VIII was composed in collaboration with John Fletcher and published much later, it is not considered for the purposes of this research. According to E. M. W. Tillyard, during his formative years, Shakespeare confronted the most momentous and captivating period of English history in the eyes of the Elizabethans: the atrocities of the civil war (Shakespeare's 155-64). Fear of the order's disintegration constitutes the central theme that these plays reflect. Therefore, Shakespeare addresses the matter of good governance and imparts a comprehensive body of doctrine in these plays as a corrective action (Tillyard Shakespeare's 19). Seven

kingly figures are depicted in Shakespeare's nine plays concerning British history. The various categories of kings and related concepts discussed in the previous chapter can be examined by analyzing these characters.

Shakespeare's History Plays do not provide an explicit analysis of the emergence of the kingship and the state, nor do they speculate on the intentions or goals of the state and kingship. However, it is apparent that he promotes a form of kingship that is sanctioned by God, as almost every kingly figure in these historical plays affirms their divine nature. The plays furnish detailed descriptions of the seven constituents of a state, namely the monarch, councillor/minister, territory, fort, treasury, army, and friend. However, they fail to address the organic interrelation that exists among these constituents. Conversely, these interconnections are depicted through a sequence of corresponding planes. The plays consistently make reference to the order established by the Great Chain of Being when discussing orders, and to the harmony of a dance whenever they discuss harmony (Elizabethan 09-108). As an illustration, Exeter employs a musical analogy in King Henry V to invoke the harmony that characterizes a well-regulated realm:

For government, though high, and low, and lower, Put into, doth keep in
one consent,

Congreeting in a full and natural close Like music. (*H5*
1.2.180-84)

Since Shakespeare's History Plays convey an image of anarchy, they depict the occurrence of virtually every type of catastrophe in the state. Amidst King Richard III, King John, King Richard II, King Henry IV, and King Henry VI, the most lethal catastrophe of all time permeates. Shakespeare has depicted usurpers who lack kingly virtues in his portraits of King John and monarch Henry IV; a king deficient in kingly virtues in Richard II; a weak monarch in King Henry VI; and a tyrant in King Richard III. According to James Winny (38), it can be observed that none of the monarchs depicted in these plays possess an unequivocal claim to the crown and are forced to contend for its preservation. Similar themes can be found in the tragedies of King Richard II, King John, King Henry IV, King Henry VI, and King Richard III concerning ministers or councillors. The nobles and ministers in King John are antagonistic toward the foreign ruler. Notwithstanding the apparent justification for their actions, a meticulous examination of the play demonstrates that they are fundamentally nefarious. A conflict arises between Lords Bolingbroke and Mowbray during the reign of King Richard II, and the state's impending doom is precipitated by Richard II's incapacity to manage it. While two sections of King Henry IV once more depict the rebellion and avarice of nobles, the ministers' discontent and calamity reach their pinnacle in all three sections of King Henry VI and King Richard III. Furthermore, Shakespeare deftly portrays the vast majority of the other catastrophes that occur at various points throughout the nine plays.

Without a doubt, these dramatic productions depict the throne as the fulcrum of the social and political structure. Whether they demystify or mystify the position of monarch, however, appears to be somewhat ambiguous. While it is true that the plays do publicize a form of kingship sanctioned by God, given that almost every kingly character in them affirms his divine status, this notion is also contested. Alternatively, one could argue that the plays obscure the divine nature of kingship. Critics have also taken opposing positions with regard to the matter. As an illustration, Raphael Falco argues in his critique of King Richard II that the charismatic leader's natural body serves dual purposes: it not only governs the distribution of personal power but also perpetuates the notion of collective power. Furthermore, Richard's failure can be attributed to the perception that his subjective outbursts isolate him from his innate political essence (224). According to John Halverson, the drama presents a steadfast perspective on kingship and kings, royal pretensions and ambitions, and kingship that is unrelated to divinity.

The author underscores Shakespeare's consistent de-mythologization of kingship, both in this work and others, and his frequent derision of "divine right" and "majesty" (143). However, upon examining the plays, one realizes that the deposition of King Richard II actually demystifies the monarchical position; once it loses its enigmatic allure, it becomes quite susceptible to danger. Across the entire collection of eight plays, this vulnerability is

present. Furthermore, the degree to which succeeding monarchs are able to restore this enigmatic aura will determine their level of success.

Anne Barton, commenting on the most successful monarch in Shakespeare's history, King Henry V, asserts that the king's conception of kingship derives from a complex and intrinsically tragic Tudor doctrine concerning the dual nature of the monarch. Shakespeare, who has previously explored the harsh realities of divorce and the conflict between the king's dual natures, accomplishes an almost impenetrable union of the natural and political selves in the character of Henry V (174).

Consequently, an examination of the plays reveals that they are profoundly entangled in the mystification of monarchy. King Richard II of Shakespeare is an autocrat who disregards the duties of his position because he believes he is the lord of the realm, a unanointed lord by God. Despite facing adversity, such as the discovery that Henry Bolingbroke has returned to England to oppose him, he naively maintains the belief that his lineage will be safeguarded by nature and God. His invocation to the earth unequivocally communicates his beliefs concerning his own divine nature.

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth, Nor with thy sweets
comfort his ravenous sense; But let thy spiders, that suck up thy
venom,

And heavy-gaited toads lie in their way, Doing annoyance to the
treacherous feet Which with usurping steps do trample thee: Yield
stinging nettles to mine enemies;

And when they from thy bosom pluck a flower, Guard it, I pray thee,
with a lurking adder Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch
Throw death upon thy sovereign's enemies.

Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords: This earth shall have a
feeling and these stones Prove armed soldiers, ere her native king
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms. (R2 3.2.4-26)

Furthermore, not only does he perceive his own position as such, but the Bishop of Carlisle concurs that the omnipotent God will safeguard the king's objective: "Have no apprehension, my Lord: the same power that established you as king retains the ability to maintain you in that position despite everything" (R2 3.2.27-28). Richard holds such a firm conviction that he believes the defiant Duke Bolingbroke will submit to his authority simply by acquainting himself with him. He appeases himself and others through the use of various natural metaphors and by drawing numerous parallels between the condition of nature and his own being. Furthermore, he holds the conviction that in support of his cause on earth, divine messengers will be dispatched to oppose every dissident (R2 3.2.36-62). He maintains his conviction in his divinity and is certain that no terrestrial entity can depose him from his dominion, even as he approaches captivity (R2 3.3.72-81). He fervently desires the insurgents' submission on the grounds that he is their legitimate monarch. However, he neglects the fact that in order to be lawful, he must possess considerably more than a mere lineal right. According to John Halverson, Richard's unwavering rule is that the monarch cannot commit any wrongdoing; the only thing he will never concede is that he is not a king and never could be one. True kingship, according to Richard, is divinely bestowed and is impregnable and inviolable. His unwavering conviction regarding his sovereignty renders him incapable of empathizing with the common human condition. His unwavering conviction in the infallibility of the monarch prevents him from even contemplating the notion of misconduct, much less comprehending or accepting it (136-37). James L. Calderwood further notes that according to Richard's Divine Right perspective, the term "king" is an intrinsic component of his proper noun – one that is legitimate, unimpeachable, and inviolable (306).

Shakespeare's King Henry IV, despite being a usurper, affirms the sanctity of a monarch through his atonement. He is discovered to have a guilty conscience for the assassination of a divinely anointed monarch throughout his

entire reign. Since he disregarded traditional restraint and all sacrosanct taboos in assuming the throne, M. C. Bradbrook continues to represent the guilt that is intrinsic to acquiring and maintaining power (91). After being deposed and murdered, the former monarch, upon discovering his ostensibly disobedient heir, concludes that his deviant son is a punishment from God.

I know not whether God will have it so, For some displeasing
service I have done, That, in his secret doom, out of my blood
He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me; But thou dost in thy
passages of life
Make me believe that thou art only mark'd For the hot vengeance
and the rod of heaven To punish my mistreadings. (*IH4* 3.2.1-8)

His endorsement of the notion that the throne is inviolable by divine sanctity is manifestly his lament. Furthermore, the critics of the play lament the absence of divine approval throughout the entire plot, and thus indirectly endorse the notion that Shakespeare endorses the mystification of monarchical authority. According to Donna B. Hamilton, the primary concern throughout King Henry IV's reign revolves around the peril to the realm that arises when a monarch lacks legal title. This is because the deposition disrupts the established tradition of legal succession, and his authority exists without explicit validation from the law or God ("The State" 281). As stated by Raphael Falco, King Henry IV attempted to bridge this divide by emphasizing his charismatic leadership and establishing himself as a legitimate hereditary monarch and scion of traditional authority (229).

Although his successor, King Henry V, initially appears to debunk the monarch's aura of divinity, he ultimately endeavors to reinstate the notion of the monarch as divine. He states during a conversation he has in concealment with one of his soldiers:

I think the King is but a man, as I am:

the violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it
doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions; his ceremonies laid
by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are
higher mount than ours, yet when
they stoop they stoop with the like wing. (*H5* 4.1.101-07)

But simultaneously he also gives his ideas regarding absolute sovereignty. He asserts that:

[A] king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, . . . for [he] purpose not
their death, when [he] purpose their services. (*H5* 4.1.153-57)

In this instance, he demonstrates his proclivity for the notion of absolute sovereignty, which holds that a monarch is solely answerable to God and not to the populace. Furthermore, he refutes the notion that individuals endure suffering at the hands of a monarch solely on account of their own malevolent actions that have earned them said monarchy: "War is a beadle, war is his vengeance; thus, individuals are punished for transgressions committed prior to the king's laws that are now the King's quarrel" (*H5* 4.1.167-69).

The matter concerning the mystification of the monarch's persona in King Henry V has been the subject of critical examination by several scholars. By demonstrating his fitness to be king, King Henry V bridges the gap between kingship sanctioned by God and kingship deprived of it, according to these detractors. Lord Hall Joan observes:

The central theme of *Henry V* is kingship; in terms of both plot and character, the play unfolds
as the testing of a monarch. Henry cannot rely
on the sacred "name" of king that Richard II invoked, since divine right

has been cancelled by his father's act of usurping the throne. As a *de facto* rather than a *de jure* ruler, Henry IV struggles to maintain authority throughout the *Henry IV* plays, and Henry V,

once he is King of England, must also prove his fitness to rule through appropriate choices and actions (104).

Shakespeare refrains from making any explicit remarks regarding the education and training of the Royal family in any of his history plays. Despite the fact that it is a royal matter that proper education and training are necessary to cultivate kingly virtues, Shakespeare remains relatively mute on the subject. He offers neither a curriculum nor a framework for the education and training of an aspiring monarch. Furthermore, regarding the attributes of instructors and mentors for an heir apparent, he remains reticent. However, Shakespeare's depiction of Prince Hal could be interpreted as his stance on the informal education of princes. Michelle Lee argues that the teachings of Prince Hal predominate over the king's tenure in the two sections of King Henry IV (88). Similarly, Julia Reinhard Lupton argues that the Henriad serves as a regal Bildungsroman by William Shakespeare, detailing Hal's transformation from an inexperienced prince to a triumphant monarch (181). It is apparent from the synopses of monarch Richard II and the initial portion of King Henry IV that the prince has strayed from his fatherly duties and is associated with thieves and miscreants; furthermore, the monarch is powerless to prevent this:

Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?

'Tis full three months since I did see him last; If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.

I would to God, my lords, he might be found: Inquire at London, 'mongst the taverns there, For there, they say, he daily doth frequent, With unrestrained loose companions, Even such, they say, as stand in narrow lanes, And beat our watch, and rob our passengers; Which he, young wanton and effeminate boy, Takes on the point of honour to support So dissolute a crew. (R2 5.3.1-12)

"Most subject is the fattest soil to weeds;/And he, the noble image of my youth, is overspread with them" (2H4 4.4.54-66) occurs in the second section of monarch Henry IV, where the monarch is similarly despondent about the Prince and the state's direction. Regarding this, Warwick appeases him by stating:

The prince but studies his companions

Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language, 'Tis needful that the most immodest word

Be look'd upon and learn'd; which once attain'd, Your highness knows, comes to no further use But to be known and hated. So, like gross terms, The prince will in the perfectness of time

Cast off his followers; and their memory Shall as a pattern or a measure live,

By which his grace must meet the lives of others, Turning past evils to advantages. (2H4 4.4.68-78)

It is apparent from the aforementioned arguments that Shakespeare's history plays endorse this ad hoc curriculum for princes. Furthermore, the prince's soliloquy demonstrates that he employs it as a component of his education to enhance his comprehension of the psychology of the commons, thereby enabling him to govern more effectively:

I know you all, and will awhile uphold The unyoked humour of your idleness:

So, when this loose behavior 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'll so offend, to make offence a skill;

Redeeming time when men think least I will. (*1H4* 1.2.190-212)

E. M. W. Tillyard concludes that the Prince, apart from his military prowess, possesses a dazzling and well-trained intellect, due to his solid education. However, the Prince appears to be completely indifferent to his intellect, as he makes no attempt to flaunt it in any way. Consequently, an additional imprint of the courtier emerges (Shakespeare's 284). However, the initial section of *King Henry IV* also reveals that King Richard II perished as a result of this pattern. According to *King Henry IV*, Richard was also implicated in the aforementioned practice, which ultimately led to his downfall (*1H4* 3.2.29-91). Furthermore, the early portion of the play *King Henry VI* contains a reference that establishes the framework for the princes' martial arts and warfare instruction. Talbot, in his eulogy for the mortally wounded Salisbury, asserts, "Salisbury overcame his adversaries in thirteen battles; Henry the Fifth was the first to train him for the wars" (*1H6* 1.4.77-78). According to the statement, Shakespeare envisioned kingship as a system in which a prince acquires warriorship instruction through apprenticeship to the state's greatest warriors.

The matter of regal succession emerges as a pivotal concern in the majority of Shakespeare's historical plays. Indeed, it is this fundamental inquiry that initiates the War of Roses. The plays typically depict regal succession in accordance with the principle of primogeniture, whereby the eldest son of the monarch ascends to the throne and the crown is bestowed upon the king's nearest blood relative in the absence of a royal issue. However, this long-standing convention is being questioned, resulting in an endless state of disorder that complicates the differentiation between *de jure* and *de facto* monarchs. Furthermore, the matter has undergone considerable critical introspection, with critics expressing contrasting and frequently contradictory views on the subject. According to Charles R. Forker, Shakespeare achieves a "fusion" of two contrasting perspectives on kingship in part by undermining or ambiguously depicting the roles of Richard and Bolingbroke as the divine-right monarch and the irresistible challenger (p. 245). In contrast, Raphael Falco argues that it is possible to challenge the stability of lineage claims, but doing so would severely compromise both general political stability and the myth of hereditary charisma. According to him, Shakespeare strives to demonstrate that absolute separation of the two bodies, as well as person and office, is impossible (222-25).

Upon examination of these dramatic works, it is discovered that in *King John*, Richard Coeur-de-lion's junior brother John usurps the lineal right of his elder brother's legitimate son. Indeed, he is considered a usurper according to the laws of the land, a fact that is mentioned by virtually every significant character in the drama. "Your strong possession much more than your right,/Or else something must go wrong with you and me" (*Jn.* 1.1.40-41) if the French monarch refers to him as "The borrow'd majesty, of England" (*Jn.* 1.1.4). His mother then undermines his claim to the throne of England. And also in the estimation of the majority of the populace:

[He] hast under-wrought his lawful king
 Cut off the sequence

of posterity,

Out-faced infant state and done a rape

Upon the maiden virtue of the crown. (*Jn.* 2.1.94-97)

While John falsely asserts his rightful succession by stating, "Our strong possession and right for us" (*Jn.* 1.1.39), the people are perplexed as to how he can be called a monarch when "living blood doth beat in [Arthur]—which owes the crown that [he] overmasterest" (*Jn.* 1.1.39)). (*Jn.* 2.1.89-109). As per the principle of primogeniture, Arthur is the legitimate heir to the throne of England; however, his cousin John usurps his lineal right. As a minor, he lacks the capacity to verify the usurpation. However, usurper John encounters significant opposition from the

populace and ultimately perishes while attempting to retain the throne; as a result, the crown is transferred to the succeeding monarch in lineal lineage.

In her commentary, Barbara Hodgdon asserts that while the events surrounding King John unequivocally illustrate that "certain foundations are not established in blood" (Jn. 4.2.104), the drama ultimately substantiates the primogeniture principle through the production of an heir (186). According to Honigmann, the narrative concludes when the usurper's strength is depleted to the point where even his legs become immobile (5.3.16; 5.7.10), and a childlike figure, Arthur resurrected as Prince Henry, ultimately prevails in an unequivocal "right" (lxv).

Similarly, in the second drama King Richard II, the monarch faces no difficulty. In this situation, an appropriate candidate who is the nearest in blood relation shall succeed him. However, he is deposed and subsequently murdered by Henry Bolingbroke, who ascends to the throne. Despite his efforts to demonstrate that Richard was duly deposed (R2 4.1.222-27) and that he had accepted him as his heir (R2 4.1.107-09), it is indisputable that he has indeed seized the throne. The subsequent play bearing his name demonstrates that the deceased King Richard II regarded Edmund Mortimer as his next in blood (1H4 1.3.143-50). This state of perplexity leads to a recurring issue in nearly every subsequent play in the series, culminating in the War of Roses, which, according to Jr. Harry Berger, depicts the harsh implementation of the "combat model" of succession (105). It manifests itself in King Henry IV through Percy's rebellion: "I shall elevate the destitute Mortimer" (1H4 1.3.133); in King Henry V through the Earl of Cambridge's scheme to end the monarch's life; and in King Henry VI through the Duke of York's assertion of his rightful succession to the throne as Mortimer (1H6 2.2.10-52). Despite having a lineal heir, Prince Edward, King Henry VI adopts him as his successor due to the uprising in York.

I here entail

The crown to thee, and to thine heirs for ever; Conditionally, that here thou take an oath

To cease this civil war, and whilst I live To honour me as thy king and sovereign, And neither by treason nor hostility

To seek to put me down and reign thyself. (2H6 1.1.198-206)

However, this choice is unequivocally declined by the queen, the prince, and a portion of the peers; consequently, a sequence of conflicts and removals from power transpire. In the end, the union of both lineal lineages is achieved through the matrimonial union of Richmond Plantagenet and Princess Elizabeth, the progeny of Edward IV.

Shakespeare's confidence in the lineal succession of the throne can be inferred from the way in which the plays' developments culminate in it. Prince Hal, in the second act of King Henry IV, affirms this. He considers the regal crown to be his hereditary title and is resolute in his efforts to retain it:

My due from thee is this imperial crown, Which, as immediate as thy place and blood, Derives itself to me. Lo, here it sits,

Which God shall guard: and put the world's whole strength Into one giant arm, it shall not force

This lineal honour from me: this from thee

Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (2H4 4.5.40-46)

As stated by James L. Calderwood, it is abundantly clear that his re-coronation serves as an attempt to rectify the situation wherein his political insecurity was palpable (278). However, the announcement of Arthur's demise ruins the event, depriving John of the advantages he had hoped to profit from it. It is also apparent from the play's progression that he has not obtained approval from the Pope, the spiritual authority of the Christian world, thus far. However, ultimately, he capitulates and relinquishes his crown to Cardinal Pandolph, the Pope's envoy, only to receive it back with his consent:

Thus have I yielded up into your hand The circle of my glory..

. . . Take again
From this my hand, as holding of the pope
Your sovereign greatness and authority. (*Jn.* 5.1.1-4)

Shakespeare's second play, monarch Richard II, makes no mention of the coronation of King Richard II, as the play commences with him already enthroned as monarch. Henry IV, however, proclaims his coronation subsequent to his deposition: "On the following Wednesday, we solemnly schedule our coronation: lords, make preparations" (R2 4.1.319-20). The only comprehensive detail regarding his coronation that is not provided in this play or the plays named after him is that he rides the Barbary horse on the day of his coronation (R2 5.5.76-78). The coronation of King Henry V also occurs in the second act of King Henry IV; however, similar to the first act, this drama provides scant description of the coronation, focusing solely on the pageantry that occurs during the event. However, Falstaff discusses the customary favor that the monarch is expected to bestow upon his councillors, lords, and close acquaintances as a ceremonial practice during the coronation in this play (2H4 5.5.5-6).

An additional depiction of the regal coronation is found in the initial section concerned with King Henry VI. Henry VI, while still a minor at the time, is executed in Paris via coronation to assert his authority over France:

Now will it best avail your majesty
To cross the seas and to be crown'd in France:
The presence of a king engenders love Amongst his subjects and
his loyal friends,
As it disanimates his enemies. (*IH6* 3.1.181-85)

The great warrior Talbot, who has served the state militarily, offers his services to the monarch during the coronation rituals (1H6 3.4.5-9), and the Governor of Paris swears allegiance to him (1H6 4.1.3-8). As compensation for Talbot's services, the monarch bestows upon him the earldom of Shrewsbury.

Long since we were resolved of your truth, Your faithful service
and your toil in war; Yet never have you tasted our reward,
Or been reguerdon'd with so much as thanks, Because till now we
never saw your face: Therefore, stand up; and, for these good deserts,
We here create you Earl of Shrewsbury;
And in our coronation take your place. (*IH6* 3.4.20-27)

Edward III's coronation in London is also allude to only marginally in the third section of King Henry VI (3H6 2.6.87-88).

It is apparent from the synopses of these plays that the attainment of the throne in Shakespeare's History Plays requires the performance of the coronation ceremony. In order to gain the support and allegiance of the populace, newly crowned monarchs typically undergo coronation. While the plays do contain evidence of subjects and nobles swearing allegiance and service to monarchs, as well as the kings themselves accepting such oaths in return, none of the plays ever present evidence of any of these kings taking a coronation oath. It is never discovered whether they have taken an oath to govern in a just manner, to abstain from oppressing the populace, or to violate legal provisions. In contrast, during the second act of the drama, King Henry IV assumes the crown with the explicit intention of confronting it as an adversary.

I spake unto this crown as having sense,
And thus upbraided it: 'The care on thee depending Hath fed upon the
body of my father;
Therefore, thou best of gold art worst of gold: Other, less fine in carat,
is more precious, Preserving life in medicine potable;
But thou, most fine, most honour'd: most renown'd, Hast eat thy bearer

up. Thus, my most royal liege, Accusing it, I put it on my head,
To try with it, as with an enemy
That had before my face murder'd my father. (2H4 4.5.157-68)

Furthermore, Lancaster's choral expression of the king's post-coronation priorities aligns with his previously mentioned soliloquy. Both demonstrate the orientations and priorities of the new monarch. The following statements demonstrate his inclination towards warfare and his determination to conquer the neighboring nation and establish his dominion over it: "I am willing to wager that by the end of this year, our civil swords and native fire will extend as far as France" (2H4 5.5.106.08).

Drawing from an examination of Shakespeare's history plays, the following can be deduced regarding the fundamental concepts of kingship:

In addition, these plays make no explicit assumptions about the origins of the kingship or the state, nor do they speculate on the goals of the state or the kingship.

The plays furnish descriptions of the seven constituents of the state—the monarch, the councillor or minister, the territory, the fort, the treasury, the army, and the friend—yet fail to address the organic interrelation that exists among these constituents. Conversely, these interconnections are depicted through the harmony of a dance and a series of corresponding planes known as the Great Chain of Being.

The plays depict an extensive range of catastrophes that have transpired within the state. The most catastrophic event in the history of kings permeates the reigns of King Richard III, King John, King Richard II, King Henry IV, and King Henry VI. King Richard III, King John, King Richard II, King Henry IV, and King Henry VI are all replete with ministerial or councillor catastrophes. Additional catastrophes manifest themselves intermittently throughout the narratives of the nine plays.

In suggesting a form of divinely sanctioned kingship, the plays depict the position of the monarch as the fulcrum of the state and social order.

In addition, the plays do not offer any explicit commentary on the subject of royal education and training, nor do they establish a curriculum or framework for the education and training of a prospective monarch. However, they describe an informal method of education for princes in which they learn the ways of the world while living among the commoners. Additionally, they specify that a prince acquires his military training through apprenticeship to the state's greatest combatants.

The plays provide substantial support for lineal succession predicated on regal birth. Although the plays offer little recourse against lineal succession, even in the case of an incompetent heir apparent, they indirectly require a would-be king to acquire human rights to the crown, in addition to the lineal right.

The plays suggest that a king must undergo a coronation ritual to gain the sanction and allegiance of the people; however, he is not obligated to swear to rule justly, abstain from oppressing the people, or violate legal provisions at any time.

CONCLUSION

In Shakespeare's history plays the approach to policy is demystifying. The plays demystify the politics and power, giving a fragmented picture of the world in which power is not only used but very often abused. The politics is seen as *realpolitik*, i.e. as the dynamics of interests, ideological trickery, manipulation, instrumentation and exploitation. Shakespeare makes it clear that the rule of a king is far more dependent on the support or the good will of his powerful subjects than on the inheritance rights he may have. All royal protagonists in Shakespeare's history plays fail because their views are limited to their own ambitions and dynastic conflicts. They also do not fulfill or violate their moral principles, civic and royal responsibilities. In general, Shakespeare accepted the opinion that good rule meant the rule of a persistent and moral ruler who has the support of the people, yet ultimately, he was not only interested in the question of good royal power but also in the process of losing humanity.

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