Article

Drama & Demigods: Kingship and Charisma in Shakespeare's England

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Abstract: Shakespearean charisma, with its medieval roots in both religion and politics, served as a precursor to Max Weber's later understanding of the term. The on-stage portrayal of charismatic kingship in the twilight of the Tudor dynasty was not coincidental; facing the imminent death of a queen, the English nation was concerned about the future of the monarchy. Through the depiction of the production and deterioration of royal charisma, Shakespeare presents the anxiety of a population aware of the latent dangers of charismatic authority; while Elizabeth managed to perpetuate an unprecedented degree of long-term charismatic rule, there could be no certainty that her successor would be similarly capable. Shakespeare's second tetralogy—known as the *Henriad*—examines this royal charisma as it appears both under crisis and in the process of what Weber would later characterize as routinization. While Henry IV (Bolingbroke) originally makes use of charisma to ensure his succession to Richard II's throne, he loses his charismatic authority in the process. Henry V, by contrast, makes use of deliberate crisis—his claim to the French crown—in order to restore royal charisma. Henry V's success, however, cannot last, and his son's reign is a disastrous reminder that charisma is, as Weber will later argue, inherently unstable.

Abbreviations

R2: Richard II; 1H4: 1 Henry IV; 2H4: 2 Henry IV; H5: Henry V.

1. Introduction

During the first decades of William Shakespeare's dramatic career, England confronted an impending monarchical crisis as the aging Queen Elizabeth I refused to designate an heir. Compounding the national anxiety surrounding this dilemma was an ongoing debate about kingship and the rising prominence of claims of divine right, both in England and abroad. The Elizabethan problem of succession brought to the fore the problematic nature of a monarchy reliant upon both traditional means of succession and personal charisma. Facing the possibility of an interregnum, the machinery of the English government sought to establish an institution capable of steering the nation in the absence of a monarch. However, these attempts at institutionalization on the part of Parliament and the Privy Council met with resistance, as Elizabeth was unwilling to give up her claims to both traditional and personal charismatic authority. The consequent tension between queen, Council, and Parliament exacerbated an already ongoing ideological debate on the definition of kingship and the role of royal charisma that spilled over from the political and into the popular and cultural spheres.

Shakespeare, as the servant of a powerful courtly magnate, but—more importantly—also as a playwright, was positioned not only to comment upon, but also to be able to publically disseminate the debate concerning changing conceptions of charismatic sovereignty. Shakespeare's *Henriad* (*Richard II*, *1* and *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*), which appeared on the London stages from 1595–1599, explores the inadequacy of the Continental understanding of royal charisma as divinely endowed, foregrounding instead the need for an institutional separation between the charisma of the sovereign office and the personal charisma of the individual monarch. The tetralogy's conclusion, drawing from a medieval tradition of limited monarchy, exposes the Continental vision of divine right charisma as inherently unstable, instead advocating for an institutional separation of monarch and office as the only viable solution to the Elizabethan succession crisis.

2. The Origins of Shakespeare's Charisma

Charisma as a concept, as has often been noted by scholarship, originates in early Christianity with Saint Paul, and means "gift of grace" [1–3]. Although Weber is often credited with translating the term from theology to sociology, the application of the theological term to the study of medieval and early modern monarchy is explicitly relevant to understanding the function and role of kings. As medieval and early modern scholars and theorists understood it, "kingship," explains historian Henry Allen Myers, "is both the rule of one person over a political unit, as at least its nominal head, and the art or science by which such a ruler governs well," which, Myers continues, lies in the possession of "a certain mystique or charisma," meant both in a modern sense of personality and the purely theological sense of divine grace [4]. In essence, the practice of kingship reflected a dual belief in the sanctity of the monarch, as well as in the monarch's obligation to meet the expectations of martial heroism, sanctified piety and wise judgment that comprised the sovereign ideal. For most of medieval Europe, "kingship" was synonymous with "divine right" and "absolutism," a paradigm in which such "mystique" was the specific endowment of God. However, there existed a competing theory, which argued that sovereign grace required the ratification of the subjects, referred to by J.P. Sommerville as "designation" [5]. In divine right theory, the "act or practice" of rule became secondary to grace, while in designation theory, practice was the means by which the king demonstrated the possession of grace.

The theories of kingship that prevailed during Shakespeare's lifetime both in England and on the Continent were predicated on medieval theology, as well as practical and military prowess. Yet, despite these universal conceptual origins, philosophers, authors, politicians and even monarchs themselves could not agree on the components of proper kingship beyond the dual elements of spiritual sanctity and political might. The early medieval origins of these two aspects—and their different applications in England and on the Continent—help to illuminate the impetus behind early modern theorists' and playwrights' frequent focus on medieval kings.

The spiritual side of monarchical duality originates in the Germanic concept of *Heil*, which is most often misleadingly translated as "luck" or "fortune." The term's Norse derivation provides us with a more accurate definition, as Bettina Sejbjerg Sommer explains: "*Heill* is used synonymously with *gæfa/gipta*" in the Norse language, meaning "a force internal to the man," although, she continues, these terms "are never used to express an external manifestation. They may be sent forth from the owner himself to help others. Both derive from *gipt* [gift], which points toward a concept of luck as something granted from some higher power" [6]. Furthermore, this understanding of "luck" differed significantly from its later definition as "good fortune" or "chance"; rather, "luck was a quality inherent in the man and his lineage, a part of his personality similar to his strength, intelligence, or skill with weapons, at once both the cause and the expression of the success, wealth, and power of a family." *Heil*, etymologically speaking, is synonymous with Saint Peter's use of the term "charisma" as applied explicitly to monarchs. Essentially, the Norse-Germanic *Heil* would evolve into the sense of divine endowment articulated in the medieval and early modern understandings of divine right kingship.

As Europe became Christianized, *Heil* was co-opted into the Christian redefinition of kingship as inclusive of religious piety, the theological underpinnings of divine right. As medieval Christianity spread, it restructured tribal and warlord monarchies, fusing together the spiritual elements of *Heil* with the martial prowess of warlord rulership needed to defend a population from external threat. Christian practices of leadership, with their roots in "the Near East background of the Judaic-Christian tradition," defined kingship "in ethnic, religious, and charismatic terms," states Myers. Specifically, early medieval Christian theories of monarchy drew upon the Davidic example, which laid specific claim to direct endowment of royal authority by God. Assertions of Davidic authorization frequently accompanied claims of absolute sovereignty leading well into the seventeenth century, as in James VI of Scotland's (1598) *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, in which he propounds that "Kings are called Gods by the propheticall King *Dauid*, because they sit vpon GOD his Throne in the earth" [7].

The belief that Christ descended from the lineage of David reconfirmed the theological contention that kings were semi-divine, and the link to Christ gave rise to claims of the ability of monarchs to perform miraculous healings; in essence, "Kings were not only supposed to have better physical constitutions than others, manifested by longevity and the fact that their wounds healed more quickly than those of ordinary men, but they were also expected to be able to impart health and healing." Ernst Kantorowicz advocates that this link between Christ and kings produced the concept of the king's two bodies. He cites Christ's *persona mixta*—mixed spiritual and physiological existence—as the precursor to the monarchical dual bodies as *personae geminatae* or "human by nature and divine by grace" [8]. Yet, while this duality was adopted by the medieval Church in the distinction between the *corpus verum* (the host and the physical body of Christ) and the *corpus mysticum* (the spiritual body of the Church), according to more recent scholarship, the duality of the monarchy, especially as it

developed in England, appears in fact not to be predicated on Christology [9–14]. Instead, the duality of royal charisma springs from the originally distinct roles of medieval monarchs as either spiritual or martial leaders, related to Davidic kingship, but distinct from Christological sanctity.

Although kingship was first and foremost a legal rather than religious office, the fusion of spiritual and martial elements elevated the monarch to a singular and superior position, firmly locating sovereign power in the specific person and body of the king, what Weber terms "traditional authority" [15]. The traditional authority of medieval kingship was therefore also charismatic by virtue of its reliance on both *Heil* and heroism: "In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma." In essence, Weber explains, "Kingship originates in charismatic heroism."

The early medieval concept of royal charisma arose from the conjunction of *Heil* and heroism, and the evolution of divine right theory—perhaps the most promoted theory of sovereignty in Shakespeare's day—was the natural consequence. Weber explains the relationship in terms of the king's ability to use martial and spiritual success to his followers' benefit: "If proof and success elude the leader for long, if he appears deserted by his god or his magical or heroic powers, above all, if his leadership fails to benefit his followers, it is likely that his charismatic authority will disappear. This is the genuine meaning of the divine right of kings (*Gottesgnadentum*)." However, as divine right evolved, it marginalized the followers in favor of the king, precluding rebellion as a sin against God-*qua*-king. By virtue of his *Heil*, the king became a demigod, infallible and untouchable, supported in his reign by a mythic tradition that placed him on a plane above his subjects [16].

In traditionalist regimes, charisma is often treated as an inheritable quality, capable of being passed through bloodlines. Primogeniture—what Weber refers to as "paternalism"—thus became the primary means of transference for traditional charismatic authority throughout most of medieval Europe; Weber notes that in this process, the original understanding of divine right as reliant on the followers "is fundamentally altered and now comes to mean authority by virtue of personal right which is not dependent on the recognition of those subject to authority." However, although this scenario played out in Continental Europe, medieval England persisted in adhering to an earlier understanding of royal charisma in which popular designation—the ratification of the monarch by the people, whether through active election or passive acceptance—remained a necessary component of divine authorization.

England, unlike the vast majority of Europe, retained the ideological basis of Anglo-Saxon participatory governance despite repeated conquests by Rome and other Continental powers, as, even into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when divine right was popular on significant portions of the Continent, England remained firmly entrenched in participatory limited monarchy [17,18]. This ideology produced the Magna Carta in the thirteenth century, the formation of an official Parliament in the fourteenth and the legal deposition of multiple monarchs (Edward II, Richard II, Henry VI) in the century leading up to the Wars of the Roses [19–21]. English reliance on participatory rather than traditional charismatic authority meant that English political ideology was profoundly resistant to claims of charismatic divine right; this resistance, in turn, produced the atmosphere necessary for the redefinition of monarchy as an institutionalized bureaucracy rather than a cult of personality. In essence, England was ideologically prepared to reject divine right in favor of "routinized" charismatic authority.

3. Elizabethan Royal Charisma and the Succession Crisis

By the time Shakespeare wrote for the London stages, Continental theories of divine right were being promoted and disseminated in England, producing an ideological debate between traditional English limited monarchy and the absolutism imported by Henry VII. The circumstances of Henry VII's accession—victory over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field—enabled subsequent Tudor claims of traditional charismatic authority based on conquest, what Garry Wills terms "founding" kingship [22]. Henry VII assumed the throne through "charismatic war leadership that has become permanent," and passed down his dynastic line to Elizabeth through a combination of primogeniture and royal designation.[1]

By the closing decade of the sixteenth century, Tudor England had seen repeated monarchical crises: the death of Henry VII's eldest son, Arthur; Henry VIII's six wives; the death of the minor King Edward VI; the short but bloody reign of Mary I; and the four-decades'-long rule of an unmarried and childless queen. By 1595, when Shakespeare's *Henriad* opened on the stage of The Theatre, the nation was largely disillusioned with the Tudor dynasty's promotion of divine right. Although Elizabeth's use of pageantry and public appearance helped to secure her position as unquestioned queen, her refusal to either marry or name an heir was a significant cause of national anxiety. These circumstances bear out Weber's later observation that "Charismatic authority is inherently unstable," a situation also recognized by both playwrights, like Shakespeare, and by the courtiers and councilors who were positioned to influence succession and national stability.

As a monarch, Elizabeth was uniquely capable of exploiting both divine right and the English understanding of designatory limited monarchy to her best advantage. Drawing on her lineal descent from Henry VII as a founding charismatic king and her designation as heir by her father, Henry VIII, Elizabeth was able to claim charismatic authority on multiple levels. Her Tudor lineage authorized her through traditionally charismatic paternalism and her active engagement in the cultivation of rhetoric, image and vision in the face of multiple national crises—most obviously, the English success over the Spanish Armada, allegorized in the circa 1588 *Armada Portrait* by George Gower—confirmed her individual heroic charisma [24]. Elizabeth, in other words, embodied royal charisma as the fusion of metaphysical *Heil* and practical monarchical heroism.

Yet despite this success, Elizabeth's rule suffered from the inability to designate an appropriate successor, a circumstance characteristic of charismatics, as Jay Conger explains: "charismatic leaders often have a difficult time developing successors. They enjoy the 'center stage' too much to share it. To find a replacement who is a peer may be too threatening for leaders who tend to be so narcissistic" [25]. While "narcissism" may have played a part in Elizabeth's refusal to name an heir, fear for her own personal security and for the security of the realm made up significantly more of her rationale, as seen in a speech given to a joint delegation of the Houses of Lords and Commons on November 5, 1566: "Your petition is to deal in the limitation of the succession. At this present, it is not convenient, nor never shall be without some peril unto you and certain danger unto me" [26]. William Cecil's report to

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[1]   Henry VIII, Henry VII's son, succeeded to the throne through primogeniture. However, in the 1534 Act of Succession, Henry stipulated the subsequent line of inheritance, in accordance with Weber's suggestion that a charismatic heir can be designated by the previous holder [23].

the full House of Commons the next day acknowledges Elizabeth's concerns, but also emphasizes the instability produced by her royal charismatic rule: "For she said she knew any causes and some of her own experience, having been a second person to a sister (the late queen meant) how perilous it was for her own person. But yet if she did not also see how perilous it was for her subjects at this time, she would not forbear for her own peril to deal therein" [27]. Both Elizabeth and her Council were aware of the difficulty in naming an heir in terms of both personal and national security, but the nation at large was also concerned with both the transition of power and the person who would next assume the throne.

4. Shakespeare's *Henriad* and Royal Charisma

The topic of succession appeared frequently in pamphlets, poems and on stages and dramatic scaffolds throughout England, expressing deep anxiety not only about the process of succession, but also about the character and identity of the person who would assume Elizabeth's power. Drama in the 1580s and 1590s was almost obsessive in its depiction of failed monarchs, usurpers and regicides. Shakespeare's second tetralogy was immediately concerned with the process of non-dynastic succession and the different manifestations of royal charisma. The first and last plays in the *Henriad*, in particular, demonstrate this preoccupation with the contrast between primogeniture and performative designation—the former of which would cease to be a determinant of succession with Elizabeth's death. The opening play in the sequence, *Richard II* (1595), presents a contrast between Richard, as king by virtue of traditional charisma, and Henry Bolingbroke, whose individual charismatic appeal allows him to overthrow Richard. Historical (quasi-)accuracy aside, Shakespeare's choice to depict in two figures the two facets of royal charisma (*Heil* and heroism) reveals his awareness of an ideological shift in the conception of monarchical legitimacy from paternalistic to designatory and, more importantly, the consequent rise in institutional over personal charisma.

In the play, Richard very clearly stands as the figure of the divine right monarch. Faced with rebellion upon his return from Ireland, Richard asserts that Heaven itself will defend his dynastic right to the crown:

> For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed
> To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
> God for His Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel. Then, if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right. (*R2* 3.2.58–62) [28]

The "right" to which Richard refers is that conferred upon him by his lineage—traditional charisma *qua* divine right. Yet his "sacred blood" (*R2* 1.2.12) is insufficient to defend his throne when placed in opposition to Bolingbroke's individual heroic charisma.

By contrast, Bolingbroke—banished by Richard in the early acts of the play—evinces a more modern charismatic relationship to his (formerly Richard's) followers. Richard describes Bolingbroke's departure from England, in which he appears more as a popular charismatic than a banished criminal:

> Ourself and Bushy, Bagot here and Green

Observed his courtship to the common people—
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy,
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their affects with him.
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench.
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee
With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends',
As were our England in reversion his,
And he our subjects' next degree in hope. (*R2* 1.4.23–36)

As Cajsa Baldini remarks, "Bolingbroke does not… have any difficulties gaining the love of the people and his friends. He is easy-going and dashing, which has earned him the love of the masses," a sentiment echoed by many critics, including Aaron Landau, who observes that Bolingbroke's "nationalist stance is thus also to a large extent a provocatively popular one, in addition to, or irrespective of, the 'original' political intention behind such populism" [29,30]. Rather than confirming Richard's power by accepting his banishment with humility, Bolingbroke adopts the persona of a kingly rival as he takes his leave of England, establishing himself as a claimant for the throne and revealing Richard's inadequacies. While Richard terms his people "slaves," Bolingbroke acknowledges the power held by the commons to ratify their monarch as "our subjects' next degree in hope." In essence, Bolingbroke's personal charisma is authorized by his followers rather than by primogeniture.

Situated within its Elizabethan context, this comparison raises significant questions about both royal designation (by monarchical will) and inheritance as the means of transferring charismatic authority. The simple fact that Bolingbroke functionally designates himself—although he does follow the letter, if not the spirit, of the law by coercing Richard into naming him as heir—problematizes both primogeniture and royal designation. In order to assume the throne, Bolingbroke must convince Richard to willingly cede the throne, yielding a linguistic and literal tug-of-war over the crown. Eventually, Richard concedes, but, following Richard's deposition, Bolingbroke—now Henry IV—faces the problem of having been, like Elizabeth, a "second person" who now himself has a "second person" in Richard; a living deposed king, as innumerable histories explained to early modern readers and audiences, remained a threat to the new king that had only one plausible solution. Although Bolingbroke does not order Richard's death, his participation—even obliquely—taints his new rule. Despite being distanced from the actual commission of regicide through a proxy and the absence of a specific order, upon receiving Exton's report, Bolingbroke condemns rather than thanks Exton for his deed:

They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murderer, love him murdered.

> The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,
>
> But neither my good word nor princely favour.
>
> With Cain go wander through shades of night,
>
> And never show thy head by day nor light. [*Exit Exton*.] (*R2* 5.6.38–44)

While Richard is the poison that infects England, responsibility for Richard's death becomes Bolingbroke's "poison", even as it provides the cure to the problem of Richard's continued existence.[2] Bolingbroke's kingship begins with the instability inherent to individual charisma, leaving the audience with the uncomfortable sense that Bolingbroke will not be capable of ensuring national stability, because he is a usurper whose future will be fraught with rebellion.

Ultimately, most scholars seem to believe that, despite the rebellions against him, Bolingbroke's personal charisma is triumphant. Barbara Baines argues, specifically, that "The good that Bolingbroke has achieved is a new kind of kingship based on competency, responsibility, and the acknowledgment of political necessity as opposed to a kingship based on an exaggerated theory of divine right" [32]. While Richard's rule was certainly characterized by *in*competence—both Gaunt and York speak extensively about his mismanagement of land and wealth and his poor choice in followers— Bolingbroke does not appear to be particularly gifted in any area of rule, except for public relations. Bolingbroke is popular, but as the *Henriad* progresses, his rule seems defined more by struggle than it does success.

Yet Bolingbroke's reign is also dubbed successful, because it translates, in *1* and *2 Henry IV*, into traditional, inheritable charismatic authority for his son, Henry V. As the subject of the final play in the tetralogy, Henry, "the mirror of all Christian kings" (*H5* 2.0.6), epitomizes both traditional and individual charisma: royal charisma as the fusion of *Heil* and martial heroism [33]. In granting Henry attributes of both, Charles Barber claims, Shakespeare aligns Henry explicitly with Elizabeth, who similarly "walked a tightrope" between dynastic and personal charismatic rule [34]. However, although Henry has inherited his crown from his father (Bolingbroke), he is preoccupied with the fact that he is only the second of his line. Prior to the battle of Agincourt, he explicitly prays for God to overlook his father's usurpation of Richard's position:

> Not today, O Lord,
>
> O not today, think not upon the fault
>
> My father made in compassing the crown. (*H5* 4.1.289–291)

Henry himself discounts the value of primogeniture as a legitimate means of transferring royal charisma, instead earning his right to claim charismatic authority through "miracles."

Henry's "miracles"—his moral transformation, his martial prowess, his discovery of the treasonous plots against him, his victories at Harfleur and Agincourt and his wooing of Katherine of France—all conform to the idealized image of the royal charismatic. In *1* and *2 Henry IV*, "Prince Hal" (Henry V) overcomes his personal vices to become a Godly prince, as the bishops of Ely and Canterbury remark at the opening of *Henry V*:

> CANTERBURY The King is full of grace and fair regard.

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2 Naomi Conn Lieber, following Girard and Derrida, refers to Richard as a "*pharmakos*," a poison that is also a cure, a necessary sacrifice whose violent death mitigates further violence [31].

ELY And a true lover of the holy Church.

CANTERBURY The courses of his youth promised it not.

The breath no sooner left his father's body

But that his wildness, mortified in him,

Seemed to die, too; yea, at that very moment,

Consideration like an angel came

And whipped th'offending Adam out of him,

Leaving his body as a paradise

T'envelop and contain celestial spirits.

Never was such a sudden scholar made,

Never came reformation in a flood

With such a heady currence scouring faults,

Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness

So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,

As in this king.

ELY We are blessed in the change. (*H5* 1.1.22–37)

The image Henry presents in this fourth play is one of both piety and heroism, confirmed by the Chorus's description of him as a paragon warrior in the Prologue:

Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,

Assume the port of Mars, and at his heels,

Leashed in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire

Crouch for employment. (*H5* Prologue.5–8)

Both the "mirror of all Christian kings" and the "port of Mars," Henry embodies *Heil* and monarchical heroism, and is capable of leadership in court and on the battlefield.

Just before battle, Henry's men—noble and common alike—are in poor spirits, hungry and facing what they believe to be certain death. Westmoreland remarks to Henry that he wishes "we now had here / But one ten thousand of those men in England / That do no work today!" (*H5* 4.3.16–18). Henry replies:

No, my fair cousin:

If we are marked to die, we are enough

To do our country loss, and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will, I pray thee wish not one man more. (*H5* 4.3.19–23)

The valuation of his companions as worthy of their shared honor cements a bond between them and their king, and the remainder of the speech underscores the importance of participation and ratification to the success of Henry's royal charisma:

We would not die in that man's company

That fears his fellowship to die with us.

This day is called the feast of Crispian.

> He that outlives this day and comes safe home
> Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
> And rouse him at the name of Crispian. (*H5* 4.3.38–43)

Here, Henry not only effaces the class-division between himself and his followers, reinforcing the validity of their approval of his actions and confirming the English participatory tradition of governance, but he also invokes the a mythic narrative of heroism in which his followers will be able to take part, should they choose to accept his vision. Henry continues, mythologizing his vision as the future history of England in which he and his followers will jointly participate:

> He that shall see this day and live old age
> Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
> And say 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian.'
> Then will he strip and show his scars,
> And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot
> But he'll remember, with advantages,
> What feats he did that day. (*H5* 4.3.44–51)

Henry's vision of triumph over crisis is inspiring to his men, but also to Shakespeare's audience, who must also be prepared to follow their royal charismatic monarch "unto the breach" (*H5* 3.1.1) of an uncertain future.

But where Henry is most effective is in his elision of the hierarchical difference between himself and his followers:

> Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
> From this day to the ending of the world
> But we in it shall be remembered,
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
> For he today that sheds his blood with me
> Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
> This day shall gentle his condition.
> And gentlemen in England now abed
> Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
> And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
> That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day. (*H5* 4.3.57–67)

By promoting participation in his collective vision, Henry is able to use rhetoric to convince his men—who were both doubtful and frightened the night before—to follow him not simply into combat, but to "miraculous" victory. Furthermore, he engages in what Yeon Choi and Renate Mai-Dalton term "self-sacrificial leadership," that is, "leadership which involves denying self-interests or personal comfort and safety, limiting personal privileges, or sharing pains and hardships with the followers" [35]. Henry's speech is effective because he both acknowledges the sacrifices of his men while offering them a cohesive vision of their impending victory against impossible odds—a charismatic "miracle" not unlike the Elizabethan victory over the Spanish Armada, to which it obliquely refers.

The so-named "Saint Crispin's Day speech" is remarkable, because of its depiction of Henry's royal charisma, specifically, Terrell L. Tebbets observes, in terms of its "attempts to win consent" from Henry's followers [36]. The speech, as has often been noted, echoes in setting and discursive style Elizabeth's famous "Tilbury Speech," in which, according to a contemporary, Dr. Lionel Sharp, she "rode through all the squadrons of her army as armed Pallas attended by noble footmen, Leicester, Essex, and Norris, then lord marshal, and divers other great lords. Where she made an excellent oration to her army, which the next day after her departure, I was commanded to redeliver all the army together, to keep a public fast" [37]. The text of Elizabeth's speech—as reported by Sharp—is also clearly echoed by Henry's "Saint Crispin's Day" address: "Wherefore I am come among you at this time but for my recreation and pleasure, being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live and die amongst you all, to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people mine honor and my blood even in the dust." Henry's speech, clearly patterned after Elizabeth's, desires the audience to see Henry as, Sharon Discorfano claims, an "ideal….charismatic, eloquent, inspiring, and capable of leading others to victory as he stands right alongside them" [38]. In the Saint Crispin's Day speech, Henry fulfills the rhetorical expectations of his followers, both those contained within the framework of the play and those in the playhouse audience, in a charismatic display that resonated with Shakespeare's and continues to resonate with modern audiences [39]. However, despite his ability to produce exemplary moments of idealized royal charisma, Henry's kingship is ultimately problematic.

5. The Problem with Henry, Elizabeth and Charismatic Succession

Critics of early modern drama cannot agree on the play's ultimate depiction of Henry or the institution of the monarchy. On one side, Henry Hudson and Henry Edmondson contend that Henry's "many-sidedness" and "inner merit" produce a "portrait of the ideal leader" [40,41]. On the other, Peter Parolin states that "[w]hile on the one hand, Shakespeare's play supports Henry's heroic rhetoric by connecting it with God, on the other hand, the play massively undercuts Henry's godliness and calls his use of godly rhetoric into question" [42]. Similarly, Nina Taunton and Sara Munson Deats find Henry to be fundamentally self-serving, seeking to "appease his insecurity and vanity" and engaging in unjustified "rapacious violence" through his threats against Harfleur and his order to execute the French prisoners of war [43,44]. Malcolm Pittock is even more critical of Henry, suggesting that he is guilty of "moral inauthenticity", because he "accepts no responsibility for his own actions" [45]. For Pittock and others, Henry is Machiavellian, "clever enough to manipulate public opinion, often by an appeal to traditional values, believing that (s)he was the mirror of all Christian kings, while actually engaging in less than scrupulous 'realpolitik'." The added "(s)" is Pittock's conflation of Henry with Elizabeth, a frequent parallel made by critics and one most likely also made by Shakespeare's audience. But, while many scholars see in Henry a criticism of Elizabethan politics, others, myself included, find, instead, an active discussion of the state of the English monarchy as an institution, rather than a condemnation of an individual leader, either present or past [46].

The source of vexation concerning Henry is the transparency given to him by Shakespeare, particularly throughout *1* and *2 Henry IV*, and the night before the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*. Because the audience witnesses Henry's private, non-charismatic struggles, and because he fails to provide England with security, Henry's success as a royal charismatic ultimately fails to soothe an

early modern audience's fears about the death of their own royal charismatic queen. By deliberately exposing the machinery of image creation—a necessary component of royal charisma—Shakespeare draws the audience's attention to the inherent fictiveness and instability of royal charisma, whether *Heil* or heroism. *Henry V*, in particular, is concerned with the fragility of the king's charismatic persona and deliberately deconstructs it in order to emphasize the danger of governmental reliance on individual, rather than institutionalized, charismatic monarchy.

In *1 Henry IV*, in which Shakespeare introduces the audience to "Prince Hal," a profligate and often-inebriated wastrel, he also demonstrates the deliberately constructed nature of "Hal"; Henry has every intention of making use of his poor reputation in order to perform the "miracle" of self-reformation that we see in *Henry V*:

> 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'll so offend to make offence a skill,
> Redeeming time when men think least I will. (*1H4* 1.2.198–207) [47]

Henry's self-presentation here serves multiple purposes: it allows him to develop a complex understanding of the lower classes (his followers) and their motivations; it enables him to "offset" his later goodness; and it represents to the audience the conscious self-construction in which monarchs engaged.

At the conclusion to *2 Henry IV*, after the death of Henry's father (Bolingbroke), Henry casts off his common and somewhat immoral company and lays claim to the aspects of royal charisma we see more fully developed in *Henry V*. Following his coronation, Henry is approached by his erstwhile companions, Falstaff, Shallow, Pistol and Bardolph (the latter two of whom reappear in *Henry V*), and addressed by Falstaff as "My King! My Jove!" (*2H4* 5.5.46). Henry's response fulfills the "debt" of self-transformation he "promised":

> Presume not that I am the thing I was;
> For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
> That I have turn'd away my former self;
> So will I those that kept me company.
> When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
> Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,
> The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
> Till then I banish thee, on pain of death,
> As I have done the rest of my misleaders. (*2H4* 5.5.56–64) [48]

Because by *Henry V*, the audience has seen Henry in two previous plays, they are aware that his royal charisma is a projected persona. This cognizance of the externality of royal charisma significantly

undermines any claim of inherent *Heil*, and Henry makes no such claims for himself or for monarchs in general. In fact, if anything, Henry claims the opposite.

The night before Agincourt, Henry disguises himself as a commoner and moves among his men in order to take the measure of their fear and—if Deats's argument is to be believed—to assuage his own. Following this confrontation, during which Henry learns that his men hold him accountable for their lives and souls, Henry discloses his own fallibility:

> 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 mounted than ours, yet when they stoop they stoop with the like wing. (*H5* 4.1.102–108)

Here, Henry is disguised as a common soldier, and he therefore employs "common" rather than elevated speech in his explanation to both soldiers and playhouse audience that he—as king—is no different than they, nor is he—as player—distinct in makeup from the monarch on the throne. In this admission of humanity, Shakespeare, through Henry, directly undercuts Continental claims of traditional charismatic authority. While Henry may act in accordance with both the heroic and spiritual aspects of royal charisma, he does not possess inherent *Heil*. Instead, Henry has deliberately constructed a royal charismatic persona with the appearance of both *Heil* and heroism.

What is most interesting about the constructed nature of Henry's royal charisma is that the play did not condemn it. Rather, Henry's charismatic performance is praiseworthy, since it enables him to lead his men to victory at Agincourt and to achieve conquest—legitimizing his charismatic persona by making him a founding king. The play's concern is not that Henry performs his way into royal charisma, but that such charisma is, as Weber notes, inherently unstable, as Richard Hardin explains: "an impulse toward sacralizing the monarch goes awry, as it always must, since in any human sacredness is an unstable commodity" [49]. In dismantling the veracity of claims of divine right and inherent sovereign *Heil*, the play exposes the problem of instability that provided the impetus for most of the drama of the period, focusing on the consequence of charismatic instability and the consequent failure of succession.

Although the Tudor dynasty had long relied upon claims of divine right and foundational kingship as a means of legitimization, Elizabeth herself had been careful to situate her own claims of royal charisma in her love for her people rather than in her God-given right to rule: "For I do esteem it more than any treasure or riches; for that we know how to prize, but love and thanks I count unvaluable. And, though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown, that I have reigned with your loves. This makes me that I do not so much rejoice that God hath made me to be a Queen, as to be a Queen over so thankful a people." Taken from her Golden Speech, given November 30, 1601, these lines echo claims made throughout her reign—that the ratification of the populace was ultimately of greater importance to her continued rule than divine endowment. Whether these claims indicated her true beliefs or whether they were a performance for the public and Parliament is—as we saw with Henry V—ultimately unimportant; what is important is that the persona Elizabeth constructed was one of a limited monarch willing to accept her people's judgment.

The concluding problem of *Henry V* ultimately has very little to do with Henry's constructed—successful—charismatic persona. In fact, the play's unsatisfying ending is the product of its epilogue,

in which the audience is reminded of the events following Henry's victories in France. The *Henriad* is Shakespeare's second tetralogy; the first tetralogy (written 1590–1593, according to most scholarship) follows Henry's son through his own failures in France, cuckolding, deposition and murder, against the backdrop of the Wars of the Roses. Because the first tetralogy, although chronologically second, was written and staged first, the audience of the *Henriad* knew the conclusion to the story. E.M.W. Tillyard has famously proposed that the entire sequence was written in praise of the Tudor dynasty, what has come to be termed the Tudor Myth, an idea that has been widely praised and criticized since [50–53].

Rather than laud or condemn the Tudor dynasty, the narrative contained within the tetralogies deliberately points to the breakdown of the illusion of national stability fostered under the rule of a royal charismatic. In *Henry V*, Henry's "miracles" and public successes create a sense of national permanence and perpetuity, necessitating the reminder at its conclusion of immanent civil and international strife:

> CHORUS Small time, but in that small most greatly lived
>
> This star of England. Fortune made his sword
>
> By which the world's best garden he achieved,
>
> And of it left his son imperial lord.
>
> Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King
>
> Of France and England, did this king succeed,
>
> Whose state so many had the managing
>
> That they lost France and made his England bleed,
>
> Which oft our stage hath shown; and for their sake
>
> In your fair minds let this acceptance take. (*H5* Epilogue.5–14)

The reference to "Small time," the fact that Henry VI was crowned as an infant, and the events contained within the already extant first tetralogy all remind the audience that regardless of Henry's successes, they are ultimately transient, and he leaves, in Parolin's terms, "a legacy of loss." Henry's royal charisma is insufficient to stabilize England and France as a unified nation, just as Elizabeth's royal charisma will not be able to provide perpetual stability for Shakespeare's England.

Henry V's epilogue does not provide an adequate solution for the problem of charismatic instability at first glance, yet the history plays in general do suggest a possible answer in the form of their critique of the institution of monarchy. Henry V himself, in fact, provides part of this answer in his own refusal of *Heil*. In short, the answer to the question, "[b]ut when conquest yields to stabilization, youth to age, fabulous exploits to everyday reality, how can charisma be 'routinized'?" lies in the process of institutionalization. In Elizabethan England, this process involved a turn toward medieval tradition, a shift back toward to English participatory limited monarchy and a rejection of Continental claims of absolutism and divine right.

This philosophical return to a medieval understanding of sovereignty augmented by a modern progression toward bureaucratization indicated the shifting attitude throughout the nation and the government as a whole. Elizabeth was queen over an assertive Parliament and Privy Council, both bodies who drew their existence and authority from English medieval tradition. By the last decade of the sixteenth century, both Parliament and the Council had repeatedly attempted to assert their authority over Elizabeth, who continued to resist their insistence that she marry or name an heir. In

1584, William Cecil attempted to "establish a Great Council to rule England in the event of an assassination and the inevitable interregnum that would follow. The Great Council would exercise all the royal powers and together with a recalled Parliament would choose the next monarch." Elizabeth refused Cecil's proposal, stating that it violated her rights as a monarch and, David Starkey notes, would have "permitted subjects to judge a sovereign and elect a new one." Nevertheless, Cecil's proposal and the 1571 Act of Parliament that made it treason to question Parliamentary right to alter the succession both indicate the ideological shift taking place within the structure of the English monarchical institution away from centralized monarchy [54]. While the traditional means of succession in England—as elsewhere—remained tied to blood, these incidents focus on the legal alteration of succession by a body other than the centralized figure of charismatic authority. In short, the English monarchy was becoming bureaucratized.

The process of creating an institutionalized bureaucracy out of the English monarchy was at its core an attempt to create stability and continuity between monarchs—to streamline the process of succession in such a way that royal charisma became routinized. The routinization of charisma, according to Weber, results from the "desire to transform charisma and charismatic blessing from a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons into a permanent possession of everyday life." This process of transformation, however, necessarily "changes the nature of the charismatic structure." So, too, did the process of bureaucratization alter the nature of royal charisma in early modern England by divorcing royal charisma from the individual ruler and attaching it, instead, to the office of monarch itself—an office required to submit to the limitations stipulated by Parliament, Council and law.

The office of monarch was attached, in traditional understandings of charisma, to the individual king or queen sitting on the throne. The English propensity for limiting monarchy, however, meant that a legal fiction was needed in order to maintain a separation between the person of the monarch and the office that person held. This became particularly important during the Tudor dynasty, when three of its five monarchs were in some way believed inadequate for the position: one minor (Edward VI) and two women (Mary I and Elizabeth I). The legislative reaction to this problem was to make distinct the monarch's body natural (personal, physical body) from his or her body politic (the metaphysical construct of the monarch-in-state), as is described in Edmund Plowden's *Commentaries or Reports* in a response to a land-disposition case in 1562: "The King has two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body Politic. His Body natural … is a Body mortal, subject to all infirmities that come by Nature or Accident…. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People… and this Body is utterly void of… natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to" [55]. This division—explored at some length by Kantorowicz—enabled a monarch limited by age, physical ability or illness to nevertheless execute the full extent of sovereign powers. However, this division also enabled the opposite; in addition to authorizing the monarch to take actions otherwise inappropriate to his age or her gender, the division between office and person created a gap into which Parliament and the Privy Council were able to step in order to assert authority over the process of succession.

The impulse to divide the individual king or queen from the office of monarch produced a corresponding increase in the power-distribution to the offices that surrounded the throne, in particular, among members of the Privy Council—like Cecil—and Parliament. The location of power in these

bodies was not new to the Elizabethan period, but the degree to which Councilors and members of Parliament felt authorized to execute power over both the monarch and the succession was much more recent. Thomas Anderson locates the beginnings of this development in the fifteenth century, citing the relocation of "official state business away from the king's household or court and into what some historians consider an independent administrative service" [56]. Anderson echoes A.L. Brown's thesis that the end of the fifteenth century saw the advent of professional government servants, men whose role was life-long (or, at least, for the duration of a given monarch's reign) and concerned primarily with administration [57].

The separation of the business of running of the nation from the person of the monarch, Michael Braddick maintains, is a consequence of the ideological conception of England as a "state," rather than a "kingdom" affiliated specifically with the crown [58]. John Guy explains that this understanding of "state," rather than "kingdom," arose during Elizabeth's reign and is symptomatic of the larger changing conception of monarchy as being rooted in the "state" rather than the individual sovereign, what Weber refers to as a "legal authority," rather than a "traditional" or "charismatic" one [59]. The existence of professional governmental administrators, the increasing power of Parliament and the Privy Council and the removal of the person of the monarch from the formal execution of sovereign authority all demonstrate the bureaucratization—the routinization—of royal charisma at the end of the sixteenth century.

Although, as Braddick notes, Elizabethan England was not yet a "rational bureaucracy" in Weber's explicit terms, this period of time did see the establishment of the foundations of what would become "a kind of bureaucracy, a 'central machine', and around this core of London government there developed a range of full-time functionaries," which included the monarch, as the embodiment of royal charisma, and also the proto-bureaucratic bodies of Parliament and the Privy Council, whose authority increased, as individual bureaucrats like William and Robert Cecil asserted their power over Elizabeth and her successor. This machinery of Elizabethan bureaucracy would have been apparent to Shakespeare as a liveried servant of the Lord Chamberlain, and, as such, the playwright would have been capable of observing and commenting on the shift in power-dynamics at court.

6. Conclusions

What is perhaps most interesting about the shift toward bureaucratization in Elizabethan England is that, while its immediate concern—as Shakespeare's drama reveals—was with the impending problem of succession, it ultimately meant a reduction in sovereign power, as the individual monarch began to appear increasingly as a figurehead rather than an arbiter of law and justice. The loyalty demonstrated by subjects and even administrators became relocated from the monarch to the crown itself, as, Kantorowicz explains, we see occur in *Richard II*: "kings were not rarely charged—we may think of Edward II or Richard II—with having 'blemished and prejudiced the Crown and the royal Dignity and the heirs Kings of England.'" The problem with Richard II was that he violated the terms of his coronation and, in doing so, exacerbated the division between his individual person and his role as monarch, permitting Bolingbroke's usurpation. However, as is evident in the remaining three plays, individual royal charisma ultimately proves to be as unstable as traditional divine right charisma.

Although Bolingbroke's demonstration of both *Heil* and heroism gained him the crown at the conclusion of *Richard II*, the elimination of inherent sanctity from the throne created the repeated opportunity for rebellion against his regime. Furthermore, even though Henry V was able to more fully claim the throne as Bolingbroke's heir, war hero and pious Christian, even this idealized image of royal charisma was insufficient to secure England's future stability. The primary concern with which Shakespeare leaves his audience at the end of the *Henriad* is that although royal charisma produces an idealized monarchy, that ideal circumstance is temporary, threatened by the inherent instability of the very charisma that makes it appear ideal. What we see in the epilogue of *Henry V* is the legitimate concern that the interregnum that would happen upon Elizabeth's death had the potential to threaten the overall security of England itself.

What ultimately transpired, of course, was that England saw no such interregnum. Instead, riders were immediately dispatched to Scotland to inform James VI that he had been proclaimed James I of England on Elizabeth's deathbed, and England experienced a smooth transition from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasty.[3] James himself was a proponent of the very sort of divine right charisma—*Heil* alone—which England had traditionally rejected, but the stability offered by the smooth succession of a king who already had produced an heir (and the proverbial "spare") was more enticing than civil or international conflict. As James MacGregor Burns notes, historically, stability and absolutism were preferable to participatory governance and instability: "So most peoples, during most of history, learned one paramount lesson—ideally it would be best to have regimes both properly chosen and stable, but if you have to choose between autocracy and instability, take autocracy. Though a despot may oppress and murder citizens who threaten his power, civil war resulting from succession struggles can ensnare whole societies and cause the deaths of thousands" [60]. While this bore out in the process of James's accession, it would ultimately prove to be too harsh of a transition for a nation long accustomed to a limited participatory government that was already undergoing the process of bureaucratization. James repeatedly found himself in conflict with both Parliament and the Privy Council, and his assertions of divine authorization were met on both the political and public stages with condemnation and derision, despite official and clerical attempts to insist otherwise.

The role played by the public theaters in the transformation is often overlooked in examinations of the changes in governmental structure and public policy. Plays, like Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which foreground deposition and regicide, reproduced the attitudinal shift away from absolutism and toward bureaucratization, but the frequency with which such events (fictional and historical) appeared on the public and courtly stages in the half-century leading up to the closure of the theaters in 1642 suggests their power was not simply reflective. The concerns of anti-theatricalists and official censors tells us that the theaters held transformative power over their audiences and led to the public acceptance—and, indeed, the expectation—of institutionalized rather than inherent royal charisma.

The ultimate consequence of frequent theatrical depiction of the routinization of royal charisma in England meant that the nation was incapable of accepting assertions of personal or divine right charismatic authority, since the establishment of participatory bureaucracy was an institutional and ideological step that could not be revoked. In short, the long-standing tradition of participatory limited

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3   While the official account is that he was designated by Elizabeth herself, apocryphal stories suggest that the decision
    may have been made by Robert Cecil or the Privy Council.

monarchy set the stage—both literally and figuratively—for the creation of a monarchical bureaucracy that insisted upon its right to regulate and designate the succession of routinized royal charismatic authority. The attempt of the Stuart dynasty to insist upon its traditional charismatic authority resulted, in 1649, in the conviction and execution of Charles I in Parliament's ultimate assertion of its bureaucratic power over not only succession, but of the persistence of the crown itself.

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