

**“Weariness Can Snore Upon the Flint”: (Re)reading Shakespearean
Theatrical Calculus of Sovereignty and the Affective Politics of the COVID
Age in *1 Henry IV***

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Abstract:

The paper reads *1 Henry IV* as an 'anatomy' of the burden of authority and the exhaustion of historical continuity in Shakespearean vision of kingship. King Henry IV embodies what may be termed 'sovereign fatigue'—the psychic as well as temporal depletion that underwrites the performance of rule which is further interpreted through Lauren Berlant's theory of 'cruel optimism'. His attachment to the fantasy of stable order becomes an affective impasse, revealing the melancholic underside of political endurance. In contrast to that, Prince Hal performs Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag', inhabiting the tension between the tavern's anti-historical temporality and the deferred futurity of princely responsibility. The father-son dyad exposes the friction between 'political futurity' and 'affective suspension' that structures Shakespeare's historical imagination. The second section of the paper situates this dynamic within the field of COVID humanities, reading *1 Henry IV* as an early modern meditation on 'crisis temporality'. King Henry's fatigued sovereignty parallels the pandemic condition of leadership sustained by managing unending emergency whereas Hal's suspended transformation raises the question : Can legitimacy be imagined when futurity itself is indefinitely postponed? Through this juxtaposition, the paper argues that Shakespeare anticipates the architecture of 'pandemic modernity' as a vital 'affective infrastructure' and envisions post-pandemic leadership as the fragile ethics of persistence amid collective exhaustion.

Keywords: COVID Humanities, Cruel Optimism, Pandemic Modernity, Sovereign Fatigue, Temporal Drag

Introduction

Placed against the broader intellectual currents of Wordsworth's dream of 'a progress in the species towards unattainable perfection', Coleridge's hope for 'progressive amelioration of mankind and Hobbesian idea of man as "preserved from mutual destruction

only by a power” (Foakes 04) , Shakespeare’s Henry IV plays resembles Freudian slips – a play haunted by what it cannot reconcile : the theological weight of usurpation and the repressive force of sovereignty that holds the fragile body politic together. As a drama of ‘substitution’ that Tudor historiography had already performed, Shakespeare inherits the genius to represent this burden of rupture : it is the reign of “political complication”(Saccio 05), “a disorderly interlude, a tragic interval between the early Plantagenets and the Renaissance flowering under Tudors. “ (Saccio 13). The History cycle reiterates that “in the whirling of Time – the individual is an agent as well as the victim of the ceaseless process of change”(Shaw 272). Like Shakespeare’s Henry, struck by “a fatal apoplexy” (Saccio 56) appears as the bodily emblem of a kingdom suffering it’s own convulsion, the pandemic made this Shakespearean paradox tangible in our own time – COVID as a ‘rebellion of nature’, lockdown as a ‘pause in history’, vaccination as a ‘rite of passage’. The recent global health crisis was strategically framed by governments though the “rhetoric of war” helped to “justify strong governmental measures” (Lehtinen and Brunila 2). Political declarations that “pandemic as a war against an invisible enemy” (Lehtinen and Brunila 2) shifted the public understanding from a medical crisis to a national security threat. The deployment of a specific type of governance rooted in “biopolitical rationality” (Lehtinen and Brunila 3), became a central tool of state power for the management of life.

Drawing upon Lauren Berlant’s affective political theory, the co-constitution of ‘sovereign fatigue’ and ‘temporal drag’ emerges from the “anxiety of formlessness”, (Berlant 176) the dread felt when the conventional genres of the ‘good life’ dissolve. The structural impasse generates a persistent state of temporal drag, where subjects experience the present as a heavy, stretched-out non-event rather than a pathway to a better future. The citizen’s response is often a contradictory attachment to an “ideal of liberal abstraction or innerdirectedness” alongside an “antiliberal orientation toward the subject’s affective knowingness,” leading to an ‘all-knowing’ cynicism(Berlant 175). The affective stance is characterized by a “relation between contemptuous defensive knowledge and the libidinal stimulation of intellectual confront” (Berlant 199)where subjects find intellectual aliveness in critically observing the very political breakdown that is wearing them out.

Section I

“Ruin Hath Taught Me Thus to Ruminare”: Cruel Optimism and the Temporal Drag of Sovereignty

King Henry IV’s fraught relationship with Prince Hal in which the King’s political hopes leads to his desire for a morally purified heir who can retroactively cleanse his tainted accession. The emotional architecture of his kingship is built upon a longing for a symbolic restoration that the temporal conditions of his reign can no longer support. “Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare” (Shakespeare 119) is the King’s haunted self-reflection , for his reign is shaped by a continuous backward gaze. In his ruminative state, sovereignty becomes a recursive burden, an anachronistic desire toward a world which is already set up eclipsed by

political modernity. The King's yearning for an heir, who can "Accompany the greatness of thy blood" (Shakespeare 3.2.16) focuses on a fantasy of symbolic absolution in which legitimacy can be purified through filial spectacle. The King reads Hal's 'strategy' as 'moral collapse', insisting that "The hope and expectation of your time/Is ruin'd" (Shakespeare 3.2.36-37). What he perceives as deficiency is in fact a sophisticated mode of political self-fashioning – a Machiavellian performance. King's cruel optimism directs him to yearn for transparent virtue at a historical moment when transparency has ceased to be politically viable. "A relation of cruel optimism" as Berlant said, could only exist only "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 18). His own ascent was depended on tactical dissimulation, he repented for it : "For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven/To punish my mistreadings." (Shakespeare 3.2.10-11) yet he refuses to recognize the very political acumen he once embodied in Hal, who is involved in the "criminal underworld [which] could hobnob with the nobility" (Hattaway 160).

Hotspur represents pre-lapsarian kingship, "Shakespeare's ideal of manhood in the sphere of practical achievement"(Bloom 104) who "embodies all that is glorious about feudal chivalry – its code of honour, its passion for heroic achievement in arms, its emphasis on loyalty to self and family over state" (Hattaway 159). When King Henry, whom Hotspur calls "fawning greyhound" (Shakespeare 1.3. 249) imagines that "some night-tripping fairy had exchanged/ In cradle clothes our children"(Shakespeare 1.1.86-87) he attempts to reverse time itself, replacing the morally compromised future (Hal) with a fantasy of uncomplicated legitimacy (Hotspur) for "Hotspur's zealous adherence to individual will was an attractive anachronism" (Hattaway 159). Hal, the necessary modern heir, embodies a future Henry who cannot emotionally permit and yet it is precisely this future that guarantees the survival of the state. The tragedy of the king resides in this paradox: that the son he believes will doom the kingdom is the only figure capable of securing it, and the ideal of heir he worships is the very embodiment of the political world he must leave behind.

Governed by an intensified matrix of cruel optimism, King Henry IV becomes a political site of redemption where each promise deepens the condition of sovereign suffering. A singular, spectacular military triumph might expiate the moral debt of usurpation into a fantasy of absolution when he hopes history might 'start over'. The cruel optimistic mistakes it to be a structural fracture for a tactical problem. The rebellion that threatens him is not an external anomaly but the internal logic of a throne built on broken legitimacy. King Henry IV is thus attached to solutions that can never deliver what they promise. His faith that foreign quarrels can "busy giddy minds"(Shakespeare 4.2 342) creates a perpetual conflict where movement masquerades as progress and mobilization exhausts the sovereign further. Freeman's notion of "forcing the present to touch its own disavowed past" just to make the possible future look unfamiliar (Freeman 78).

His cruel optimism expands in his paternal life where he hopes Hal will perform the redemption he himself failed to achieve, yet this hope is cruel because it eternalises his own unresolved guilt onto the heir which makes the “relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility where realization is discovered either to be impossible, [or] sheer fantasy or too possible, and toxic.” (Berlant 96) Knowledge itself is a cruelly optimistic pursuit. Henry believes more accurate reports, or clearer counsel might change his fate but yet every new piece of information multiplies his anxiety which turns the politics of governance to be an epistemological trap. Hal becomes a biopolitical prosthesis which raises the question: Can an heir truly redeem the past, or does inheritance merely repackage historical violence? “Hal is behaving much as Richard once did, and that Hotspur, with whom Henry identifies, stands to reap the benefits of Hal’s profligacy. Henry appears to have no idea how different his political opportunism is from Hotspur’s feudal nobility, nor how different his son is from the skipping King”(Hattaway 164). Hal functions as a temporal shock absorber, absorbing the oscillation between medieval honour and emergent political modernity where no successor could realistically stabilize.

Is power even inherited, or is it only its exhaustion that is passed down? Cruel optimism as a state-sponsored fiction demand the misreading of Hal by King Henry just to refuse his political strategy as acute modernity, thus succumbing to the Hegelian concept of the “the ability to comprehend a historical situation” only as it becomes “obsolete” and what Lisa Hilderbrand has called “retroactivism” (Freeman 85).

Beneath the surface lies an unconscious fantasy of heirlessness, for the rejection of Hal becomes a clear denial of succession itself and therefore a denial of the King’s own mortality. When the King said “And showed thou mak’st some tender of my life,/In this fair rescue thou hast brought to me.” (Shakespeare 5.4.48-49) Hal replied – “O God, they did me too much injury/That ever said I hearkened for your[King’s] death” (Shakespeare 5.4.50-51).

Hal’s formation who “transforms himself from wastrel to responsible heir” (Hattaway 158) is not a narrative of linear growth but a dialectic of desire and negation. He is a figure of “thought less(ness) in the psychic time of the individual than in the movement of time of collective political fantasy” (Freeman 65). Shakespeare constructs Hal as a subject whose aspirations must be relentlessly foreclosed in order to inhabit the throne. Hal’s formation requires not only a single renunciation of desire but a cumulative erosion of relationality to become the ‘logic’ of governmentality.

Hal’s ‘unemotional’ attachment to the life of Eastcheap suspends the courtly lineage of his position. The political expectations that saturate the court subverts the fulfilment of the erotic sovereign desires of Hal. The world where laughter acts as a counterweight to the rigidity of monarchical destiny, Hal, to his paternal figure as well as to his predecessors

become a dangerous liability when it comes to sovereign heir. Falstaff represents an ‘impossible’ object, whose presence threatens the coherence of the political order that Hal must soon take the responsibility. The optimism of authentic companionship becomes cruel and which made Hal confront the question: how sustainable is such freedom for someone whose future depends on inhabiting an institution until tolerates no excess feeling?

The metaphor of ‘reformation’ puts reputation as a debt he can only repay only through a conversion from prodigality to princely virtue. It interrogates “the interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of domestic life” (Freeman xxiv). To reform is not merely to perform virtue, but to mask a demand for “organiz[ing] individual human bodies” into “maximum productivity” (Freeman 3). What becomes of a subject who must extinguish the impulses that made him human in order to become king? He gains the throne but at the price of entering a barren affective landscape where the self becomes a curated instrument of state ideology. Henry’s desire to make the “northern youth” “exchange” his “glorious deeds” for the king’s “indignities” (3.2.145–146) maps sovereignty onto an affective economy where shame is outsourced and glory is absorbed.. His optimism about crafting a future self becomes cruel when the resulting self is diminished. He is “living not only as self-extension but as a process that interferes with the drama of the self” (Berlant 176), and In Berlant’s terms, belonging to the “normal world” entails “misrecogniz[ing] only certain modes of intelligibility as expressing “one’s true self” (Berlant 176), a process through which the subject becomes readable only by sacrificing alternative modes of being.

The most profound layer of Hal’s cruel optimism is his belief that he can control the narrative of his own becoming. He imagines himself as director and protagonist of a carefully managed self-fashioning drama. The crown, far from amplifying personal power, consumes the person wearing it. Once he ascends, the state script rewrites his subjectivity. The individual is subsumed by the symbolic order that legitimises him. The optimism of self-authorship becomes cruel where authorship is seized by the crown, leaving Hal not as a man who chooses kingship but as one chosen to be absorbed by it. Hal’s deliberate descent into the world of the commoners is a calculated strategy to internalise multiple social idioms. He aspired to become the kind of king who ‘knows the people’ and this versatility produces a paradox: How can one draw authority from social intimacy only to renounce the relationships that facilitated it? “Henry V, immediately after ascending the throne, banishes to a proper distance the companions of his youthful excess” (Bloom 82) is not an act of political necessity but a form of violence against the very emotional labour that shaped this persona.

Shakespeare leaves us with two equally viable possibilities: that Hal reforms to become worthy of the crown and that Hal merely performs reform as part of the dramaturgy of power. His self-fashioning into the “well-deserved” heir is an affective labour to purify history itself, to correct the moral illogic of Bolingbroke’s ascension. The ‘zero to hundred’

arc becomes his chosen 'target' through delayed revelation and not through reformation. Why did he choose the tavern? Tavern being not just a space of common people, it is outside of the decorum of sovereignty where the law loosens itself. If Hal wanted simply to endear himself to the populace, he could have walked in marketplaces, courts, churches. Instead he chooses Eastcheap which represents a microcosm of excess and illicit pleasures. The tavern functions as a kind of 'laboratory of being' where he finds "a seed of truth and grace in Falstaff" (Bloom 103). Hal rehearses alternative selves, tests the elasticity of identity and learns the grammars of those excluded by the centre of power.

His intimacy with Falstaff, a figure who embodies ethical looseness," besotted and disgusting old wretch" that Bernard Shaw calls him (Bloom 153) offers Hal an encounter with what sovereignty represses. To rule effectively, he must understand what sovereignty fears. In banishing Falstaff, he banishes the tavern-self, the version of Hal that experimented with humanity outside the strictures of kingship. Does Hal reform, or does he simply bury a part of himself to play the necessary role of king? In vowing to "stain [his] favours in a bloody mask" so that the act might "scour [his] shame" (Shakespeare 3.2.136–137), he seeks to replace the 'shame' of tavern life with battlefield honour. Falstaff and Eastcheap become "the centre of [his] sinful earth" (Shakespeare 202).. The effort to turn away from his former self required him to turn away from Falstaff primarily, "I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers" (Shakespeare 5.5.46) and by "being awak'd", he do "despise [his] dream" (Shakespeare 5.5.50) as he was not "the thing" he was (Shakespeare 5.5.55).

Section II

"Bare Ruin'd Choirs Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang": The Affective politics of Authority from 1 Henry IV to Covid Present

A certain Fehlleistung of Freud had a misquotation. In quoting 1 Henry IV which reads "Thou owest God a death" as "Thou owest Nature a death", Freud's repression of the word 'God' and its substitution with 'Nature' reflects what he himself theorized: the return of the repressed. Freud felt the need of substituting for Him (God) "an impersonal shadowy abstract principle" as a result of "unconscious emotional conflicts of an instability to feel consciously the affective content of the repressed" (Zilboorg 135). Focusing on sovereign consciousness afflicted by fatigue where body politic is gasping under the strain of its own continuity, the modern state, despite its shell-core of strength, remains vulnerable to exhaustion. King Henry IV's lament, "O God, that one might read the book of fate / And see the revolution of the times," (Shakespeare 3.1. 45-46) and his reflection that "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," (Shakespeare 3.1. 31) bring forth the effect of the radical global biopolitical uncertainty which, in our age, is named as COVID-19. The play begins by depicting a realm "so wan with care" that even peace can only "pant" under the weight of anxiety (Shakespeare 1.1.1–2). The exhaustion of sovereignty under national control questions rational power, exemplifying the theatricalization of governance.

King Henry's stoic restraint during political stagnation mirrors the moralistic rhetoric of India's first COVID-19 lockdown, when the nation entered a forced stillness—silent highways, halted trains, and emptied public spaces. Shakespeare's image of "bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang" (Shakespeare 128) becomes an apt metaphor for this hollowed landscape: classrooms, temples, libraries, and hospital corridors stood abandoned, architectural reminders of a suspended social life. Much like Shakespeare's England, India inhabited a frozen temporality, yet citizens built improvised infrastructures of care which functioned like a 21st-century tavern community, offering camaraderie and quiet moral subversion even as governance idled. When King Henry IV said, "this sickness doth infect / The very lifeblood of our enterprise" (Shakespeare 1.1. 28-29), it captures the contagion of administrative fatigue where the dream of a healed commonwealth with the restoration of bureaucratic machinery falters. To preserve the illusion of stability within his 'sick' commonwealth, Henry IV's performative authority becomes a fragile theatre of control. Like the Indian State's dependence on ritualized reassurance and its inability to manage crisis, Henry's sovereignty is confronted with the unpredictable realities of contagion.

A performative assertion of control substituting affect for infrastructure could not successfully do away with the nationwide lockdown of March 24, 2020, immobilizing 1.38 billion citizens. To mask the absence of systemic preparedness, ritualized gestures like lamp-lighting and public clapping became spectacular symbols of collective reassurance — not unlike Henry's faltering kingship, which did not fail to maintain the illusion of institutional order. The second wave of 2021 mirrors this anxiety of exhaustive contagion: with infections surpassing 400,000 daily and oxygen demand soaring beyond 8,400 metric tons, the administrative medical machinery collapsed under its own weight. The government seemed to suffocate with the innumerable digital 'SOS' pleas of the citizens. The sarcastic rhetoric of control affected the sovereign voice, which grew increasingly hollow in Shakespeare's play.

Hotspur's boast "to pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon" (Shakespeare 1.3.201) shows aspiration that could be draped on illusion rather than stability of structure. His excessive vitality mirrors the hyperactivity of sovereign performance — a cruel optimism that exhausts itself in pursuit of unattainable ideals of honour and restoration. Prince Hal's promise "And when this loose behaviour I throw off, / And pay the debt I never promised" (Shakespeare 1.2.198-199) shows a strategic moral rebranding like the government's self-fashioning of post-pandemic recovery. "Redeeming time when men think least I will" (Shakespeare 1.2.207) demonstrates how states invoked narratives that mask systemic failure. Hal's penance, like the state's, is theatricalized yet transformative, as when he declared, "I'll so offend, to make offence a skill" (Shakespeare 1.2.206) staging illusion where the restoration of order conceals the persistence of moral decay.

Glendower's claims that he "can call spirits from the very deep," and Hotspur's questions

Whether they will come "when [he] calls for them?" (Shakespeare 3.1.52–54), expose the gap between declarative authority and material efficacy — a gap pandemics made visible in the modern state. Hal, who promised that he will 'redeem' time becomes a figure of the redeemer-in-waiting, sustaining hope through spectacle of sovereignty. Henry IV's inability to 'command' the peace with his own divided kingdom questions the figure of the ruler, be it the medieval monarch or the modern Prime Minister. Standing as symbols of paralytic authoritative figures, both can issue orders but cannot restore vitality. The Indian state during COVID-19 became an organism like Henry IV's body politic, gasping for breath, both literally and metaphorically.

Prince Hal's self-fashioned invisibility serves as a potent futuristic metaphor for the state's denial of mortality during the pandemic. "I know you all, and will awhile uphold the unyoked humour of your idleness,"(Shakespeare 1.2. 185-186) read against the state's selective narration of pandemic deaths. The epistemic deferral, masking the true scale of death through bureaucratic terms like 'comorbidities' and 'suspected cases' functions as a biopolitical strategy to control (in)visibility. To focus on the "epistemology of the virus" (Dibyachintan et al. 134), emphasizing how "persistent patterns of socio-economic vulnerability" shape the unequal impacts of disease progression (Dibyachintan et al. 134), the non categorised analysis of COVID-19 data reveals "considerable heterogeneity in metrics" (Dibyachintan et al. 138). The seroprevalence studies in COVID cases are underreported and restrictions are laid on "enumerating mortality and to transmit data reliably". (Dibyachintan et al. 138)

The spatial oscillation between the court, the tavern, and the battlefield implicates the geographical fragmentation of India during the lockdown. The court stands for control: the bureaucratic epicentre issuing containment orders, enforcing curfews, and dictating public health protocols. The tavern parallels India's informal settlements where social distancing was only a privilege, while the battlefield evokes the highways where millions of migrant workers walked home during the first phase of lockdown. The "econometric causality nexus between mobility and COVID-19 indicators" promotes "tactical urbanism" and "the use of temporary interventions to transform public spaces" (Anshuman and Bhairannavar 247). Divided between containment and contagion, the pandemic ruptured the illusion of a unified national space. Like Henry's court is blind to Falstaff's world, power failed to reach the margins. The urban elite accessed vaccines and care, while rural regions faced oxygen scarcity and neglect.

“If all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work” (Shakespeare 1.2.193–194) focuses on the unequal distribution of leisure and suffering where the urban elites quarantined in comfort while migrant workers walked miles. Falstaff’s query, “Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?” (Shakespeare 3.3. 80) contrasts with the dispossession of minimal shelter and the geography of exclusion. “Banish plump Jack / and banish all the world” (Shakespeare 2.4. 466) dismantles the affective infrastructure of the social body. The concept of “information ecology that is intensifying the fake news problem” (Al-Zaman 102) focuses how “social media has now become a more effective tool to (re) produce and (re)distribute information” (Al-Zaman 105). The infodemic featured by “exceptional political ambience, cultural exceptionalism, technological penetration, news consumption patterns” (Al-Zaman 112) pre-breathes the epistemological disorder of Shakespearean world of infodemic where truth becomes a conquest of narratives. In India’s pandemic, misinformation spreaded through WhatsApp forwards, miracle-cure videos generating a form of collective delirium. Governmental announcements and digital propaganda intensified confusion : it claimed ‘victory’ over virus or ‘herd immunity’ even as rising death tolls and mass cremations.

As Falstaff remarks, “The better part of valour is discretion, in the which better part I have saved my life” (Shakespeare 5.4.118-20), the climate saturated with rumours and discretion became a way of survival. Hal’s observation that “These lies are like the father that begets them; gross as a mountain, open, palpable” (Shakespeare 2.4.249-51). Revealed a generative cycle of lies. “It is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled withal” (Shakespeare 1.2.122). This “malady” mirrors the public’s overwhelming susceptibility to unverified claims, miracle cures, and conspiracy theories during lockdown. The architecture of misinformation is captured strikingly in Rumour’s confession that “Rumour is a pipe / Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures... the still-discordant wavering multitude, / Can play upon it” (Shakespeare Ind.15-20). The pandemic made visible this same mechanism: a pipe played by millions, each breath of conjecture showcasing confusion. COVID-19 thus became not only a biomedical crisis but a crisis of epistemic vulnerability, where “Rumour’s pipe” drowned out scientific clarity. Dominated by selective keywords, such as “blame,” “conspiracy theory,” rather than terms directly representing infodemic such as misinformation, disinformation, myths or rumours, it tries to build an epidemic based linguistic superiority. (Khan et al. 45). To challenge the “task of managing information combined with public concern” (Khan et al. 48) where misinformation serves as a peculiar feature of the pandemic (Khan et al. 62), it builds on the “artificial hype that drives focus to the news” (Khan et al. 75).

As India’s infrastructures collapsed, an affective network of humour and empathy sustained life. Falstaff’s comic exaggeration reflects this dynamic: his tales generate belief through feeling, much like the state’s performative proclamations that turned speech into an affective tool shaping public emotion. The play’s emotional landscape is defined not by

political action but by the triad—Falstaff's laughter, Hal's irony, and Henry's anxiety. Falstaffian grotesque humour, his ease in mocking death, anticipates the digital humour that circulated through India's pandemic—memes, parody videos, and comic clips that transformed grief into the absurd joy. Laughing amidst cremations became a form of collective catharsis and subtle resistance had echoed the affective defiance of Falstaff's tavern wit.

India's pandemic time became circular rather than linear. Each wave re-enacted the same choreography of fear and policy."The roots of conflict" are likely to be found in "horizontal" social relations rather than "vertical" ones (Lawrence 30), especially in the context of "patrimonial capitalism back under democratic control "(Lawrence 28). The belief that vaccinating would end crisis, that economy would swiftly 'rebound' and the 'new normal' would redeem collective suffering became the feature of cruel optimism, binding the population to an ever-delaying hope of recovery. Each new wave of infection dissolved the previous promise — 'We are in the endgame', 'We have conquered the virus' — as if performative resurrections were necessary to refuse the reality. The 'performative' transformation of Hal to a penitent heir mirrors the state's own rhetoric of recovery. To 'build back better' and to convert suffering into moral progress, the transformation that the Lancastrian court witnessed, had narrated its own reform and so did the Indian state through borrowed time and borrowed belief and with the promise that tomorrow at last, will redeem today.

Translational Medical Humanities views the body as a "bio-cultural entity", arguing that "knowledge must be made 'translatable' and the very concept of evidence should be redefined" (Bondio 367). The recent global pandemic has foregrounded the "necropolitical aspects of sovereignty" (Lehtinen and Brunila 8), revealing upon the "perpetual fear generated by the unknowability of the future", which turns immediate "self-preservation" and the foresight of future security into an ultimate collective concern (Lehtinen and Brunila 7). However, the state's efforts to frame and manage the crisis have been characterized by an "errancy of the recognizability," or a 'misfiring' in how it constructs the positions of both the subject and the virus (Lehtinen and Brunila 11). This disconnect is further highlighted by the "disconnect between the state as the sovereign actor facing down the pandemic" (Lehtinen and Brunila 13), and the resulting practices are exemplified by the emergence of competitive, self-interested policies like "vaccine nationalism" (Lehtinen and Brunila 14).

Conclusion

"Play is the erection of an illusion into a reality" (Bloom 166). To dramatize a realm of political theology of modern consciousness, Shakespeare turns history as the mirror of the present, presenting it as a theatre of survival amidst the affective politics, which proposes "archaic rationality in its inmost structure" (Anderson 32) & refuses closure, perhaps to encounter only to 'counter' a theology stripped of transcendence and politics as a repetition of crisis. Sovereign is the one "who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 5) where "exception

is more interesting than the rule” and where “the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism” that has become tired of repetition (Schmitt 15). King Henry’s sovereign fatigue becomes a kind of “flint,” the hard ground upon which he must rest because the crown has exhausted him. Hal, the “down pillow” of sloth offers restlessness of deferred duty.

Shakespeare throws us a challenge to question the position of the kingdom where the power can barely stay awake and or it will flicker in the dark. Hal boasts, “I imitate the sun,” (Shakespeare 1.2.187) promising a dazzling ray someday while his father, suffering with “intestine shock” (Shakespeare 1.1.12) can barely plead, “O sleep, O gentle sleep” (Shakespeare 3.1.5) for momentary peace. The irony is brutal: the heir rehearses brightness while the King awaits darkness. The stage-light sun waiting in the wings as the exhausted monarch cannot coax Nature’s “soft nurse” (Shakespeare 3.1.6) to close his eyes.

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