

## Simulation and Dissimulation in Shakespeare's History Play *Henry IV Parts 1 And 2*

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### **Abstract**

*The reign of Henry IV (1399-1413) was troubled by rebellions and social unruliness both leading either to troubles or wastefulness subverting the order of kingship, of law and government. This paper intends to study Shakespeare's Henry IV plays where Prince Hal the son of Henry IV of Bolingbroke, seeing his father troubled by elements of chaos himself subsumes his identity and adopts a dissipated identity of a lawless figure to interact with the elements of misrule in his society. The paper discusses the historical background of Henry VI and Henry IV plays and tries to show that the carnivalesque madness of Henry IV plays looks forward to the dynastic madness of the Yorkists and Lancastrians that comprise the background of the Henry VI plays. It shows the strategy of dissimulation that Prince Hal adopts with the forces of misrule only to emerge as the true and ideal king at end.*

**Keywords:** *misrule, dissipate, rebellion, dissimulation, glory, kingship*

### **Introduction**

Shakespeare's history plays primarily deal with the struggle between the two dynasties Yorkists and Lancastrians for the crown of England. It began in 1399 when Henry of Bolingbroke, of the dynasty of Lancaster usurped the throne from Richard II. This began the long dynastic struggle between the Yorkists and Lancastrians that reached its climax during the rule of Henry VI of England 1429-1461 and again from 1470 to 1471, that witnessed a chaotic and troublesome struggle that has been depicted by Shakespeare in his *Henry VI* plays. The Wars of the Roses coincided with England's hundred years war with France and featured such figures as, Richard Neville, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warwick, his son Edward who became the king in 1461, Edward's younger brother George of Clarence, Margaret of Anjou of France with whom Warwick joined forces, till finally it reached its catastrophic end with the reign and death of

Richard, Duke of Gloucester who became Richard III (1483 to 1485) that saw innumerable deaths till Richard was killed and succeeded by Henry Tudor who brought the war to an end. My focus in this paper is the rule of Henry IV who began the War of the Roses by deposing Richard II and the activities of his son Prince Hal who adopts an underground method of rule as opposed to his father's struggles with rebellions where he intermingles with the actual sources of misrule in the society and learn their language from first hand exchange instead of from the distance of the throne. Prince Hal who later becomes Henry V in 1413 used his knowledge earned through dissimulation with the errants to punish them at the end and cleanse the society. This unfolds a new angle of kingship of England that seeks in the end to uphold the glory of the ideal King of England and also looks forward to the chaotic madness of the Wars of the Roses and its end and