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Uneasy heads: Shakespeares schlafende Herrscher

ZITATE

A. KING

How many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep? O sleep! O gentle sleep!
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee
And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state
And lulled with sound of sweetest melody?
O thou dull god, why li'st thou with the vile
In loathsome beds and leav'st the kingly couch
A watch-case or a common 'larum bell?
Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude, imperious surge
And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them
With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds,
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
Canst thou, O partial sleep, give then repose
To the wet sea-son in an hour so rude,
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 2* (ca. 1597), 3.1.4-31.

B. LADY PERCY

In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars,
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed,
Cry 'Courage! To the field!' And thou hast talked
Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners' ransom, and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream,
And in thy face strange motions have appeared
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?

Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1* (ca. 1596), 2.3.46-61

- C.** Come sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low;
 With shield of proof shield me from out the press
Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw:
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
 Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise, and blind to light;
A rosy garland, and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
 Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
 Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (1580s), No 39

D. PRINCE

No, I will sit and watch here by the King.
 [*Exeunt all but the King and Prince.*]
Why doth the crown lie there upon his pillow,
Being so troublesome a bedfellow?
O polished perturbation, golden care,
That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide

To many a watchful night, sleep with it now –
 Yet not so sound and half so deeply sweet
 As he whose brow with homely biggen bound
 Snores out the watch of night. [...]
 [...] My gracious lord? My father?
 This sleep is sound indeed. This is a sleep
 That from this golden rigol hath divorced
 So many English kings. Thy due from me
 Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
 Which nature, love and filial tenderness
 Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously.
 My due from thee is this imperial crown,
 Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
 Derives itself to me. [*Puts crown on his head.*]
 Lo where it sits,
 Which God shall guard; and put the world's whole strength
 Into one giant arm, it shall not force
 This lineal honour from me. This from thee
 Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. *Exit.*
 [*The King awakes.*]

Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 2* (ca. 1597), 4.3.152-178

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