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978-0-521-86801-3 - The First Part of King Henry IV: Updated Edition

Edited by Herbert Weil and Judith Weil

Excerpt

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## INTRODUCTION

### The First Part of King Henry IV

#### Reputation

In the most highly regarded twentieth-century study of history plays from different periods and nationalities, Herbert Lindenberger argues: ‘*Henry IV* surely provides the supreme example of a complex and serious approach to history that diverts in the very act of instructing.’<sup>1</sup> G. R. Hibbard represents many leading critics and directors when he expands this evaluation beyond the confines of genre: ‘In size, in significance, and above all, in the sheer wealth of invention that has gone into its making, *Henry IV* is among the major achievements.’<sup>2</sup>

For *1 Henry IV*, undisputed facts concerning the play’s reception support these superlatives. From its first appearance, probably in 1597, *Part One* has enjoyed great popularity and has been performed with exceptional frequency. Between 1598 and 1622, before the First Folio of 1623, there were seven quarto editions – more than for any other play by Shakespeare. *Part One* continues to be among the plays most often published in general texts and anthologies of literature for students around the world.

Readers and audiences familiar with the reputation of *1 Henry IV* will often be surprised when they approach the play itself for the first time. If they anticipate stirring action or expect to laugh whole-heartedly with Falstaff, the first two scenes may seem relatively subdued. They contain a stimulating but unstable mixture of serious and comic qualities. During the third scene, political conflict does disrupt the King’s Council, yet the next episodes, which focus on the robbery at Gad’s Hill and on Hotspur’s argument with his wife, Lady Percy, may even diffuse such political momentum as has built up during the Council scene. Only with the three great scenes of the central action – in the tavern with the Prince and Falstaff, in the household of Glendower, and in the court of Henry IV – does the dramatic intensity and richness for which the play has been celebrated burst upon us.

This delay between expectation and fulfilment provides evidence of the play’s basic design: a restless, de-centred opening movement, followed by a mid-section filled with astonishing, highly theatrical surprises, and a concluding movement which powerfully intensifies the already discordant rhythms of uneasiness and elation. Shakespeare’s willingness to postpone satisfactions reveals the confidence with which he reshaped historical and theatrical sources in composing his play. Early audiences, acquainted with some of these materials and aware of Shakespeare’s prior history plays, were probably even more surprised by this first movement than are audiences today. For example, anyone who had recently watched *Richard II*

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Drama: The Relation of Literature and Reality*, 1975, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *The Making of Shakespeare’s Dramatic Poetry*, 1981, p. 162.

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(1595-6) would already know that, according to Shakespeare, Henry's reign had begun with a rebellion which the Percys helped put down, and with the assassination of Richard himself. The King's pointed reference to his 'unthrifty' son as a dissolute prodigal (*Richard II* 5.3.1) would prepare an audience to behold a ruffian Prince of Wales. So would the popular legends circulated through ballads and tales as well as in plays like *The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth* which celebrated the Prince's wild youth. But when the Prince suddenly confides to the audience his secret plans for self-reform - plans which necessarily 'falsify men's hopes' (1.2.171) - the audience realises that Shakespeare intends to give them something fresh and surprising.

The Prince's soliloquy offers the most emphatic among many examples of how, early in the play, Shakespeare unsettles preconceptions. If audiences believe the King in the opening scene, they may expect the Prince to be stained with 'riot and dishonour' (1.1.84). They may also surmise that Glendower, 'irregular and wild' (1.1.40) is a barbarian, that Hotspur is princely, and that the King, admiring Hotspur's virtues, will treat him with respect when they meet 'Wednesday next' (1.1.102) at Westminster. Expectations about all these matters will prove to be mistaken, at least in part.

Shakespeare fashions *Henry IV* as a sequence of three movements. Although his seventh play about English history, it is striking for its originality. Shakespeare forgoes the ceremonious, highly symbolic style of dramaturgy on which he had relied in *Richard II*. He leads the audience to a more gradual, detached understanding of complex characters who repeatedly foist their interpretations of the past upon one another. What is distinctive about Prince Henry is not that he so fervently remembers and predicts events, but that he ultimately succeeds in imposing his will on these events. With *Henry IV*, Shakespeare turned his attention to a king who had barely escaped the violent sacrificial death suffered by Henry VI, Richard III, and Richard II. He thereby freed himself to explore the volatile, disconcerting strategies of other would-be survivors.

Falstaff is probably the best-known survivor in western literature. Generations of spectators have watched to see if he can dodge the trap set for him by the Prince and Poins, and have been astonished by the way he escapes death at the battle of Shrewsbury. Falstaff's dramatic impact has become inseparable from his reputation. However widely critical responses to him may diverge, they are usually informed by some sense of his fame, of the debates he has inspired, and of the rejection he must ultimately experience. His reputation tends to enhance the vitality which shines through this extraordinary character, so that he may seem to enjoy a life almost independent of the play's design. Falstaff is an unpredictable presence throughout the three movements; his theatrical range extends from intimate banter to brilliant and uproarious scene-stealing. He is never more likely to surprise us than when he apparently adopts conventional roles or when he passes shrewd judgements upon the Prince - or on himself.

To elaborate a design which could register the energies of his characters in this history play, Shakespeare drew upon his own experiments with comedy; he also

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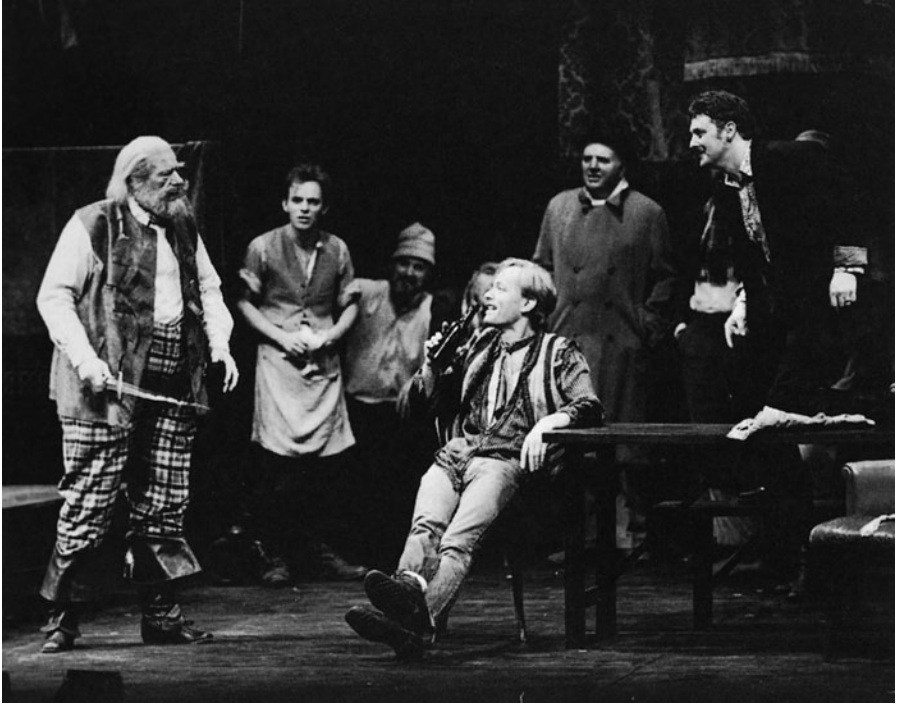
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1 'What trick, what device . . . canst thou now find out?' Act 2, Scene 4. Michael Pennington as the Prince and John Woodvine as Falstaff in Michael Bogdanov's English Shakespeare Company touring production, 1986

enriched 1 *Henry IV* with imitations of popular festivity and entertainment. But when he transferred his own grasp of exciting surprise and reversal to suspicious rulers and ambitious courtiers, he moved far beyond the characterisation of such earlier self-conscious tricksters as Richard of Gloucester in *Richard III* or the Bastard in *King John*. Richard knows what he is doing and does it; the Bastard openly experiments. But Henry IV, his son, and Falstaff deny us full confidence that they can or will attempt to do what they say, for their success may at times depend on obscuring their motives, both to others and to themselves.

As a consequence, this history play will divert and instruct different audiences in remarkably different ways. Recorded critical reaction to the play begins with a narrowly partisan response by the powerful Cobham family who apparently protested against Shakespeare's treatment of their supposed ancestor Sir John Oldcastle, thereby causing his name to be changed to Sir John Falstaff. The controversy that seems to have arisen over Falstaff's name provides important information about both the date and the early reception of 1 *Henry IV*. These topics, to some extent inseparable, will be distinguished for the sake of clarity. 'Date' focuses upon matters of chronology – perhaps the last subjects we might expect to find closely associated

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with Falstaff. The early reception of the play will be considered later, as a preface to selected contexts for interpretation.

**Date**

The few accepted facts about the date of *1 Henry IV* have enabled scholars to place its first performances tentatively in the early months of 1597. As we consider this limited evidence, it is helpful to remember that early performances of this play probably overlapped those of *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–7) and closely preceded those of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *Julius Caesar* (1599), and *Hamlet* (1600–1). Furthermore, the text of Shakespeare's new play would have been especially flexible, subject to the pressure of contemporary political and theatrical circumstances.

On 25 February 1598, a play entitled *Henry IV* was entered in the Stationers' Register to Andrew Wyse:

1597 [1598, new style] xxv die ffebruarij. Andrew Wyse. Entred for his Copie, under t[he] handes of Master Dix: and master Warden man a booke intituled The historye of HENRY the IIIJth with his battaile of Shrewsburie against HENRY HOTTSPURRE of the Northe with The conceived mirthe of Sr John Ffalstoff.

This entry makes no mention of 'Part One' or of 'The first Part', which may indicate that *Part Two* had not yet been written or performed, or that, if it had been, those who entered the copy saw no reason to identify this second play in any way.

Two separate quarto editions of *1 Henry IV* were printed in 1598, but only a fragment of the first (Q0) survives (see Textual Analysis, pp. 219–20). The second (Q1) was reprinted from the first by the same printing house, that of Peter Short. Its title modifies slightly the entry above:

THE / HISTORY OF / HENRIE THE / FOVRTH; / With the battell at Shrewsburie, / *betweene the King and Lord* / Henry Percy, surnamed / Henrie Hotspur of / the North. / *With the humorous conceits of Sir* / Iohn Fastalffe.

Only when, some months later, Francis Meres praised Shakespeare for his excellence in both comedy and tragedy in *Palladis Tamia* (entered in the Stationers' Register, 7 September 1598) do we have firmer evidence to support Shakespeare's authorship. As examples of 'tragedy', Meres submitted 'Richard the 2. Richard the 3. Henry the 4.' The titles of the quartos printed between 1599 and 1613 credit Shakespeare with having 'newly corrected' his play. None of the early quarto titles of the play show that it had an immediate sequel; our earliest specific reference to 'the first part' comes from a Stationers' Register entry of 1603. In contrast, the sole quarto of *Part Two*, printed in 1600 as *THE Second part of Henrie the fourth . . . Written by William Shakespeare*, clearly indicates its relationship to *Part One*.

That the play was well received is beyond doubt. Following the two quarto editions of 1598, additional quartos were printed in 1599, 1604, 1608, 1613, and 1622, before the First Folio publication in 1623. New quartos in 1632 and 1639 strongly indicate the continuing appeal of the play. From the beginning, as the titles above suggest, Falstaff must have been counted upon to attract audiences. Indeed, Shakespeare's

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success in making Falstaff notorious seems to have displeased a small but influential group of courtiers.

In the earliest staged version of *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff was apparently called Oldcastle, while Bardolph and Peto seem to have been named Rossill and Harvey. These names angered powerful aristocratic families, particularly the Cobhams who were descendants of Oldcastle's wife. The fifteenth-century Lollard, Sir John Oldcastle (d. 1417), would have been widely revered as a precursor of Protestant Reformation martyrs. Shakespeare changed these names, perhaps modifying the play in the process, but also leaving relics of his earlier intentions in his text. Two of the early names survive as speech headings, 'Ross.' in Q1 of *Part One* at 2.4.147, 149, and 153, and 'Old.' in Q of *Part Two* at 1.2.114. Poins names the four robbers-to-be as 'Falstaffe, Harvey, Rossill and Gadshill' in Q1 1.2.130–1, a line that endured through over twenty years of 'newly corrected' reprintings to appear in the Folio.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship of this controversy to the probable earliest performance of *1 Henry IV* is indirect but significant. Original performances are particularly elusive; the editors of *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (1987) conclude, 'We can identify the first performances of only two plays: *All Is True* [usually called *Henry VIII*, 1613] and *1 Henry VI*.'<sup>2</sup> E. K. Chambers speculated that *1 Henry IV* may have been published 'unusually soon after its production. This can hardly have been earlier than 1597.'<sup>3</sup> He reasoned that the company would have wished 'to advertise the purging of the offence' which they had managed to give through the treatment of Oldcastle and others. An important consideration here is that William Brooke, Lord Cobham, served briefly as Queen Elizabeth's Lord Chamberlain between August 1596 and his death on 5 March 1597. Only then was he in a position to stop performances of a play which seemed to satirise his ancestor. Original performances before his death but fairly late in the season 1596–7 would also be consistent with the agreement among scholars that *Richard II*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 29 August 1597, had probably been first performed late in 1595. On the theory that Lord Cobham was responding to both parts of *Henry IV*, which 'increasingly misrepresent his ancestor', A. R. Humphreys conjectures that *Part One* might have been performed earlier in the season.<sup>4</sup>

Two other issues are closely bound up with the changing of names: the influence of censorship in reshaping the play and the form in which such a shape might be considered 'final'. We have no proof that Lord Cobham actively intervened, using his authority over the Revels Office or the licensing of plays. Why, one may wonder, would Shakespeare's normally cautious company have gone out of its way to

<sup>1</sup> On the premise that Lord Cobham required the name changes, they have been altered in the Oxford *Complete Works*, 1986; Falstaff becomes 'Sir John'; Bardolph becomes 'Russill'; and Peto becomes 'Harvey'.

<sup>2</sup> S. Wells and G. Taylor with J. Jowett and W. Montgomery, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, *Shakespeare*, I, 382–3.

<sup>4</sup> Humphreys, p. xiv. Gary Taylor argues that 'Oldcastle' was changed to 'Falstaff' before performance at court, Christmas 1596, in 'William Shakespeare, Richard James and the house of Cobham', *RES* 38 (1987), 347–9.

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antagonise a Lord Chamberlain?<sup>1</sup> In the summer following the conjectured first performances of *Henry IV*, when the second Lord Hunsdon, the patron of Shakespeare's company, had become the new Lord Chamberlain, the Privy Council actually prohibited *all* performances from 28 July to about 10 October 1597. They were both reacting to an allegation from the City fathers that 'unruly apprentices' were gathering at plays, and terminating production of *The Isle of Dogs* by Jonson and Nashe, which they judged to be inflammatory.<sup>2</sup> In the light of such regulatory powers and attitudes, Gary Taylor argues credibly that official censors insisted that the name 'Oldcastle' be eliminated.<sup>3</sup> Yet no evidence has so far appeared which would suggest that Shakespeare resisted changing Oldcastle and the other names. Indeed, it is possible that having touched the nerves of honour and piety with 'Oldcastle', he would probe them more deeply with 'Falstaff', especially if, early in 1598, he were still developing his character for performance of *Part Two*.<sup>4</sup>

Whether 'Rossill' and 'Harvey', the original names of Bardolph and Peto, actually pleased or displeased powerful lords has been matter for careful but inconclusive speculation about Elizabethan patronage.<sup>5</sup> That these names survive in speech headings or in a list of thieves may give us evidence of another kind by contributing suggestions about playhouse practices. In the theatres, composition, rehearsal, revision, and performance may have overlapped extensively.<sup>6</sup> This could have been particularly true when the playwright, Shakespeare, as both a shareholder and an actor in the company, might well have exercised the powers of a modern director in preparing plays for the stage. From this theatrical perspective, survival of the names could reveal playhouse nonchalance where groups of attendants are concerned or reflect the irrelevance of precise identities where a deliberately confusing robbery, enlivened with improvisation, must have been enacted.<sup>7</sup> Because the naming of the thieves has contributed to the largest group of textual problems in *1 Henry IV*, further discussion is reserved for the Textual Analysis (pp. 220–1). In later productions, as well as in allusions to the play, Falstaff is occasionally called Oldcastle. Even if intended merely as neutral substitutions, such references might have stirred up the embers of ill will.

<sup>1</sup> See Bullough, p. 171; Robert J. Fehrenbach, 'When Lord Cobham and Edmund Tilney "were att odds": Oldcastle, Falstaff and the date of *1 Henry IV*', *S.St.* 18 (1986), 87–101. E. A. J. Honigmann believes that Shakespeare and his company deliberately provoked the Cobhams in order to please the Essex faction. See 'Sir John Oldcastle: Shakespeare's martyr', in *Fanned and Winnowed Opinions: Shakespearean Essays Presented to Harold Jenkins*, ed. John W. Mahon and Thomas A. Pendleton, 1987, pp. 118–32.

<sup>2</sup> See Chambers, *Stage*, 1, 298–9. He argues that the new Chamberlain may have persuaded the Council to permit performances to resume in October.

<sup>3</sup> 'The fortunes of Oldcastle', *S.Sur.* 38 (1985), 85–100. Janet Clare describes the 'Oldcastle' controversy in the context of developing regulation in *'Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority': Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, 1990, pp. 76–9.

<sup>4</sup> Melchiori argues that *Part Two* was composed in 'late 1597/early 1598' and first performed 'after March 1598', p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> See John Jowett, 'The thieves in *1 Henry IV*', *RES* 38 (1987), 325–33.

<sup>6</sup> Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and 'The Book of Sir Thomas More'*, 1987, pp. 37–9.

<sup>7</sup> Mahood, *Bit Parts*, pp. 8–9, 15–16.



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**The design of the play**

Who in Shakespeare's original audiences could have anticipated that he would take up the sober figure of a Lollard knight, regarded as a martyr by sixteenth-century religious reformers, and give him the theatrical genius of a great entertainer? *1 Henry IV* incorporates surprise within overall expectation as a principle of design. Shakespeare's skill at crafting an interplay of expectation and surprise, convention and experiment, becomes evident in the three-phase movement of his drama. The first movement of *1 Henry IV*, which includes six scenes, extends from the briefing session of Act 1, Scene 1, to the wrangling between Hotspur and Lady Percy in Act 2, Scene 3. The second movement begins with a long and vigorous scene set in the Eastcheap tavern (2.4) and ends two scenes later with the confrontation, so vividly anticipated in the tavern, between King and Prince at court (3.2). The third and final movement of ten scenes starts with another tavern gathering in Act 3, Scene 3 and ends after the victory by the King's party over Hotspur and his army at the long-awaited battle of Shrewsbury. Even so brief a survey can suggest some of the play's most important features: the economy with which Shakespeare links episodes; the combativeness of characters living in readiness for war; and the entanglement of public with private, political with domestic spheres of action. What such a survey of the play as a whole omits are the ways in which each movement differs from the other two. These are important differences; they may help to explain why, for many, the comic genre of *1 Henry IV* is a belated discovery rather than a foregone conclusion. Comedy arises surprisingly and with evident strain and stress from the grimly efficient dramaturgy of the third movement.

**THE FIRST MOVEMENT: 'THEREFOR WE MEET NOT NOW'**

In the opening speech King Henry describes his hopes for a crusade to the remote Holy Land which both he and his lords probably know will not take place: 'Therefor we meet not now' (1.1.30). They do meet to consider news from England's own borders: Mortimer's defeat and capture by the Welsh rebel, Glendower, and Henry Percy's (Hotspur's) victory at Holmedon, with his capture of several Scottish lords. Potential controversy over this 'honourable spoil' will become the occasion of the Council at the beginning of Scene 3. Shakespeare quickly plunges his audience into the political confusions for which the King is largely responsible. He has usurped power from his first cousin, King Richard II, and has caused Richard to be assassinated. Edward Hall, the Tudor chronicler, characterised as 'unquiet' the early years of Henry's reign. They were frequently disrupted when other rebels attempted to imitate the King's success and thereby replace him. By demonstrating that a king could be deposed, in spite of the divine sanctions which, all were taught, supported his rule, Henry had undermined a major prop of feudal monarchy. Feudal rulers were idealised as the first among equals in the legends of King Arthur supported by his Round Table; nevertheless such rulers were at the mercy of great landed noblemen, on whom they depended for arms and services. As *1 Henry IV* begins, the powerful Percy family who helped Henry become king is testing his authority.

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In terms of staging, it is significant that this beginning has a business-like quality. Shakespeare may well have reserved for his third scene the striking visual props of royal power. There, a central throne and a spectacular display of crown and sceptre might serve as royal weapons with which to awe the unruly Percys.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, we appear to be in the royal equivalent of that workaday world which Shakespeare evokes throughout the first movement of his play, a world which includes household chambers and an innyard as well as the public highway where both the King's 'auditor' (2.1.46) and Falstaff will be robbed. A subdued conference in 1.1, followed by a surprising exhibition of regal might in 1.3, would not only deploy the resources of the Elizabethan stage; it would conform to the policy later explained by Henry to his son in Act 3, Scene 2. A ruler who avoids frequent and showy public appearances can have, he believes, the effect of a 'comet' when he does display his 'presence' (3.2.47, 54).

In terms of a developing structure, the opening scene introduces a series of episodes in which 'Therefor we meet not now' becomes almost a leitmotif. The King summons Hotspur to court, then drives him to rebel; the Prince agrees to participate in a robbery but robs the robbers; Hotspur talks of battle in his sleep yet refuses to confide his plans to his wife. Perhaps the King does more than any other character to establish a sense of uneasiness and mistrust during this first movement of the play. Although he is physically present in only two scenes, he epitomises, as cause and focus of rebellion, a range of political and familial disorders. He provides memorable and misleading accounts of Hotspur's honour and the Prince's 'dishonour' (1.1.84), initiating an opposition which he will accentuate when he has an opportunity. In Act 1, Scene 3, he imposes his own pessimistic interpretations upon the puzzling behaviour of Mortimer.

To set off the King from the characters who try to imitate or mimic him, Shakespeare creates a distinctive style.<sup>2</sup> In Henry's opening speech, images of body parts – 'lips' and 'blood' (6), 'hoofs' (8), and 'eyes' (9) – suggest dismemberment rather than identifiable wholes. By vaguely picturing uncontrollable forces – 'frighted peace' (2) or the 'edge of war' (17) – King Henry insinuates the divisions which trouble his kingdom and communicates a potential for violence.<sup>3</sup> Through a series of prophetic statements linked by the repetition of 'No more . . .', Henry promises peace but rhetorically stresses war. Such language is appropriate for a politician who, from his first appearance in *Richard II*, has been adept at activating the darker motives of others and at obscuring his own. The King's conduct raises questions to which

<sup>1</sup> On the theatrical dimensions of kingship, see Anne Righter [Barton], *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, 1962, pp. 113–38; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance*, 1975; David Scott Kastan, 'Proud majesty made a subject: Shakespeare and the spectacle of rule', *SQ* 37 (1986), 459–75.

<sup>2</sup> For the use of images which individualise characters, see Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, 1951, pp. 5 ff.; Katherine Eisaman Maus, 'Taking tropes seriously: language and violence in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*', *SQ* 37 (1986), 66–82.

<sup>3</sup> For a different view of allegorical language here, see Madeleine Doran, 'Imagery in *Richard II* and in *Henry IV*', *MLR* 37 (1942), 113–22.



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there can be no reliable answers: would he really have gone crusading if not thwarted by rebellion? Is his rage at Hotspur calculated?

The opening episode of *1 Henry IV* demonstrates Shakespeare's skill in writing scenes which have the coherence of miniature plays, yet reflect and support his overall design. Scene 1 foreshadows the rhythm of subsequent scenes which move from irresolution to decisiveness. It also anticipates the shape of the overall dramatic narrative. King Henry controls the discourse of the conference through his questions.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the scene, the King has begun to recover the firmness which will be so conspicuous in Scene 3: 'I will from henceforth rather be myself, / Mighty and to be feared . . .' (5–6). When he emphatically concludes the third and final movement of the play, he has, at least for the time being, consolidated his authority.

#### *The drama of moral choice*

Showing how Shakespeare could achieve a 'continuous flow of action' on a bare thrust stage, Anthony Brennan observes: 'The progress of characters in time is embroidered in a pattern of contrasts and parallels, echoes and distortions.'<sup>2</sup> We may therefore notice again in Scene 2 several of the elements which both typify the first movement and echo Scene 1: informality; distinctive styles of speech; conscious anticipation of later events. Just as Scene 1 leads to a second and more complex court scene, Scene 2 points towards the first tavern scene, 2.4, which in turn pulls together and builds upon Hal's first appearance with Falstaff and the pair of robbery scenes, 2.1 and 2.2.

Yet such similarities bring out striking differences which repay very close attention. Falstaff's reiterated 'when thou art king' (1.2.12–13, 19, 47, 49) repeats King Henry's 'No more . . . no more', but in a far more hopeful key. The fluent prose style of the jests between Falstaff and the Prince introduces us to an unusual 'friendship' (see below, pp. 31–3). This style helps us begin to distinguish Falstaff's world from those of the King and of the Percy faction.<sup>3</sup> Falstaff exaggerates his freedom and social stature as a highwayman: 'Let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon' (1.2.20–2). His fantasies and his wonderful caricature of social order as 'the rusty curb of old Father Antic the law' (48) provoke the Prince's responses: imagining dire consequences for Falstaff's crimes and taunting him with the promise that he will be made official hangman.

The Prince and Falstaff are alone together onstage for the first eighty-five lines of Scene 2 and exchange thirty-three speeches. But the exact rapport between the two characters will vary from one production or reading to the next. A phrase like Falstaff's, 'Indeed, you come near me now, Hal' (10) can express a wide range of tones, from delighted approval and applause to ironic resentment. The productions described in 'Stage History' have shown that this relatively brief dialogue at the

<sup>1</sup> Joseph A. Porter, *The Drama of Speech Acts: Shakespeare's Lancastrian Tetralogy*, 1979, pp. 60–1.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespeare's Dramatic Structures*, 1986, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See Jean E. Howard, *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response*, 1984, p. 27.

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beginning of Scene 2 quickly suggests the nature of the bond between Falstaff and the Prince and is crucial for its later richer development.

Much more clear than the nature of their feelings for each other are the tacit rules which guide the relationship between them. As they plan the joke of the Gad's Hill robbery, the Prince and Poins count on Falstaff to amuse them in predictable ways. The repartee between Falstaff and the Prince is impersonal enough to accommodate other characters; Poins can enter into their non-stop bantering and baiting as if he had been present all along.

The Prince, having side-stepped questions about his future, suddenly reveals in his soliloquy that his behaviour has been intended to create a misleading impression. His speech probably surprises many readers and spectators, reversing their expectations about his character. The Prince's clear motives and plans contrast with his father's opaque calculations; his promises imply both a star performance as Henry V, and a unified dramatic narrative about his development. For Shakespeare, such a narrative model already existed in the form of popular Morality plays and Interludes which represented the testing of Christian youth beset by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Morality plays showed the influence of ingenious preaching techniques, as well as of folktales. They embodied, according to Robert Potter, archetypal narratives of innocence lost and salvation achieved through conversion and repentance.<sup>1</sup> Although this particular Morality pattern had flourished in the late fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries, it could probably still be recognised by Elizabethan audiences and reinforced through contemporary enthusiasm for the biblical theme of the prodigal son.<sup>2</sup>

Modern audiences and readers have often responded to the Prince's dramatic function by perceiving its similarity to more recent versions of the spiritual quest archetype: romantic and post-romantic stories of education and self-discovery, rebellion and initiation. Lindenberger points out that for a 'generation' of interpreters, the play explores the 'balance' which the Prince achieves or the ambivalence he learns to negotiate between values typified by Hotspur and Falstaff.<sup>3</sup> Yet this coming-of-age story provides only one of the conventions on which Shakespeare relied in designing *1 Henry IV*. Also important are chronicle histories, history plays, and poems which develop more sequentially as well as romance narratives like that of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590), composed of interlaced stories occurring simultaneously. Then too, we should reckon with traditions of celebration and entertainment which could have prepared Elizabethan audiences to find established conventions used in theatrically self-conscious and unconventional forms. Falstaff joyfully plays the Morality role of the Vice or 'Iniquity', but other functions of the Vice, tempting, mocking, and entertaining, seem to be shared out more equally between Falstaff and the Prince himself. Even the division of comic from serious scenes, often practised in Morality plays and stipulated by Renaissance theorists

<sup>1</sup> *The English Morality Play: Origin, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition*, 1975, pp. 8–10, 16–20.

<sup>2</sup> See Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals*, 1976, pp. 2–3, 12–15. On similarities between Falstaff and the tempters in such plays, see Wilson, *Fortunes*, pp. 17–23, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Lindenberger, pp. 100, 180 n. 5.