



1 Henry IV

A Critical Guide

Edited by
Stephen Longstaffe

Continuum Renaissance Drama



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Series Introduction

The drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has remained at the very heart of English curricula internationally and the pedagogic needs surrounding this body of literature have grown increasingly complex as more sophisticated resources become available to scholars, tutors and students. This series aims to offer a clear picture of the critical and performative contexts of a range of chosen texts. In addition, each volume furnishes readers with invaluable insights into the landscape of current scholarly research as well as including new pieces of research by leading critics.

This series is designed to respond to the clearly identified needs of scholars, tutors and students for volumes which will bridge the gap between accounts of previous critical developments and performance history and an acquaintance with new research initiatives related to the chosen plays. Thus, our ambition is to offer innovative and challenging Guides which will provide practical, accessible and thought-provoking analyses of Renaissance drama. Each volume is organised according to a progressive reading strategy involving introductory discussion, critical review and cutting-edge scholarly debate. It has been an enormous pleasure to work with so many dedicated scholars of Renaissance drama and we are sure that this series will encourage you to read 400-year old playtexts with fresh eyes.

Andrew Hiscock and Lisa Hopkins

Timeline

- 1399 Henry IV becomes king of England following the deposition of Richard II.
- 1400 Richard II dies.
- 1403 The battle of Shrewsbury, first battle on English soil to make massed use of the longbow.
- 1413 Henry IV dies; his son, the Hal of *1 Henry IV*, becomes King Henry V and has Richard II's body reburied in Westminster Abbey.
- 1417 Sir John Oldcastle executed for heresy.
- 1422 Henry V dies.
- 1564 Shakespeare born.
- 1587 Publication of the second edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, one of Shakespeare's major sources for *1 Henry IV*.
- 1595 Publication of Samuel Daniel's poem sequence *The Civil Wars*, one of Shakespeare's major sources for *1 Henry IV*.
- 1598 Frances Meres' *Palladis Tamia* mentions Shakespeare's 'Henry the 4'. Publication of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format. Often referred to as Q1. Publication of *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, one of Shakespeare's sources for *1 Henry IV*, which was certainly on the stage 1588 or earlier.
- 1599 Publication of second edition of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format (Q2).

- 1600 First record of performance of *1 Henry IV*, at Lord Hunsdon's house in London. The Flemish ambassador attended a performance of 'Sir John Oldcastle'. Hunsdon was the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company, then called the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Publication of first edition of *2 Henry IV*, at the end of which Hal becomes king and rejects Falstaff. Publication of first edition of *Henry V*, which shares some characters with *1 Henry IV*, and which describes Falstaff's death.
- 1602 Publication of first edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a comedy set in contemporary England featuring Falstaff and companions.
- 1604 Publication of third edition of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format (Q3).
- 1608 Publication of fourth edition of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format (Q4).
- 1612–1613 First recorded performance of *1 Henry IV* at court, as part of the wedding celebrations of James I/VI's daughter Elizabeth. Play referred to in records as 'the Hotspur'.
- 1613 Shakespeare dies. Publication of fifth edition of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format (Q5).
- 1616 Shakespeare dies.
- 1622 Publication of sixth edition of *The History of Henry the Fourth* in Quarto format (Q6).
- 1623 First publication of Shakespeare's collected works in Folio format, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*. Now often referred to as *The First Folio*, or *F* for short.
- 1624–1625 Another court performance of *1 Henry IV*, on New Year's night 1624/1625. Play referred to as 'the first part of Sir John Falstaff'. Further court performances of 'Oldcastle' recorded in 1631 and 1638.
- 1700 First performance of Thomas Betterton's *King Henry IV with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff: A Tragicomedy*. Betterton played Falstaff.
- 1746 Production of *1 Henry IV* at Covent Garden, with James Quin as Falstaff and David Garrick as Hotspur.

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- 1777 Publication of Maurice Morgann's 'An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff'.
- 1788 Publication of William Richardson's *Essay on Shakespeare's Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*.
- 1817 Publication of William Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.
- 1874 Publication of Richard Simpson's 'The Politics of Shakespeare's Historical Plays'.
- 1876 Publication of Hermann Ulrici's *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*; original German version published 1839.
- 1893 First performance in Milan of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Falstaff*.
- 1909 First publication of 'The Rejection of Falstaff' in A. C. Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on English Poetry*.
- 1929 First performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams's opera *Sir John in Love*, based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.
- 1943 Publication of John Dover Wilson's *The Fortunes of Falstaff*.
- 1944 Publication of E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays*.
- 1945 Old Vic production of *1 Henry IV* with Ralph Richardson as Falstaff and Laurence Olivier as Hotspur. Richardson had played Hal in 1930 against John Gielgud's Hotspur.
- 1951 Stratford production of *1 Henry IV* with Anthony Quayle as Falstaff, Michael Redgrave as Hotspur and Richard Burton as Hal; excerpts broadcast on BBC children's television in the same year.
- 1959 *The Life and Death of Sir John Falstaff* (a seven-part adaptation from all the Falstaff plays) broadcast on BBC children's television, with Roger Livesey as Falstaff. Publication of C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*.
- 1960 *1 Henry IV* broadcast virtually uncut as part of BBC adaptation of all Shakespeare's histories called *An Age of Kings*. Sean Connery played Hotspur.
- 1965 Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* released. The film is a collage of several Shakespeare plays, with a focus on Falstaff.

- 1979 First transmission of David Giles's *1 Henry IV* for the BBC Shakespeare.
- 1985 First publication of Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Invisible bullets: Renaissance authority and its subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*'.
- 1991 Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* released. The film is a contemporary story drawing explicitly on elements from the *Henry IV* plays.
- 1995 Three-hour compression of both *Henry IV* plays broadcast by BBC, with Rufus Sewell as Hotspur, Ronald Pickup as Henry IV, and David Calder as Falstaff.
- 1997 First publication of *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* by Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin.
- 2002 Publication of Tom McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tudor History: A Study of Henry IV, Parts One and Two*.
- 2010 First production of *1 Henry IV* at Shakespeare's Globe, London, with Roger Allam as Falstaff and Jamie Parker as Hal.

Introduction

Stephen Longstaffe

When they have had enough of serious matters, Shakespeare scholars sometimes play, extempore, a party game. What if? What would we think of Shakespeare if the First Folio had not made it into print, and we did not have *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Julius Caesar*? What would we think of Shakespeare if we only had five comedies and six tragedies to go on? How would we then feel about Shakespeare's extant sequence of *seven* history plays, beginning with the reign of Richard II and ending with the death of Richard III? And what would we think about Falstaff, who dominates 3 of those 18 plays, giving his name to one of them, and whose death is movingly described in a fourth?¹ We might then still have had a Shakespeare who is pre-eminent in the creation of character – but with an achievement weighted rather more towards comic character than currently is the case. We might then still have had a Shakespeare with some claim to be a 'national poet' – but with rather more of an interest in the actual history of that nation, as understood in his own place and time, than in 'human nature'. And, in *1 Henry IV*, we would still have plenty of evidence that Shakespeare was a theatrical genius.

Shakespeare's four most instantly popular plays – going through four cheap editions each in their first ten years in print – were *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III* – and *1 Henry IV*. In other words, to his early readers, Shakespeare the playwright was first and foremost a historian. These three popular histories were all produced, so far as we can tell, during the 1590s, and form the beginning-, mid- and end-point of Shakespeare's eight-play sequence on the Wars of the Roses. *Richard III*, the final play in the historical sequence, was the first of these three to be performed, to be followed by the equally tragic *Richard II*, chronologically

the start of the sequence. Both plays share common sources in the chronicles of Hall (1548) and Holinshed (1587), and are indebted to the mid-century compilation of first-person narrated verse ‘tragedies’ in which historical persons lament their eventual fates, *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559, and subsequent editions), as well as to a range of prior tragic dramas on these and other English kings’ reigns. They share a narrative arc too, focusing on the downfall (or in Richard III’s case, the rise and fall) of their principal characters, who get far and away the lion’s share of the lines spoken.

1 Henry IV deals, as the two others do, with civil war, and ends, as *Richard III* does, with a climactic battle. It too draws on Holinshed, and shares with *Richard II* an important source in Samuel Daniel’s verse retelling of *The Civil Wars* (1595). Yet it presents a very different version of the historical past both tonally and in terms of narrative. The play does present a ‘fall’, that of Harry Percy (‘Hotspur’), killed at Shrewsbury. But Shakespeare alters his historical sources, following Daniel’s lead, to make Hotspur the contemporary of Henry IV’s son (though he was actually three years older than the king himself). Hotspur’s fall is bound up with Prince Hal’s rise, and, to reinforce the point, Shakespeare gives the two characters almost the same number of lines. Indeed, in its distribution of lines, the play resembles a comedy rather than a tragedy focused on one protagonist, with Hal, Falstaff and Hotspur all speaking between 18 per cent and 20 per cent of the lines. As for the king the play is named after, he speaks only 12 per cent of the lines. Apart from anything else, this even distribution of parts has ensured that the play has remained a steady attraction on the English stage, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it was common for actors to play (usually) Hotspur while young and Falstaff when they were older. But in its overlapping spheres – court, tavern, rival court, each with their ‘star’ – it also helps to construct an idea of the nation which is not simply dependent on the (tragic) fate of one notable individual. *1 Henry IV* is thus a ‘comical history’ (to coin a Polonian phrase), ending with a ‘resurrection’ rather than a marriage, and furthermore takes its place as part of a ‘tetralogy’, a sequence of four plays, dealing with the reigns of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V. All of its main characters appear in more than one play, though Hotspur has only a walk-on part in *Richard II* and really lives (and dies) in *1 Henry IV*.

By the time Shakespeare wrote this play, the vogue for plays on post-Conquest English history was well-established on the London stage. The 1590s was a particularly stressful decade, both at home and abroad, with a court growing increasingly skittish about the succession question, recurrent fears of invasion and economic and social dislocation as a result of Elizabeth’s wars. English history plays came in many shapes and

sizes – comical histories featuring disguised kings and feisty commoners, *Mirror for Magistrates*-style tragic discourses, and plenty of plays on civil war. The century up to the 1590s (especially its religious element) was fairly lightly touched upon. One reason for this is that history was a family affair, and late-Elizabethan society was full of families who, notwithstanding the Henrician and Elizabethan purges of the major nobility, could trace their lines back to the houses represented in the histories themselves. Many of the characters in Shakespeare's histories had living descendants of one kind or another, and many scholars have detected in the representation of these historical figures a knowing engagement with the family's current status and reputation.² The London stage was in normal circumstances relatively lightly policed, but one thing which consistently caused trouble for companies was displeasing powerful people, who were well capable of having theatre companies shut down and actors imprisoned.

And it appears that, sometime in 1597, Shakespeare's company ran into one of these powerful people. The family in question was the Brookes, whose family name does not appear in *1 Henry IV*. It would be more to the point to say that their family name no longer appears in *1 Henry IV*, though traces of its removal from both *1* and *2 Henry IV* remain. Shakespeare's first choice of name for the prince's larger-than-life companion in both plays was that of a historical contemporary, Sir John Oldcastle, who had already appeared onstage in a play covering *The Famous Victories of Henry V* for the queen's own company, the Queen's Men. Indeed, it is generally agreed that Shakespeare's own play is 'dependent' upon the earlier one for plot and characterization, and a line from it recurs in *Henry V*. However innocuous it may have been in the past to portray Oldcastle, Shakespeare's particular take on the character was quickly linked to his contemporary, if remote, descendants, the Brookes.³ William Brooke, Lord Cobham, was an unfortunate man for a theatre company to annoy; a Privy Councillor and father-in-law to Robert Cecil, between August 1596 and his death in March 1597 he held the post of Lord Chamberlain of the royal household, a post involving (among other things) oversight of court entertainments. Shakespeare's own company for much of the 1590s was under the patronage of two other Lord Chamberlains, the Hunsdons, during which time it was known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

By February 1598 – before the play was printed – the Earl of Essex referred to William Brooke as Falstaff in a private letter. Clearly, by then, Shakespeare had replaced the original 'Oldcastle' with 'Falstaff', a name he had already used in *1 Henry VI*, and attempted to dissociate Falstaff from Oldcastle in the epilogue to *2 Henry IV*, which states that 'Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man'. Two other families were also,

presumably to their satisfaction, written out of the plays, as 'Sir John Russell' and 'Harvey' were replaced by Bardolph and Peto respectively.

We have no way of knowing whether Shakespeare voluntarily acquiesced to the changes, or how often this kind of negotiation took place. To complicate matters, the first printing of *Merry Wives* in 1602 (a play built around Falstaff and friends in present-day Windsor) *does* have a character called 'Brooke', though the name was changed to 'Broom' in the First Folio. Giorgio Melchiori, the most recent Arden editor of the play, sees this as 'revenge on the censorship of *Henry IV* suffered at the hand of William Brooke, Baron Cobham'.⁴

'Oldcastle' was clearly a different transgression to 'Brooke'. The reason for this is probably that 'Oldcastle' was not any old ancestor. He was executed for heresy in the reign of Henry V, something which, after the triumph of Protestantism in sixteenth-century England, gave him the status of a martyr for the true faith. And yet, the loss of the name 'Oldcastle' from the play did not prevent it from being interchangeable with 'Falstaff' for many years.⁵ Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe also got into trouble in 1597 over a play called *The Isle of Dogs* – Jonson was imprisoned with two other actors and was spied on in jail and Nashe's house was raided and his manuscripts seized. We know nothing about the play. However, it has been plausibly suggested in the light of Jonson's and Nashe's continuing animus in print against the Brookes/Cobhams (including Jonson's portrait in *Every Man In His Humour* (1599) of a watercarrier called 'Cob' who is overly proud of his ancestry) that they played a role in the affair.⁶ These two plays experienced very different fates, for while Jonson's and Nashe's play has disappeared, *1 Henry IV* remains one of Shakespeare's crowning achievements.

This collection of essays testifies to the historic hold the play and its characters have had on stage and in study. Edel Lamb's chapter on the play's critical backstory shows how the play immediately made an impact on contemporaries, not least because of the Oldcastle affair, and many references to its theatrical popularity survive. Falstaff's popularity was worried over, particularly in the eighteenth century, by critics thinking through the implications of such an 'immoral' character being so attractive. Romantic-era critics were more sanguine about Falstaff's 'Vices' which were, after all, social and secular; critics with democratic leanings (such as Hazlitt) even contrasted him favourably with the squalid doings of the play's higher nobles. Indeed, some famous 'defences' of the fat knight's character, up to and including A. C. Bradley's early twentieth-century piece on 'the rejection of Falstaff', display considerable, if sentimental, ingenuity in their attempt to forestall any hint of moral judgement. A post-Pax-Britannica twentieth century was, initially at least, to be much more open to the idea of territory folks sticking

together, and the attractions of the strong arm defending existing order against chaos. Falstaff, the witty freeloader, and Hotspur, the charismatic boy warrior, had to wait a while to have their moment. But the tide turned once again; power, whether located in the male body or the state's gaze, came under suspicion, and the chimes at midnight did not seem so bad when the alternative might be the clocks striking thirteen. Lamb's essay takes us up to a quarter century ago, with feminism and historicism established as dominant approaches; but as Jonathan Hart's chapter on the 'the state of the art' shows, the play, like Falstaff, is never comprehensively pinned down for long. Ranging far more widely than is usual in such overviews, and respectful of criticism from beyond the Anglosphere, Hart stresses the *copiousness* of criticism that this ever-fertile play continues to produce. It is certainly possible to isolate some key themes – theatricality, the education of the ruler, Falstaff, festivity and Englishness, the matter of 'Britain', rhetoric, gender, economics – some of which already have a long history. But Hart's comprehensive, multilingual overview stresses that, though it has been much worked over, this play shows no signs of being worked out, and looks set to remain, in his resonant phrase, a 'renewable resource'.

The play does not merely live on the page: it exists for and in performance, on stage and in other media, and in the classroom. Graham Atkin's history of the play in production begins by quoting an actor, the great Falstaff, Anthony Quayle, and moves quickly on to an appreciative early 'review' from Samuel Pepys. Acting is based on reading, an interpretation of a part. Theatre directors, with their concern for the 'whole' play rather than the 'part', arrive late on the scene, historically speaking, and more or less up until the twentieth century the stage was the local habitation of the actor–manager–impresario. Stage history is the history of creative–critical, rather than simply critical, readings. Samuel Johnson famously said of *Lear* that it was unactable (and, indeed, there was very little unadapted Shakespeare around in the theatres of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and though *1 Henry IV* survived better than most on stage (usually minus, inexplicably to modern audiences, the play extempore), critics sometimes complained that actors simply were not up to producing the Falstaff of their mind's eye. But as the evidence accumulates, particularly in the twentieth century, the sheer imaginative range of engagement with the play becomes clear. It is too easy to see productions as 'mirroring' the times in which they are produced – something most obvious, perhaps, in the common critical comparison between Olivier's 'D-Day' film of *Henry V* and Branagh's 'Falklands' version of the same play. In fact, as Atkin makes clear, great productions are *ahead* of their times. Richardson's Falstaff, seen at the age of 15, inspired the critic Harold Bloom to a lifetime of thinking

through what he came to see as Shakespeare's 'invention of the human.' Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* joins film-making and acting genius to create a wholly new masterpiece.

Brian Walsh's chapter "'By Shrewsbury Clock' : The Time of Day and the Death of Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*" reminds us that Shakespeare (and his first audiences for the play) began from its predecessor, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, a play whose action Shakespeare extends throughout the two parts of *Henry IV* and into *Henry V*. Perhaps Shakespeare's major innovation was – inspired by Samuel Daniel – to include Hotspur as a foil for the young prince in addition to his disreputable companions in the tavern. Apart from anything else, Hotspur slows the action down by his sheer wordiness. Walsh suggests that, in context, Shakespeare's remaking of the shape of history available in *The Famous Victories* – from reprobate prince to Agincourt victor in a couple of hours – shows historical action as a continuum, to be shaped according to the particular agenda of the writer and theatre company. The aftermath of the battle of Shrewsbury makes this clear. Not only does Falstaff claim, ridiculously, that he fought a 'long hour by Shrewsbury clock' (the audience sees exactly how long he fought, which is presented in real time to them), but the prince agrees to 'gild' the truth, to support the lie that Falstaff killed Percy. This is history-making in action, and it lays bare Shakespeare's own project as a history-maker (e.g., inventing the death of Hotspur at the hands of the prince).

Alison Findlay's essay 'The Madcap and Politic Prince of Wales: Ceremony and Courtly Performance in *Henry IV*' focuses on courtly ceremony in the play. Notwithstanding the clearly fictional representation of ceremony, she argues that the play complicates such representations further by including Falstaff's parodic interview with the prince before we see him meet his father for real. For a performance in a public playhouse, perhaps to a predominantly plebeian audience, she suggests a subversive momentum to the pair's easy and, it appears, practised appropriation of forms supposedly reserved for 'sacred' majesty. But Findlay does not stop at suggesting 'subversion' in such circumstances. Rather, she goes on to consider how these scenes might have functioned in an opposite context – performance at court. The parody of Falstaff in state now takes place within a real palace, offering the court a glimpse of itself 'from the outside.' In addition, the first recorded court performance took place, as part of the marriage celebrations of the king's daughter, just after James' heir, prince Henry, died suddenly. In such a circumstance, the play's concern with the education of the prince, with true chivalry, and the responsibilities of rule (and its location of all of these in relation to *three* main characters named Henry) took on new resonances. In particular, given the dead prince's well-known chivalric

persona, the relationship between Hotspur's 'honour community' and rebellion raised interesting questions – as did the parallel between James's public fondness for his new son-in-law rather than his own son, with Henry IV's open admiration for Hotspur. The play had further court performances in the year of Charles's accession to the throne, and on the ninth birthday of *his* son, perhaps, as Findlay suggests, because the play's concern with the making of a prince continued to generate fresh meanings in new contexts. Finally, Findlay suggests that the 1620s conflation of both *Henry IV* plays in the Dering manuscript for amateur performance may have been prepared to entertain Charles (then Prince of Wales) as he passed through en route to Dover and Madrid.

Chris Fitter's "The Devil Take Such Cozeners!": Radical Shakespeare in *1 Henry IV*' situates the play in one powerfully imagined moment – that of its composition and first performance in the crisis-hit London of late 1596 and early 1597. The frequent notes of paranoia struck by conspirators and king alike speak of the situation of early audiences, for the plebeians of the capital were 'between malnutrition and martial law' as dearth-driven rioting had in turn produced savage reprisals and a regime of close surveillance and brutal punishment. In such circumstances, the late-night knock on the door which disturbs the princely play extempore is significantly located, for in the London of the mid-1590s, in particular, the alehouse was the plebeian locus of solidarity, fellowship and food. The alehouse and its customers were also subject to a disciplinary crackdown, with licences under review and virtual curfews imposed on apprentices. In such a context, the play's 'delighting central scenes of boozy anti-establishment bonhomie', its bawds, drinking games, fecklessness, subcultures and slang are not too difficult to read as offering to playgoers the spectacle of their own 'imagined community'. This community was under threat outside the theatres – in the theatre, in the person of the counterfeiting outsider, who says directly 'I know you all . . . and will a while uphold the unyoked humour of your idleness', attacks 'playing holidays', bullies Francis, searches Falstaff's pockets when he is asleep, and includes riffs on hanging in his many gags and comebacks.

The prince's 'puritan' project of self-improvement, of which his time in the tavern forms a part, is, of course, mercilessly mocked from the inside by Falstaff. But Falstaff – always an ambivalent figure in a time of dearth, focused on feeding himself to excess – turns out, once he goes to war, to be a similarly ambivalent figure, for all his sympathetic appeal for sixteenth-century 'youth culture'. By this time, however, the audience has itself gazed, undetected, upon the inner workings of royalty as it eavesdrops on the prince's interview with his father, in an empowering moment in which they, via the theatre, conduct some surveillance of their own.