

THE THEME OF HENRY IV, PART I

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PREFACE

In presenting a new statement of theme I have had to be at odds with great scholars who have other interpretations for Henry IV, Part I, and I have freely entered into debate with them. The scholarship of many of these writers holds such weight in the field that if I had to meet them face-to-face with my little argument, I would probably be reduced to dumbness. But I have had the guidance, encouragement, and wisdom of Dr. David S. Berkeley while writing this thesis; and if there is anything of excellence in this paper, he must have the credit.

To Dr. Berkeley I owe a debt that extends beyond the writing of this thesis. I have freely drawn upon his learning and depended upon his inspiration for the two years that I have been in graduate school. To Dr. Samuel Woods I owe gratitude for pointing out weaknesses in this paper that has allowed me (through revision) to strengthen it considerably. I also extend sincere thanks to fellow graduate students Larry W. Thompson and Dorothy Cozart for help they have given me. I have been particularly fortunate in having the help of my scholarly wife, Mary Ellen, while writing this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's greatest history play, Henry IV, Part I, does not admit of simple categorizing, and after writers have announced that this is a mark of Shakespeare's genius, they must then admit that this is also the stuff controversy is made of. In this study, which presents a new statement of theme, the author does not presume to advance a new truth to supplant an old error.¹ It is felt, however, that both old truths and old errors concerning the theme of the play will need to be reevaluated in the light of this new interpretation. One criterion has been followed throughout, namely, basing all observations on what may actually be found in Henry IV, Part I. The writer feels that a great many of the problems of interpretation may be eliminated by striving to discard that which has been read into the play and to concentrate on what is actually found there. This is not to say that controversy can be quieted, for what remains is only one writer's opinion; but it seems that this approach would place one on firmer ground for argument. It goes without saying that this also does not

¹The writer follows E. M. W. Tillyard's admonition in his Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1946), p. 280. Tillyard warns against advancing a new idea as if it superseded all other ideas in the field.

mean that background study is not valuable. The author will allow himself the enjoyable and perhaps sometimes fruitful exercise of conjecturing only in the conclusion to this study after all the facts have been marshaled for inspection.

It is necessary that Prince Henry, around whom most of the action turns, be given his proper place in the play, that of the leading character. To many writers (especially the Romantics) Sir John Falstaff is the central figure of the play. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, for example, saw Falstaff as the "real hero of the play."² Other critics, such as Harold Goddard,³ cannot make up their minds at all because of the rich characterization of Falstaff, Hal, Henry IV, and Hotspur. But no matter how we may love the old rogue, no matter how we anticipate the scenes at the Boar's Head, we must not become so enamored of this corpulent character that we regard all else in the play as secondary. He has his place. He is the captain-general of the forces of vice with whom the seemingly dissolute prince associates before making his theatrical conversion. That Falstaff happens to be the finest comic character in Shakespeare, indeed in all of English literature, is here beside the point.⁴ Modern scholarship has

²Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship (New York, 1917), p. 115.

³Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago, 1951), p. 161.

⁴The writer does not mean "to write off the succulent old sinner." He means only to place him in his proper relationship to Prince Hal, not "dehydrate" him.

placed Sir John in proper focus, however, and no one has done it better or with more understanding than Professor J. Dover Wilson:

Falstaff may be the most conspicuous, he is certainly the most fascinating, character in Henry IV, but all critics are agreed, I believe, that the technical centre of the play is not the fat knight but the lean prince. Hal links the low life with the high life, the scenes at Eastcheap with those at Westminster, the tavern with the battlefield; his doings provide most of the material for both parts⁵

But even as early as 1852 Henry N. Hudson had made a similar observation, but one of two-fold importance:

Where are we to find the center and the vital unity of the play? What is the "key-note" which guides and controls its harmonies? Doubtless it is to be sought in the character of the Prince of Wales, and in the wonderful change alleged to have taken place in his behavior Accordingly, in the very first scene this matter is put before us uppermost in the king's mind.⁶

Hudson not only saw Hal as the leading figure of the play, but he pinpointed that which "guides and controls its harmonies," namely, the reformation of the madcap Prince of Wales. Further citations to prove that Prince Hal is the central figure of the play would be supererogation. The point to be made is that it is in the character of Prince Hal that the critic must look to discover the play's real meaning.

⁵J. Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (New York, 1944), p. 17.

⁶H. N. Hudson's 1852 ed. of Shakespeare's plays was not available. See The New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part I, ed. S. B. Hemingway (Philadelphia, 1936), p. 20 for the above quotation.

To present a clear and understandable argument throughout the first two chapters of this thesis it is necessary to outline briefly the new statement of theme for 1 Henry IV at the outset although the main demonstration of theme will be reserved until chapter three. In offering a new statement of theme the author agrees with Lawrence E. Bowling that "while any attempt to fix a play's theme in a formulated phrase is likely to err on the side of oversimplification, a workable thematic statement can be arrived at which helps to reveal . . . [a] play's central meaning and to bring together in their proper relationship its various elements" ⁷ The main theme of 1 Henry IV, the author submits, is seminally transmitted virtue; vulgarly, "blood will tell." Medieval legend (popularly accepted by Elizabethans as authoritative) and certain philosophical concepts which emphasized a hierarchical structure in society placed a great value on a hereditarily determined station for individuals. Whether a person's station was accidentally too high or too low or whether it was just right, an event or series of events would occur at some time in an individual's life which would reflect in his actions his hereditary worth (or worthlessness). In 1 Henry IV all of the principal characters and many of the minor ones are concerned about the essential nature of the prince. The Prince himself, admittedly, is never in doubt about his true

⁷Lawrence E. Bowling, "The Thematic Framework of Romeo and Juliet," PMLA, LXIV (1949), 208. The author regards this work as a model for studies of this type.

worth; but this fact is a secret shared between him and his audience.⁸ Although no one questions his literal legitimacy (except Falstaff, who gets away with a great deal,⁹ and his father who fancifully and hypothetically poses the question¹⁰) all other characters are certainly doubtful concerning his actions. They are doubtful, that is, until the Prince's magical victory over the renowned Hotspur at Shrewsbury, a feat so highly improbable from the hands of a profligate prince who admitted his own truancy to chivalry that it proved beyond a doubt his true worth, and it also proved the popular belief concerning heredity that "blood will tell."

⁸See Hal's famous soliloquy in Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (Boston, 1946), I, ii, 219 ff. Subsequent quotations from Shakespeare will be from this edition; and act, scene, and line number will be listed parenthetically in the text.

⁹Falstaff, counterfeiting the King, recites dangerous lines in the presence of the heir apparent. See *Ibid.*, II, iv, 439 ff.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, I, i, 77-90.

CHAPTER II

THEMES IN THE FIELD

The two formulations of the main theme of 1 Henry IV that presently hold the field are (1) the education of a prince and (2) a tripartite clarification of the idea of honor. Neither, the author believes, clearly emerges from the play. Since these themes carry the most critical weight, however, the discussion of them will be reserved until the last part of this chapter immediately preceding the author's demonstration of his new statement of theme. Other themes have been advanced that deserve brief attention. Goddard sees the theme as "the theme of fear and lies--and the violence to which they inevitably give rise."¹¹ He depicts Henry IV as a king who obtained his throne through a lie (see King Richard the Second, III, iii, 31 ff.) and whose "living fear" did not become his "buried fear" upon Exton's murder of Richard. He sees old Northumberland and Worcester as fearing Henry because of Henry's own fear of their power (they had helped unseat a king once; perhaps they would try again). Also, Worcester would not accept King Henry's offer of pardon for fear of being betrayed. Fear pitted against

¹¹Goddard, p. 166.

fear resulted in the inevitable violence of Shrewsbury. Goddard gives other support for his argument (the psychological violence in the King's mind that results from his fear of God for deposing an anointed king), but the above forms the main basis for his statement of theme. The author rejects this presentation of theme for 1 Henry IV because there is not enough textual evidence in all parts of the play to support it as the main theme. Too, most of the leading characters do not figure in this account of theme, especially Prince Hal who has already been established as the central personage of the play, not to mention Falstaff (who certainly must be accounted for).

L. C. Knights writes that the theme of 1 Henry IV shows the unhappy consequences of usurpation.¹² The author agrees that this idea may be found in the play. Derek Traversi, although he holds that the education of Prince Hal is the theme of the play,¹³ points out: "The fruits of usurpation in terms of civil strife are, indeed, amply shown in the two plays devoted to the usurper's reign."¹⁴ Many writers¹⁵

¹²L. C. Knights, "Notes on Comedy," Determinations, ed., F. R. Leavis (London, 1934), pp. 121-129.

¹³Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: From Richard II to Henry V (Stanford, 1957), p. 3.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵For example, Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Histories (San Marion, California, 1947), Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (Princeton, 1957), and Tillyard.

have pointed out the attitude of the Elizabethans toward the historical period that Shakespeare embodied in his second tetralogy. This attitude was based primarily on the belief in the divine right of kings (an attitude nurtured by the chroniclers who firmly established what has come to be known as the Tudor myth).¹⁶ The implications of that belief are manifold, but the following are the most important. First, the king is God's lieutenant, subject only to God, and only God has the power to depose him. Second, all members of society are fixed under the king in a certain fixed order and must observe the tenets of a hierarchical system. One need not turn to Ulysses' speech on "degree" or to the raving Lear in the storm to find the dire consequences that result when degree is broken. Elizabethan audiences, no doubt, saw in Richard's deposition a breach in the order of things that was surely to bode evil. This is why Knights views the theme of 1 Henry IV as showing that there can be no peace during a usurper's reign. The author agrees, as stated previously, that this idea may be found in the play (the King's opening soliloquy shows the effect civil strife has had upon him), but the idea is rather like the background in a portrait: it is in the picture but not so important as the subject. Shakespeare deals more with the personal than the political aspects

¹⁶See Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York, 1955), pp. 1-50. See also Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1944).

of history in 1 Henry IV; that is, his concentration is more on Prince Hal (the subject) than on politics (the background). Too, the writer thinks there is one facet of the play that Knights has not considered, namely, the good treatment afforded the Lancasters in the play. Civil strife and all, Henry IV (thanks to Prince Hal) does not fare so badly in the play. Is Shakespeare championing the "divine-right king" over the "strong-man king?" One writer offers as a possibility (and as a possibility only) the idea that Shakespeare could have been supporting the "strong-man king" view:

. . . 'better a strong and efficient king with illegal title than' . . . as Tyndale described it, 'a king that is soft as silk and effeminite.'¹⁷

But no matter how that argument is resolved, textual evidence shows that Shakespeare was more interested in 1 Henry IV in a madcap prince than in the philosophical and political implications involved in a breach of hierarchical order.

A more common view of the main theme of 1 Henry IV is that the play presents a tripartite clarification of the idea of honor. Professor Elton in 1889 set down a succinct formula for those critics who hold this view: "Hotspur's and Falstaff's views on honour are the two extremes, ironically facing. Shakespeare probably exhibits the prince's way as the true mean."¹⁸ This view has textual support.¹⁹ The phrenetic

¹⁷Ribner, p. 161.

¹⁸Quoted in Hemingway, p. 316.

¹⁹The following analysis is an honest attempt to support Elton's view.

Hotspur, "he that kills me some six or seven dozen Scots at a breakfast," is represented as honor in excess. He is a person who loved the name of honor more than honor itself, or who, as Worcester observed (I, iii, 209-210), fooled himself with grandiose verbal definitions of honor. But this other Harry's honor is not mere foppery to many of the characters in the play, for even if his chivalric type of honor is an anachronism in the realistic and political age of the Lancasters, it is not without its charm or influence. Henry IV lamented that his Harry did not possess the chivalrous qualities of Hotspur (I, i, 78 ff.), the mighty Douglas called him "the king of honour" (IV, i, 10), Westmorland paid high tribute to him (I, i, 76-77), the braggart Owen Glendower submitted to Hotspur's childish demands (III, i, 136), and even Prince Hal (who did not fail to recognize the falsity of Hotspur's honor) paid respect to his chivalry (V, iv, 87 ff.). One need not depend on commentators to discover that some of the best poetry in the play is given to Hotspur. But it is even in these eloquent outbursts that critics see the shallowness of Hotspur's brand of honor. In the first act Hotspur, after being verbally chastised by the King, works himself up to this poetic pitch:

By heavens, methinks it were an easy leap
 To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
 Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
 Where fadom line could never touch the ground,
 And pluck up drowned honour by the locks,
 So he that doth redeem her thence might wear
 Without corrival all her dignities;
 But out upon this half-fac'd fellow-
 ship (I, iii, 201-208)!

This speech alone furnishes writers who see Hotspur as representing honor in excess with abundant fuel for their critical furnaces.²⁰ Here Hotspur despises sharing Honor's titles with anyone else in the kingdom ("half-fac'd fellowship"); he does not think of the good of the kingdom or even of his own party (although he would not admit it even to himself), nor does he think of the dangers involved in these enterprises of honor, but he would wear "bright honour" on his crest without "corrival." Thomas Percy, his uncle, observed at the close of the above speech: "He apprehends a world of figures here, / But not the form of what he should attend." What Hotspur sees is all in his highly imaginative and selfish mind's eye, expressed in lively figures of speech, but without any substance. The more politically-minded Worcester is not deceived by Hotspur's verbal paeon on honor. In the scene at the rebel's camp just before the battle Hotspur unrealistically rants of the bright "lustre" that will surround their "great enterprise" (to battle against the King without the aid of the wily old Northumberland (IV, i, 75-83). At

²⁰Kittredge, in his single-play edition of The First Part of King Henry the Fourth (Boston, 1940), p. 122, has the following note for Hotspur's lines: "In the introduction to Beaumont and Fletcher's Knight of the Burning Pestle, the Citizen's wife calls on their apprentice Ralph to show his ability as an actor by speaking 'a huffing part'--i. e., one in the heroic vein. Ralph recites:

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the sea,
Where never fathom-line touch'd any ground
And pluck up drowned honour from the
pit of hell."

That Hotspur's speech is a "huffing part" is obvious.

the end of the same scene when Vernon reveals that the King's forces reach to thirty thousand, he does not take time to weigh the consequences of opposing this superior army but bursts forth into this stirring but foolish little speech: "Forty let it be . . . Doomsday is near. Die all, die merrily" (IV, i, 130-134). It is a chivalrous speech, an honorable attitude, some would say, but certainly not a wise attitude. In the intimate scene at Warkworth Castle between Hotspur and his wife there is a further revelation of his shallow conception of honor, of life itself. The charming Kate realizes that something serious is stirring ("I fear my brother doth stir/ About his title and hath sent for you . . ." II, iii, 84-85), but what answer does he give her for her concern:

. . . This is no world
To play with mammets and to tilt with lips.
We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns,
And pass them current too . . . (II, iii, 94-97).

As Traversi remarks concerning this passage, "If the assumption that the serious business of life is no more than a matter of 'bloody noses' and 'crack'd crowns' be the practical outcome of the cult of 'honour,' then there is in that outlook something lacking."²¹ Other strong evidence to buttress this argument may be found in the last act when the two Harrys meet. When Harry Monmouth hurls his challenge to Harry Percy (" . . . think not, Percy, / To share with me in glory any more" V, iv, 63-64.), the taunt has special meaning to Hotspur, for he has already grown tired of sharing "this half-fac'd

²¹Traversi, p. 66.

fellowship" and desires above all things to wear honor's dignities without corrival.²² This is his real reason for being at Shrewsbury. And a few lines later when Hal says that he will crop Hotspur's "budding honours" to "make a garland" for his head, Hotspur is enraged and engages Hal in mortal combat; and when Hal has given him his death wound, he does not lament the loss of life so much as having lost all his honorable titles to a novice:

O Harry, thou hast robb'd me of my youth!
 I better brook the loss of brittle life
 Than those proud titles thou hast won of me.
 They wound my thoughts worse than thy
 sword my flesh (V, iv, 77-80).

This attitude definitely displays a wrong conception of honor, an honor that is purely selfish. The egoism, the poetic rant with little substance--these are the reasons why Hotspur is represented as displaying honor in excess.

Sir John Falstaff's position concerning honor is anti-thetically opposed to Hotspur's. As a matter of fact, Falstaff wants nothing to do with such an absurd and meaningless word as "honour." Just before the battle Hal tells Falstaff that he owes God a death, and the knight replies (to himself) by reciting his famous catechism:

'Tis not due yet. I would be loath to
 pay him before his day. What need I be
 so forward with him that calls not on me?
 Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on.
 Yea, but how if honour pricks me off when
 I come on? How then? Can honour set to a
 leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away

²²The writer has not discovered any commentators writing on the honor theme who have made this point.

the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word honour? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore, I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon-- and so ends my catechism (V, i, 128 ff.).

That speech is plain enough. Since exploits of honor can serve no purpose (except perhaps to decorate a shield on a tomb), Sir John will have none of it. He has not found any cause so grand that it outweighs the most important thing he knows of, the preservation of his fat body. During the battle Falstaff comes across the dead Sir Walter Blunt and says: "There's honour for you! Here's no vanity" (V, iii, 33-34), and later, "I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath" (V, iii, 61-62). In the heat of the battle Falstaff is forced to cross swords with the Douglas, but he does not fight long. He feigns death, for as he says after the field is cleared of fighting, "The better part of valour is discretion; in which better part I have saved my life" (V, iv, 120-122). Perhaps to the man of the twentieth century this is the soundest view of all, but to the Elizabethans (and in the framework of the play), this attitude is dishonorable.

The golden mean between the two above positions is, of course, Prince Henry. When he is called to the palace and is severely scolded for being a truant to chivalry, he makes a reply that is at once high-minded, chivalrous, and serious; and the speech does not show the same selfish motives that

Hotspur displayed in his speech on honor (III, ii, 132-48). He will fight Hotspur to regain his respect and redeem his princely position in the eyes of his father and his future subjects. Prince Hal is not deficient in honor as is Falstaff. Before the battle of Shrewsbury he offers to settle the whole affair in single combat against Hotspur to save lives (V, i, 83 ff.). This is a picture of the temperate, level-headed, perfect prince, a prince that honorably performed "fair rites of tenderness" over the fallen Hotspur, but who cared so little for personal glory that he magnanimously relinquished his claim of having killed him to Falstaff. It is upon this interpretation of the three characters and their relation to honor that Elton and the following critics have built their case.

Over six decades later W. G. Zeefeld passed Elton's formula as current: "The spring and direction of the action is toward a vindication of the honor of Hal, which must be made to exceed that of Hotspur in spite of his habitual association with Falstaff. This, I take it, is the theme of Part I.²³ Similarly, F. S. Boas: "The unity of the play does not lie in incident nor in political tendency, but in the relation of the leading personages to certain elementary principles of life and action. What is their idea of 'honour' and its values? This is the chief touchstone by which the various characters are tried. As the embodiment of Shakespeare's own

²³W. G. Zeefeld, "'Food for Powder'--'Food for Worms,'" Shakespeare Quarterly III (1952), 251.

view stands Prince Henry, with Falstaff in glaring opposition"²⁴ Others associating themselves with this view are Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch ("We have only to oppose Hotspur's high rant about honour with Falstaff's low appraisalment of it, and we have two cross-lights that illumine the whole play."²⁵), W. B. Hunter,²⁶ and H. Haydn.²⁷ One other commentator, Georg G. Gervinus,²⁸ holds the same view as the above critics but with one addition to the usual three-part division of the types of honor. He adds the character of Henry IV who represents the type of honor that is purely political; Bolingbroke's honor is a show only that is a necessary part of kingship, mere adornment.

Honor is surely a theme of this play; but it is not the main theme, the author thinks, for these reasons. To regard Hal as symbolic of honor in right measure and Falstaff and Hotspur as honor in deficiency and excess is to do damage, by over-rigid schematization, to the richness of their characterization. The abstract definition of honor is not a preoccupa-

²⁴Quoted in Hemingway, p. 399.

²⁵Quiller-Couch, p. 126.

²⁶W. B. Hunter, "Falstaff," Shakespeare Association Quarterly, L (1951), 86-95.

²⁷H. Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1950), pp. 600-605. Haydn develops the honor theme in terms of the Platonic tripartite division. Hal represents "reason"; Hotspur, "passion or the ireful virtue"; and Falstaff, "desire or the concupiscible."

²⁸The author was unable to obtain Georg G. Gervinus' Shakespeare Commentaries (trans. F. E. Bunnett, 6th ed., 1849), but his position is outlined in Hemingway, pp. 396-97.

tion of most persons in the play, but the quality of the Prince of Wales is a question in the minds of many from all levels of society. The Prince cares little for verbal definitions of honor. The theme should concern the whole nature of the Prince, i. e., whether or not he is "essentially made," honor being of course an important part. Dividing a main theme from a sub-theme or sub-themes requires, for the most part, quantitative analysis, and in addition to the above arguments the entire third chapter of this thesis should be weighed against the position outlined by Elton and others to substantiate more firmly the author's relegating honor to the position of a sub-theme.

By far the most universally accepted statement of theme for 1 Henry IV is the education of a prince. Irving Ribner explicitly delineates the position of those who hold this view:

The Henry IV plays $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Ribner sees Parts I and II} \\ \text{as unified in theme} \end{array} \right\}$ are above all "education" plays in the manner of Edward III. They show us the process by which the ideal king is made. And to accomplish his "education" purpose, Shakespeare adapted the dramatic form which had traditionally been used in such plays, that of morality as it had developed in such interludes as Nice Wanton, Lusty Juventutus, and Wit and Science. Prince Hal must be educated in the arts of war and the arts of peace, and to each of these ends one part of Henry IV is devoted. We thus have in the two plays a development of the two ends which the author of Edward III had encompassed in his single play. Just as the moral aspects of kingship are taught to Edward and the military aspects are taught to his son, Prince Hal is taught to be a soldier in 1 Henry IV and a statesman in 2 Henry IV.²⁹

²⁹Ribner, pp. 169-170.

More specifically undergirding the theme of Part I, Ribner says:

The Prince's association with Falstaff and his fellows is not a wasteful experience, for in it he learns to know the common people who will be perhaps his most powerful allies when he attains the crown.³⁰

Evidence to support this view rests primarily on an assumption (that the play is a morality) and the passages in Part I where the Prince tells Poins that when he is King of England, he "shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap" (II, iv, 5-20), and after the scene with Francis where he says:

I am now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since the old days of goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock midnight (II, iv, 104-107).

The usual explanation of these two passages goes like this:

(1) I (the Prince) have associated now with all levels of society from the highest (at court) to the lowest (at the Boar's Head); indeed, "I have sounded the very base-string of humility" with Francis and the drawers and have learned the nature of even my lowliest subjects. When I become King, I will understand my subjects better and therefore will be able to command more loyalty. (2) My education is complete. I have learned all I need to know about human nature and am now suited to rule England as a capable monarch who has prepared for the job (some here compare Hal with Richard II, who was not a capable ruler³¹). Tillyard says of this second passage:

³⁰Ribner, p. 173.

³¹Traversi, p. 3.

Hal means that "he has mastered all the springs of human conduct" [by "having learnt to understand the drawers"] and that "he has even then completed his education in the knowledge of men."³²

Many writers that argue this theme follow an approach similar to Ribner's; i. e., they base their argument on the assumption that the play is a morality. They interpret Hal as the prodigal who must make a choice between Vice (Falstaff and a dissolute way of life) and The Good Angel (The Lord Chief Justice and a virtuous way of life). These writers also assume the unified conception of both parts since the Lord Chief Justice has little to do with Part I. They see the climax of Part I as coming when Hal looks at the dead body of Hotspur and the apparently dead Falstaff and rejects what each had represented (the "ill-weav'd ambition" of Hotspur and the "Vanity" of Falstaff). The rejection of Falstaff in favor of the Lord Chief Justice in Part II marks the completion of the education of Prince Hal. Tillyard presents the morality pattern as being present in Part I without needing Part II to make it complete:³³ "In the first part the Prince . . . is tested in the military or chivalric virtues. He has to choose, Morality fashion, between Sloth or Vanity, to which he is drawn by his father and brothers. And he chooses

³²Tillyard, p. 275.

³³As will be pointed out later, Tillyard does not believe that 1 and 2 Henry IV are moralities in the strictest sense but only that the pattern of the morality may be seen in the plays.

chivalry."³⁴

Traversi, writing in support of the education theme, interprets Hal as a prince who realizes that "the traditional sanctions of monarchy are no longer immediately valid," and that if he is to be a successful ruler in a new world of uncertainties, he must prepare himself for the office. Therefore, "Hal is subjected to a process of education which finally enables him to assume with full competence, the burden of authority in the circumstances which his father's act (and Richard's own previous unworthiness) had brought into being."³⁵ This political preparation entails a study of not only the life surrounding the court (which Hal is already familiar with) but of all levels of society. This knowledge of each rung on the hierarchical ladder is important, for as Traversi points out, the realm was threatened by anarchy on the popular as well as the aristocratic level. Traversi continues:

It will be Hal's special vocation to conjure this threat [the threatening anarchy], restoring unity to the society of which he is to be the anointed head; but--meanwhile--it will be part of his political preparation to participate in the state of his future realm, to study its condition in detachment, to reject what his intelligence finds to be corrupt in it whilst converting himself, by conscious effort into the supreme embodiment of political virtue.³⁶

Prince Hal, in Traversi's view, has deliberately set about to educate himself, and his association with Falstaff and the

³⁴Tillyard, p. 265.

³⁵Traversi, p. 3. The italics are mine.

³⁶Ibid., p. 49.

disorder that surrounds the fat knight is merely to make him "realistically familiar, on all levels, with the conditions of his future rule" ³⁷ Twenty years before Traversi published his views, Mr. R. Ridley wrote in a strikingly similar vein:

He [Hal] is always aware that he will in time wear the crown, and he proposes to wear it efficiently. He will amuse himself with Falstaff and Poins as a man, just as he will study his subjects while he amuses himself by bewildering the drawer, but if they interfere with his being the king that England needs they will be brushed aside almost carelessly. ³⁸

Tillyard (whom I have already quoted as supporting the education theme) also notices Hal's deliberate actions in receiving his "education," an education that Tillyard thinks is so complete that he describes Hal as "versed in every phase of human nature," ³⁹ and one who has "perfect knowledge both of himself and the world around him." ⁴⁰

J. Dover Wilson writes of the education theme in 1 Henry IV as revealed through the morality pattern. More than that, he sees the play as a morality in the strictest sense: Hal is likened to "the individual soul on its road between birth and death, beset with the snares of the World or the wiles of the Evil One." ⁴¹ He even finds a literary ancestor of Falstaff

³⁷Traversi, p. 8.

³⁸M. R. Ridley, Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1937), p. 99.

³⁹Tillyard, p. 277.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 260.

⁴¹Wilson, p. 17.

in the character of Riot, the gay vice of an early Interlude entitled Youth.⁴² Hal, like Everyman, must make a choice between good and evil. Thus Wilson writes:

. . . the mainspring of the dramatic action is the choice he [Hal] is called upon to make between Vanity and Government, taking the latter in its accepted Tudor meaning, which includes Chivalry or prowess in the field, the theme of Part I . . . Shakespeare, moreover, breathes life into these abstractions by embodying them, or aspects of them, in prominent characters, who stand as it were, about the Prince, like attendant spirits: Falstaff typifying Vanity in every sense of the word, Hotspur Chivalry, of the old anarchic kind, and the Lord Chief Justice the Rule of Law or the new ideal of service to the state.⁴³

Quiller-Couch, whose influence Wilson admits,⁴⁴ says: "It remains for one mainly intent upon workmanship to point out how the whole of the business is built on the old Morality structure, imported through the Interlude."⁴⁵ Both Wilson and Quiller-Couch see Hal, then, as obtaining his education through the morality process, a process, the writer wishes to emphasize for later reference, that requires the subject to make a choice. Other scholars explicitly concurring in the education theme are Alan S. Downer ("The theme of the play . . . is the education of a prince . . . Hal's discovery of the true rule of honor by which a man must live in society"),⁴⁶

⁴²Wilson, p. 18.

⁴³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁵Quiller-Couch, p. 127.

⁴⁶Alan S. Downer, ed., William Shakespeare: Five Plays (New York, 1960), p. xiii.

Gareth Lloyd Evans,⁴⁷ and M. M. Reese.⁴⁸

The educating of Prince Hal as the principal theme of Henry IV, Part I is objectionable. The first soliloquy of the Prince indicates that, without telling anyone, he will indulge an outré publicity stunt--by a sudden reformation not basically genuine he will become the cynosure of every eye:

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
 The unyok'd humour of your idleness.
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That, when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted, he may be more wond'red at
 By breaking through the foul and and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
 If all the year were playing holidays,
 To sport would be as tedious as to work;
 But when they seldom come, they wish'd-for come,
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
 So, when this loose behaviour I throw off
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
 I'll so offend to make offence a skill,
 Redeeming time when men think least
 I will (I, ii, 219-241).

Education is clearly not in Hal's mind: he regards himself as being complete at the outset of the play. To think of Hal as needing education is to view him as being much less sophis-

⁴⁷Gareth Lloyd Evans, "The Comical-tragical-historical method--'Henry IV,'" Early Shakespeare, ed., John Russel Brown and Bernard Harris (New York, 1961), pp. 146-147.

⁴⁸M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (New York, 1961), p. 292.

ticated than he really is. There is no growth in Hal: what he is at the ending of the play he is at the beginning. Naturally he picks up incidental and random information, such as the piece Ribner cites, about some of his future subjects. Hal's whole association with Falstaff and that rowdy group is a bit of "slumming" with the purpose of attracting "more eyes" upon his reformation. The author cannot agree with those writers (Kittredge, for instance⁴⁹) who say this soliloquy is little more than a chorus to let the public know that the prince is really not a bad fellow, or writers like F. S. Boas who assures us: "This Pharisaical declaration need not be taken too literally, as it is probably meant for little more than a dramatic 'aside' to the audience, assuring them that Henry is not in reality what he appears."⁵⁰ There is too much purpose in the sun imagery⁵¹ for those statements to be true.

The lines in Act II previously quoted where Hal says that he is "now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since the old days of goodman Adam," have acquired a great deal of significance to those who hold the education theme. Those writers who use the passage to support that theme interpret it to mean that Hal knows all the humours or "all the springs of human conduct" that there is to know. The only other textual evidence that could possibly complement such an

⁴⁹Kittredge, ed., The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, p. xi.

⁵⁰Quoted in Hemingway, p. 49.

⁵¹See Chapter IV of this thesis.

interpretation is within the very same scene (II, iv, 5-20). For these lines to be used as the specific statement of theme within the play there should be similar evidence in other acts to support it, or since this is a climactic moment in his education (he needs to learn no more about human nature after this moment), it seems there should be a "building up" to the scene in earlier parts of the play. It would also help if there were evidence to support this idea beyond this point. The writer thinks with Kittredge that Hal could just as easily mean (in his reply to Poins) that all that business with Francis was just a whim of his, and that he is now in a mood "to indulge any fancy that any man has ever had since the creation."⁵²

The morality structure, exhibiting the contest between Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice occurs in Part II, and the rejection of Falstaff is also found there. Those who thus link the play with education as the theme assume the unified conception of Parts I and II, a matter decidedly controversial. But no matter if the morality pattern is considered in both parts or in Part I alone, there is one insurmountable barrier that can be placed at the outset, and that is that in a morality there must be a choice made by the hero between Good and Evil or some other opposing abstract ideas. In the Henry IV plays Hal makes no choice. He knows his mind from the beginning and there is never any mental struggle over what his

⁵²Kittredge, ed., The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, p. 140.

choice should be as in the morality plays. Reese noted the same thing: "Strictly, he [Falstaff] is not the Vice, since Henry IV is not really a morality: the hero's mind and spirit are never debauched and the outcome is not for one moment in the balance."⁵³ Traversi concurs.⁵⁴ Tillyard also agrees and observes:

But though Henry IV is built on the morality pattern it is quite without the mental conflict that often marks that pattern, as in Doctor Faustus. . . The Prince . . . has made up his mind from the start, and any twinges of conscience he feels at his delay in putting his resolution into action are minor affairs.⁵⁵

The writer feels that Tillyard has the answer to the problem. The outline of the morality may very well be seen in 1 Henry IV but the substance is not there.

Henry V was a popular Elizabethan hero, the author knows, and legendary tales of his wild youth and miraculous transformation were well-known.⁵⁶ Advocates of the education theme state that Shakespeare developed the wild youth and transformation to show the education of Hal. Is it not just as likely that this facet of the legend might have been used to show a prince whose worth and whose courage were in doubt and who almost thaumaturgically proved his royal blood? From this

⁵³Reese, p. 294.

⁵⁴Traversi, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁵Tillyard, pp. 268-269.

⁵⁶Cf. W. G. Bowling, "The Wild Prince Hal in Legend and Literature," Washington University Studies, XIII (1925-1926), 305-334.

point of view what better situation could there be than that of a wounded young man whose previous experience of war has been in the tavern rather than on the battlefield, of a wounded novice striking down the unwounded paragon of English chivalry, tested by many battles and expert in arms? But this topic is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

"BLOOD WILL TELL"

The main theme of Henry IV, Part I is seminally transmitted virtue; vulgarly, "blood will tell." This theme, widely dispersed in folklore, is found in Havelok, in three tales of Malory's Morte Darthur, and in the "wild Prince Hal legend" itself. The idea that either nobility (with all that word implied in sixteenth-century England) or baseness was inherited had firm foundation in the popularly accepted hierarchical thinking of the time. Under this system there was a strict stationing of individuals in society, and if by accident a person were misplaced in society, i. e., if his rank were not commensurate to his breeding, or even if his station were just right, there would be some event or series of events, it was thought, that would reveal his true rank, whether it was noble or base. In the Timaeus Plato sets down the doctrine Arthur O. Lovejoy calls "the principle of plenitude."⁵⁷ God (the Demiurge) is without envy and therefore created all possible creations, from the highest to the lowest, in a great ladder of being. This idea, blended with the faculty psychology of Aristotle,⁵⁸ formed the original basis

⁵⁷Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, 1936), p. 52.

⁵⁸Aristotle, De Anima, tr. J. A. Smith, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, 1947), pp. 177-79.

for hierarchical thinking. Hierarchical thought was prevalent in the literature of both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with such widely read works as the De Proprietatibus Rerum of Bartholomew⁵⁹ serving as popular encyclopedias, in which, states William P. Dunn, the "grand hierarchy of life from mineral to angelic, constituted the accepted framework of thought."⁶⁰ It might be added that the Tudors did nothing to discourage this thinking.

All dialogue in Henry IV, Part I, generally speaking, dealing with the character of the true prince and the debased prince is thematic. The idea that "blood will tell" comes to the surface of the play at many places, involving major characters and appearing at least once in every act. The following textual support of the author's thesis is given character by character or by pairs of characters rather than scene by scene. In the very first scene of the play Westmorland, speaking of Hotspur's deeds at Holmedon, remarks meaningfully that it "is a conquest for a prince to boast of" (I, i, 76-77). The King's reply shows that he has received the force of Westmoreland's statement and that he is envious.⁶¹

⁵⁹For the best discussion of these medieval encyclopedists and the importance of De Proprietatibus Rerum see Kester Svendsen, Milton and Science (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 11-42. See also pp. 51, 118, and 138 for revealing illustrations from Bartholomew's work.

⁶⁰William P. Dunn, Sir Thomas Browne (Minneapolis, 1950), p. 11.

⁶¹Evans (p. 154) flatly states: ". . . to the King, Hotspur remains the perfect son some 'night-tripping fairy' exchanged for his own."

Yea, there thou mak'st me sad, and mak'st me sin
 In envy that my Lord Northumberland
 Should be the father to so blest a son--
 A son who is the theme of honour's tongue,
 Amongst a grove the very straightest plant;
 Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him
 See riot and dishonour stain the brow
 Of my young Harry. O that it could be prov'd
 That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
 In cradle clothes our children where they lay,
 And call'd mine Percy, his Plantagenet!
 Then would I have his Harry and he
 mine (I, i, 77-90).

It is evident here that even Hal's own father misunderstands his true nature. As Reese points out, "he [Henry IV] is a man who judges by appearances,"⁶² and by all appearances, Hal is a profligate. In III, ii, 4 ff. the King, privately castigating the Prince, intimates that so unprincely a prince as Hal has been given to him to punish him for "some displeasing service I have done" to God. The King continues more pointedly:

Tell me else,
 Could such inordinate and low desires,
 Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean
 attempts
 Such barren pleasures, rude society
 As thou art match'd withal and grafted to,
 Accompany the greatness of thy blood
 And hold their level with thy princely
 heart (III, ii, 11-17)?

It may be noted that the King quite directly associates Hal's vulgar ways with baseness of blood. Hal's lewd nature must be a manifestation of God's displeasure with Henry's usurpation of Richard's crown. How else could so mean a prince have sprung from Royal Blood? After the Prince's not too convincing reply, the King continues the suggestion that Harry's blood is

⁶²Reese, p. 312.

alien to that of his family: " . . . let me wonder, Harry, /
 At thy affections, which do hold a wing / Quite from the flight
 of all thy ancestors (III, ii, 29-31). In III, ii, 128 the
 King tells his son quite frankly that the boy is "degenerate,"
 a word referring in Shakespeare's time to the quality of the
 blood--the biological inheritance. Hal asserts in answer that
 after redeeming himself on Percy's head he will "Be bold to
 tell you that I am your son," a verse showing the Prince's
 apprehension that his legitimacy is under question. The King
 earlier told Hal that he had lost his princely privileges
 (his place on the King's council) for "vile participation,"
 in other words, as Kittredge says, "by associating (prince
 though thou art) with worthless companions."⁶³ Hal's reply
 is significant: "I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,/
 Be more myself" (III, ii, 92-93). Hal is saying that he will
 hereafter be more like the true prince he is, and he says it
 in princely terms that echo the King's earlier speech to
 Worcester: "I will from henceforth rather be myself. . ."
 (I, iii, 5). A central moment in the play occurs in V, iv,
 49-51 when the King, after being rescued from Douglas by the
 bleeding Hal, says: "Thou hast redeem'd thy lost opinion, /
 And show'd thou mak'st some tender of my life, / In this fair
 rescue thou hast brought to me." The point is that Hal has
 at last proved his royal blood to his father ("And in the
 closing of some glorious day, / Be bold to tell you that I am

⁶³Kittredge, ed., Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare, p. 576.

your son."), and redeemed himself in his father's eyes. He has proved to his father that he is a Plantagenet. A little later he proves it to the world.

The first time Hotspur appears on stage he has something thematically important to say about Hal: "And that same sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales-- / But I think his father loves him not / And would be glad he met with some mischance, / I would have him poisoned with a pot of ale" (I, iii, 230-33). In this speech Hotspur intimates that the Prince is base-born or that his military manners are base by describing him as a "sword-and-buckler" prince who never drinks wine with gentlemen but only ale with fellows of low birth.⁶⁴ This passage also shows the King's low opinion of his son has spread beyond the gossip of the court. Sir Richard Vernon will be considered together with Hotspur since his main function seems to be to tell of Hal's true nature as opposed to Hotspur's low view of Hal. In V, ii, 52 ff. Vernon's speech, "No by my soul. I never in my life / Did hear a challenge urged more modestly," etc., conveys the essential nature of the Prince as against Hotspur's implications of degeneracy, "Never did I hear / Of any prince so wild a libertine" (V, ii, 71-72). In the fourth act Hotspur asks Vernon: "Where is his son, / The nimble-footed madcap Prince of Wales, / And his comrades, that daff'd the world aside / And bid it pass" (IV, i, 94-97)? In this speech Hotspur not only al-

⁶⁴Kittredge, ed., Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare, p. 556, explains Hotspur's lines as ridiculing the Prince as one no better than a low fellow or a person of low rank.

cludes to Hal as being a coward ("Nimble-footed"), certainly no epithet for anyone of royal blood whether enemy or not with its implications of cowardly flight, but he points out the reputation Hal has gained through his association with his dissolute comrades. Vernon's answer (IV, i, 97 ff.) likening the Prince, as he vaults into his seat upon his horse, to feathered Mercury shows for the first time in public the essential nature of the Prince. That Shakespeare meant Vernon to show the princeliness of Hal and the miraculous transformation that seemed to have occurred seems evident when his speech is compared to its likely source in The Faerie Queene:⁶⁵

At last she saw, where he upstarted brave
 Out of the well, wherein he drenched lay:
 As eagle fresh out of the ocean wave,
 Where he hath lefte his plumes all hory gray,
 And deekt himselfe with fethers youthly gay,
 Like eyas hauke up mounts unto the skies,
 His newly budded pineons to assay,
 And marveiles at his selfe, stil as he flies:
 So new this new-borne knight to battell
 new did rise.⁶⁶

Some writers such as Tillyard and Hardin Craig argue that Hal's transformation was not meant to be sudden or miraculous. Tillyard says: "The whole point of the Prince's character was that his conversion was not sudden, that he had been preparing with much deliberation for the coming burden."⁶⁷ Craig

⁶⁵See Hemingway, pp. 256-257. See also Wilson, p. 65.

⁶⁶Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed., R. E. Neil Dodge (New York, 1908), Book I, canto xxxiv, p. 221

⁶⁷Tillyard, p. 306.

agrees:

Shakespeare's most definite study of the normal man who comes to himself is of course Prince Hal, later the great English hero Henry V. Hal's coming to himself is slower, less dramatic than other cases; for Shakespeare has pitted against Prince Hal's reformation Sir John Falstaff, his wittiest and most seductive character.⁶⁸

Craig and Tillyard are no doubt thinking about the first soliloquy, but they fail to take into account the battle of Shrewsbury and Vernon's speech as well. The speech refutes the "slow process reformation" (which is in effect the education theme). Such a similarity between Hal and the Red Cross Knight does not seem an accident; but even if advocates of the above view would not admit Spenser as a source, the lines are still there and the substance is the same as that found in The Faerie Queene, i. e., the regeneration (or seeming regeneration) described by Vernon is in terms that indicate the sudden and the miraculous.

As would be expected, Falstaff, who is such a major figure in the play, has a great deal to do with the development of theme. In II, iv, 150-154 Falstaff with outrageous speech, focuses attention on the dubiety of the Prince's nature: "A king's son! If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of wild geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more. You Prince of Wales?" Falstaff is here accusing Hal of cowardice for not helping at the Gadshill robbery, and

⁶⁸Hardin Craig, "Shakespeare and the Normal World," Rice Institute Pamphlets, XXXI, No. 1 (1944), 39.

the last four words form a significant question that is in the minds of many in the play. The King, Hotspur, Westmoreland, and others could look on Hal's lewd actions and wonder with justice if this were indeed the Prince of Wales. Later in the scene when Falstaff has been given the lie concerning his part in the robbery, he brilliantly evades the issue by saying:

By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye. Why, hear you, my masters. Was it for me to kill the heir apparent? Should I turn upon the true prince? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct. The lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter. I was now a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself and thee during my life--I for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince . . . (II, iv, 295 ff.).

In saying that he will think better of himself for running because his instinct recognized a true prince, Falstaff is, as Kittredge points out, mischievously intimating that "he is glad to have this confirmation of the Prince's true legitimacy."⁶⁹ In III, iii, 165-168 Falstaff continues along the same line, persisting in his disparagement of the Prince as degenerate: "Why Hal, thou knowest, as thou art but man, I dare; but as thou art Prince, I fear thee as I fear the roaring of the lion's whelp." In the little play within the play when Falstaff is acting the part of Henry IV, he clearly shows that he realizes that the King regards his son as a madcap:

Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art

⁶⁹Kittredge, ed., Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare, p. 567.

accompanied. For though the camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted, the sooner it wears. That thou art my son I have partly thy mother's word, partly my own opinion, but chiefly a villanous trick of thine eye and a foolish hanging of thy nether lip that doth warrant me. If thou be son to me, here lies the point: why, being so to me art thou so pointed at? Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher and eat blackberries? A question not to be ask'd. Shall the blessed son of England prove a thief and take purses? A question to be ask'd (II, iv, 439 ff.).

This speech anticipates the King's speech that is soon to follow. Both Falstaff and the King ask the Prince if one of royal blood should conduct himself the way Hal has been. Falstaff talks of Hal's wasted youth and how he spends his time. Too, he dangerously talks of Hal's legitimacy ("That thou art my son I have partly thy mother's word," etc.) bringing that central question once more before the audience. Falstaff is, of course, deceived by Hal's actions (but so is the King, so is Hotspur). He thinks that Hal is actually a libertine who has no other reason for being in the Boar's Head than the enjoyment of his company and a wild, carefree life. All of Falstaff's associates are deceived too as their very language to the Prince and their intimacy with him reveal. Gadshill, for instance, considers Hal as one of the fellows. In answering the Chamberlain's talk about hanging, he says, "What talkest thou to me of the hangman? . . . Tut! There are other Troyans that thou dream'st not of, the which for sport sake are content to do the profession some grace; that would (if matters should be look'd into) for their own credit

sake make all whole." The "other Trojans that thou dream'st not of" part of the speech refers to Hal who has for sport's sake (so Gadshill thinks) joined the band of thieves to do the profession some grace. Gadshill need not worry about the hangman, for if worse comes to worse, Prince Hal will "make all whole," i. e., the Prince will take care of things. Bardolph is also deceived. He has the gall to ask (along with Falstaff) that Hal rob his own father:

Prince. I am good friends with my father,
and may do anything.

Fal. Rob me the exchequer the first thing
thou doest, and do it with unwash'd hands too.

Bard. Do, my lord.

The simple directness (if Bardolph were not so knobby-faced from drinking ale, the author would have said "child-like") of that "Do, my lord" shows how fully Bardolph is deceived.

Shakespeare, the author believes, explicitly states the theme of Henry IV, Part I in Falstaff's speech, II, iv, 539-541, "Never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit. Thou art essentially made, without seeming so."⁷⁰ The meaning is that Hal is an essential prince, a true scion of the royal house, no changeling or bastard; but his actions and his appearance belie the legitimacy of his blood because he dallies with Falstaff and leads a lounging life. The reading "made" is that of Quartos 1 through 8 and of Folios 1 and 2. The reading "mad," which Capell suggested in 1779, following

⁷⁰Reading "made" here follows the first folio, not Kittredge.

Folio 3, has been accepted by Malone, Elton, J. Dover Wilson, Kittredge, Hemingway, Harrison, and all other editors, the author believes, except R. P. Cowl and A. E. Morgan in the first edition (1914) of the Arden Shakespeare. The author suggests that the numerous editors who read "mad" for "made" constitute a stumbling-block causing thematic difficulties in Henry IV, Part I; and two of the commentators who have interpreted this speech in separate articles have, the author thinks, missed the point.⁷¹ Cowl has the first discussion of the passage that the writer was able to find:

A difficult passage that has never been satisfactorily explained. Falstaff may mean: "Do not deliver me to the sheriff as a thief; I am a true man (a true piece of gold) though I may appear as a false thief (counterfeit); thou too art made of the same essence or nature (of true metal) without seeming so." The Prince, however, may be the true piece of gold: "You will prove to be true in friendship (a true piece of gold), you will not play me false for you are by nature true gold (essentially made) though you seem a counterfeit."⁷²

Both explanations point to the seeming dissoluteness of the Prince who is actually "essentially made." Hemingway rejects both of the above interpretations, but only after a troubled mind: "[reading 'mad'] perhaps does not take sufficiently into account the typical Shakespearean contrast between truth and 'seeming.'"⁷³ Richard Flatter, treating Falstaff's speech

⁷¹John Lawlor, The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare (London, 1960) and Evans read "made," but only in passing.

⁷²See Hemingway, p. 169.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 169-170.

in the article "Mad, Made, and Maid,"⁷⁴ thinks that "made" may be retained if it is understood to mean "artificially made." What Falstaff intends, according to Flatter, is this: "Don't give me away; I am genuine gold (such as alchemists try to 'make' in their furnaces)"--whereupon the Prince, taking up the antithesis of naturalness and imitation makes the reply: "And thou art a coward--not a counterfeit, but a natural one." The author rejects this interpretation of "made" on grounds that it has no logical connection with the preceding or following lines and no connection with the play as a whole, which, certainly, is not a requisite; but the author's interpretation does have important ramifications. K. M. Lea treats this line in the following way: "Listen, Hal. Don't ever make the blunder of mistaking a true gold (friend) for a sham (and flatterer)"; Lea says that "plump Jack" is this friend. Lea then explains this speech:

Then turning to the heir-apparent who is both counterfeiting the King before his time and, as Falstaff would hope, feigning annoyance as a friend when he is really quite well disposed toward his old fat companion, he carries on his metaphor into a compliment: "you are the real thing all right (good metal)," adding with an irresistible quip, "though you don't look it."⁷⁵

In this interpretation Lea has reduced the significance of "made," causing the word to apply to a narrow action, the play within the play. The significance has far greater impli-

⁷⁴Richard Flatter, "Mad, Made and Maid," Times Literary Supplement, Oct. 6, 1945, p. 475.

⁷⁵K. M. Lea, "'Never Call a True Piece of Gold a Counterfeit': What Falstaff Means," Review of English Studies, XXIV (1948), 236-240.

cations than Hal's simply "counterfeiting the King before his time" and/or 'counterfeiting' or 'feigning' rejection of Falstaff. The "irresistible quip," as Lea calls it, has significance; for Hal has in mind the "coward-instinct" lines a bit earlier in the play (II, iv, 294-302) when he says, "and thou a natural coward, without instinct." This interpretation (associating "made" and "instinct") ties in with the theme of "blood will tell," which Lea fails to discern.

Lawlor gives a meaning for the passage that is at once clear, and in the author's opinion, exact: "Falstaff means no more than 'Don't judge by appearances; you are a King's son, though no one would think so to look at you.'"⁷⁶ Evans is more thorough: "Falstaff asks Hal not to mistake his (Falstaff's) counterfeiting (i. e., cowardice) for his real character (a true piece of gold). Hal is one thing while seeming to be another--so, the inference is, why should not he, Falstaff, counterfeit too?"⁷⁷ H. H. Adams, another commentator who favors retention of "made," thinks that Falstaff is saying, "I recognized you for a true prince before; my instinct told me so; never call a true prince or a true piece of gold a counterfeit." Thus the second clause of the speech can only mean that Hal is made of the essence of princeliness, even though his actions do not seem to show it. In other words, he is reminding Hal that he as a prince can

⁷⁶Lawlor, p. 32.

⁷⁷Evans, p. 153.

protect him from the sheriff, and that a true prince would not let his friends down. Hal, of course, cannot afford to let the challenge pass; so he retorts that Falstaff is by nature a coward without finer instinct, even though he does protect Falstaff from the sheriff.⁷⁸ The author accepts the last three interpretations of the line as substantially correct, but he wishes to point out that these commentators fail to mention its thematic importance.

The theme of seminally transmitted virtue or "blood will tell" is best displayed in Hal's deeds at Shrewsbury. Here, like Redcross dipped into the Well of Life, the Prince, sloughing off his dissolute associations, bleeds but fights on (V, iv, 1-3). The Prince saves King Henry by putting the renowned Douglas to flight (V, iv, 39-43), and he defeats the mightiest warrior in the kingdom, Hotspur (V, iv, 59 ff.). The last of these deeds, in view of the Prince's lack of conditioning and training and in the face of his fatigue and wound, is so antecedently improbable that it can only be explained, since Shakespeare could not admit the killing to be a fluke, as a lively exhibition of the essential Prince, hitherto concealed: his blood shows itself for what it is, not what it has seemed to be. One should point out that the Prince's constantly reiterated addition, "heir apparent," emphasizes the difference between what he is essentially and what he appears to be. The theme of Henry IV, Part I is,

⁷⁸H. H. Adams, "Falstaff's Instinct," Shakespeare Quarterly, V (1954), 208-209.

therefore, a variant of Shakespeare's master-theme, the difference between men as they are and men as they appear to be.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Many writers have come close to seeing the theme of Henry IV, Part I that has been outlined in the previous chapter. It will be noted by checking back through the paper, that such commentators as Kittredge (in his notes), Lawlor, Evans, Reese, and Adams (who comes quite close to the idea), have written all around the point. Tillyard makes a passing comment that shows that he was aware of the element of appearance and reality in the play: ". . . Richard and Prince Hal are deliberately contrasted characters; Richard being the prince in appearance rather than reality, Hal being the prince in reality whose appearance at first obscures the truth."⁷⁹ John Palmer says in his discussion of Hal that all those round about him were mistaken concerning his real character.⁸⁰ C. A. Greer talks of "the public's low opinion of the Prince, an opinion, however, which . . . was gained largely through a misunderstanding of the Prince's true nature."⁸¹ All these near hits give heart to the author in

⁷⁹Tillyard, p. 234.

⁸⁰John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1945), passim.

⁸¹C. A. Greer, "Shakespeare and Prince Hal," Notes and Queries, CXCVIII (1953), 424.

making his contribution, for to be trite, "where there is smoke there must be fire."

The author has made no attempt to enter the argument of unity (i. e., whether or not the two parts of Henry IV were conceived by Shakespeare as one ten-act play). This is a matter of controversy that has not been settled. The author believes, however, that no matter whether the two parts were conceived as one unit or not, Part I stands by itself as complete and the interpretation of theme was based on this assumption. Kittredge supports this view:

The two halves of Henry IV are not the two halves of a single play. Each part is a drama complete in itself. The word 'part' signifies an historical period--a portion of a dramatic unit.⁸²

It has been shown that this theme had firm roots in both popular legend and in the hierarchical thinking of the times. It has been further proved, by textual evidence, that all the major characters in the play are concerned about the Prince's true nature from the personages at Court (King Henry and Westmoreland), to those in the rebel camp (Vernon, Hotspur), to the gay fellows at the Boar's Head (Falstaff and company). The theme of seminally transmitted virtue turns on Falstaff's speech ("Thou art essentially made, without seeming so") with the main manifestation of the theme coming at Shrewsbury where Hal proves by his amazing victories over the Douglas and Hotspur that he is indeed of royal blood.

⁸²Kittredge, ed., The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, p. viii.

The Prince, as stated above (pp. 5-6), never doubts his true worth, his legitimacy; in fact, his "seeming" worthlessness or baseness has been planned from the outset (see pp. 22-24 above). The point is, the Prince seems a profligate to the other personages in the play (just as he wants to). But Hal's planning his reformation does not answer the question of how? in his shocking victory over Hotspur at Shrewsbury. Why would Hal think that he could defeat such a warrior? What has Hal done? Physically, he has done nothing except carouse in the taverns of Eastcheap, and that is why his victory is so unlikely. His confidence (and when the text comes, his strength), the author feels, springs from the fact that he realizes that he is heir apparent to the throne of England, of blood royal, and will one day be the sun around whom all the lesser beings in the hierarchical system will rotate. Shakespeare, the author submits, is in the beginning of the career of his hero king establishing him securely in the old hereditary system that his father upset. Hal must restore to the throne not only competence, but a rule under God in a divinely ordered universe. The author feels that Shakespeare meant for the conversion to be a miraculous event because no matter how Machiavellian the Prince's planned conversion might have been, the transformation at Shrewsbury is an event that could not be explained in any terms other than those under the old hereditary system. A prince who has spent his hours in the tavern instead of practicing arms, who has spent his time at the Boar's Head

rather than the battlefield, can hardly make a physical transformation that would allow him to defeat the hero of Holmedon. There is only one explanation, in the author's belief, and that is that "blood will tell."

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