

379
N81
NO. 2467

MODERN TRENDS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF FALSTAFF

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Fred Page Boswell, B. A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1956

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE BACKGROUND OF FALSTAFF.	1
II. EARLY CRITICISM	34
III. TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISM	54
IV. CONCLUSION.100
BIBLIOGRAPHY108

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF FALSTAFF

The different interpretations of the character of Sir John Falstaff have been so controversial that at no time since the presentation of the Henry IV plays have critics been able to agree as to his precise qualities. He has been called the greatest humorous character in all literature by even those critics who have spoken adversely of his other traits. George Bernard Shaw called him "a besotted and disgusting old wretch," an opinion added to those of others who have seen him as a coward, liar, cheat, thief, glutton, and rogue.¹ There is no denying that he is one of the most captivating and controversial of all characters in English literature.

Since Shakespeare created his supreme masterpiece, the fat knight has become established as the embodiment of humor, not only in the English-speaking world but in the drama and literature of all time. In the Henry IV plays he completely dominates the action, overshadowing the historical and political themes, and subordinating them to his witty and

¹ Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago, 1951), p. 175.

attractive personality. However, there are fundamental questions to be solved before taking up the various aspects of criticism that have prevailed from his inception to the present day.

Speculation about the origin of this most paradoxical of all literary figures is even more controversial than the interpretations of his character. Much controversy centers around the name and personality of Falstaff, and it is probable that he is a composite personality. This question of his ancestry has been of primary concern to all critics and can probably never be settled satisfactorily to all. There is a reasonable doubt that Falstaff even existed prior to his conception in Shakespeare's fertile imagination; yet the general opinion is that he derived from a source.²

For source material most critics have turned to the text itself and to Falstaff's earlier appellation of Sir John Oldcastle. Shakespeare used the old anonymous play, The Famous Victories of Henry Fifth (c. 1588), as a source of material for the Henry IV and Henry V plays;³ yet all critics agree that there is little resemblance between Falstaff and Sir John Oldcastle of the older play. Oldcastle, in this

² H. B. Charlton, "Falstaff," John Rylands Library Bulletin, XIX (January, 1935), 46.

³ Ibid., p. 47.

play, was only a minor comic character among other companions that Prince Henry eventually dismissed. For comparative purposes, a brief summary of this older play is offered at this point.

The play opens with the prince, Sir John Oldcastle, and their lowly associates, Ned and Tom, dividing among themselves a thousand pounds, which they have just acquired from the King's Receivers in an armed robbery. They then retire to an Eastcheap tavern for a night of revelry, which terminates in a bloody street brawl. They are all arrested and carted off to jail. Upon hearing of his commitment the king has young Henry freed and rebukes the arresting officers, whom he says "might have considered that he is a prince, and my sonne, and not to be haled to prison by every subject."⁴

Henry IV, after initiating the release of the prince's associates, then laments his son's waywardness:

Ah, Harry! Harry! Now thrice accursed Harry,
that hath gotten a souse which with greefe
will end his father's dayes! ⁵

Shortly after the prince's release he boxes a judge's ears, and is this time haled off to the Fleet Prison. After a short incarceration he is again free and talking of the gay times that he and his roisterers will have once he has become king.

⁴ Anon., The Famous Victories, ll. 316-319.

⁵ Ibid., ll. 363-366.

Upon hearing of his father's illness, he sets off for court, saying that the breath will no sooner be out of his father's body, but that he will "clap the crown on. . . [his] head."⁶ It is here for the first time that the young prince gives indications of reform. While talking to Oldcastle he speaks of becoming a "well-toward young man";⁷ yet he gives no appearance of sincerity. In fact, he quite ridicules the idea of reformation.

As the king lies dying and bewailing his son's second incarceration, the reprobate prince enters the castle. As the weeping king upbraids his son, the prince suddenly repents, saying, "My conscience accuseth me. . . and those wilde and reprobate companions, I abandon. . . ! Pardon, sweet father, pardon. . . even this day I am borne new againe."⁸ He then reforms completely and permanently. The reassured king crowns him and dies.

All the prince's old friends now enter seeking personal awards, but they encounter a reformed Henry. Oldcastle, anticipating Falstaff, had rejoiced at the coronation and is expecting a sizable share of good fortune. It is not long, however, before they all see the turn of events. The new king

⁶ Ibid., 1. 663.

⁷ Ibid., 1. 680.

⁸ Ibid., 11. 764-813.

rebukes them and advises them to mend their ways. He then warns them upon pain of death not to approach within ten miles of his presence, and to expect "no more favour at. . . [his] hands than at any other man's."⁹

The author of The Famous Victories has presented an amusing play based on a traditional tale. The play is simply a presentation of successive episodes, and there is no dramatization. Henry's reformation conforms to history, and no effort at characterization is made to make the conversion convincing.

There are many points in common between The Famous Victories and Shakespeare's cycle. In both plays stress is laid on the prince's madcap misdemeanors; in both plays Hal has wild companions; in both the armed robbery has a prominent place. There are many small points of verbal resemblance, and certain episodes in the historical parts of the Henry IV plays have their counterpart in the earlier play. In 1 Henry IV occurs the father-son burlesque acted by Falstaff and Hal.¹⁰ In The Famous Victories a similar burlesque is acted out by Dericke and John Collier.¹¹

However conclusive this parallelism in plot, Dover Wilson still suggests that the Shakespearian plays were not based

⁹Ibid., I, 10381.

¹⁰William Shakespeare, King Henry V, II, iv. This and all subsequent textual references to Shakespeare's plays are based on The Complete Works of Shakespeare, edited by Hardin Craig (Chicago, 1951) unless otherwise noted.

¹¹Anon., The Famous Victories, v.

on The Famous Victories but on a still older play on which The Famous Victories itself was based.¹²

Although there is little resemblance between Falstaff and Oldcastle of the older play, Shakespeare seemed to have originally called the character in his earliest version of the play "Oldcastle," and the satire was supposedly directed toward Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard martyr. He was an historical personage who lived in the early fifteenth century and was an early companion of the youthful Prince Henry. Later he became a convert of Wycliff and presently found himself in trouble with the church authorities. Because of their old friendship the historical King Henry V tried to divert Oldcastle from so dangerous a path by persuading him to abandon his association with the Lollards. But later Oldcastle, who had become Lord Cobham, led an abortive Lollard rebellion. The rebellion was suppressed and he was taken prisoner. He later suffered martyrdom as a heretic in 1417.¹³

There is a traditional story about the English national hero, Henry V, to the effect that while Crown Prince, he had spent his time idly and among loose companions. History records none of this but shows him as a dutiful son and soldier, performing his duty in slaughter and devastation,

¹²Dover Wilson, "Falstaff," Times Literary Supplement, January 9, 1919, p. 175.

¹³Cumberland Clark, Falstaff and His Friends (Shrewsbury, 1935), p. 26.

like the Western hero of all time. Historically, he did have a friend in his youth, a very serious person who dispelled all frivolity. This friend was Sir John Oldcastle, who later suffered martyrdom as a follower of Wycliff. The prince, after becoming Henry V, fell out with him over the Lollard issue, and Oldcastle suffered the death of a heretic. Fanatical defamation followed Sir John's death, and for a century every sort of reproach was attached to his memory. Thus he was handed down by tradition, in spite of the Reformation, as a fat, gray-haired sinner and seducer of young men, the boon companion of the royal son. Oldcastle had already been presented dramatically in this light in literary works before Shakespeare's time, including the anonymous play The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth; a play attributed to Munday, Drayton, and others, entitled The First Part of the True and Honourable Historie of Sir John Oldcastle, the Good Lord Cobham; and John Weever's poem, "The Mirror of Martyrs, or the Life and Death of Sir John Oldcastle."¹⁴ Shakespeare combined this baseness with an infinite zest for life and humor, but this evidently annoyed William Brooke, the contemporary Lord Cobham, who would no longer bear any mistreatment of the martyr, no matter how unintentional it might be. His complaint

14

James Tait, "Old Castle, Sir John," Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XIV (Oxford, 1900).

at court is considered by some critics as having been responsible for the queen's ordering the name changed.¹⁵

Regardless of the reason for the change of name, it appears certain that Shakespeare changed "Oldcastle" to "Falstaff." Obeying the queen's command, he has left proof of this in the Epilogue to 2 Henry IV, where he dissociates Falstaff from the historical figure of Sir John Oldcastle:

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katherine of France: where, for any thing I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already a' be killed with your hard opinions; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man.¹⁶

This last portion of the Epilogue was written at the time of the revision of the play. However, the revision itself was not so careful that traces of the name are not still found. In the text of the Quarto of 2 Henry IV "Old." is found for "Fal." in Act I, Scene 2, line 137. In other respects also the revision looks somewhat hasty. In 1 Henry IV, Act I, Scene 2, lines 47 and 48, the prince addresses Falstaff as "my old lad of the castle," which is very likely a pun on the name of "Oldcastle." Several metrically imperfect lines are found in which the name "Falstaff" appears, one of which is "Away Good Ned, Falstaff sweats to death."¹⁷ When the trisyllabic "Oldcastle" is substituted

¹⁵Clark, p. 26.

¹⁶2 Henry IV, Epilogue, p. 28.

¹⁷1 Henry IV, II, ii, 115.

in this line for the disyllabic "Falstaff," the scansion is smooth.

In 1625 Richard James, in his dedication to The Legend of Sir John Oldcastle, and later Nicholas Rowe in 1709, substantiated the substitution of "Oldcastle" by "Falstaff." Rowe ascribes the reason for the substitution to the intervention of Queen Elizabeth, whereas James attributes it to the protestations of the Oldcastle descendants.¹⁸ In any case it can be assumed that the use of this name offended the Oldcastle descendants, who caused enough pressure to be placed on Shakespeare to force him to rechristen the "Oldcastle" from an earlier play as "Falstaff."

Other inquirers into Falstaff's origin believe him to be a combination of both Oldcastle and the clown of The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth.¹⁹ E. E. Stoll gives him a lengthy genealogy back to the miles gloriosus of Roman comedy, which in turn arose out of the Roman wars.²⁰ John Dawtreay traces him back to one of his own distant ancestors, a swashbuckling, roisterous Captain Nicholas Dawtreay, sometime seneschal of Claveboye and Warden of the Palace of Carrickfergus. He had been notorious for his persistent

¹⁸Kercher Chambers, "Shakespeare, William," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XX (Chicago, 1946).

¹⁹James Monaghan, "Falstaff and His Forebears," Studies in Philology, XVIII (1921), 354.

²⁰Edgar Elmer Stoll, "Falstaff," Modern Philology, XII (October, 1914), 213.

pestering of Queen Elizabeth's court officials with innumerable letters, petitions, and reports in his quest for money and preferment. He was a large and unwieldy man like Falstaff, indolent and self-indulgent. He was a soldier by trade, and by all accounts a brave and enterprising one.²¹ This does not exhaust the possible sources of Falstaff, and the proffered suggestions extend from the vice of the morality plays²² to other contemporary Elizabethan characters. Even Robert Greene is mentioned as a possible prototype for Falstaff. Maxwell Baldwin says that Greene, who was known for his dissolute and licentious living, and whose familiar name for his wife was "Doll," was being repaid by Shakespeare for Greene's savage attacks on him when he was a young dramatist struggling to establish himself.²³

After the change of the name to Falstaff, a new speculation arose as to whether Shakespeare had modeled his character on Sir John Fastolfe, who appears in 1 Henry VI. The historical Sir John Fastolfe, a lieutenant general accused of cowardice while fighting under Talbot in France, was convicted and deprived of the Garter. He was subsequently cleared of the

²¹ John Dawtrey, The Falstaff Saga (London, 1927), p. ix.

²² John Webster Spargo, "An Interpretation of Falstaff," Washington University Studies, IX (April, 1922), 131.

²³ Maxwell Baldwin, "The Original of Sir John Falstaff, Believe It or Not," Studies in Philology, XXVII (1930), 230-231.

charges and reinstated. A striking coincidence is the fact that he was the owner of the Boar's Head Tavern so often frequented by Shakespeare's rowdies and accompanied by the crown prince. The opinion that Fastolfe, too, favored Lollardry adds to the speculation of his having been purposefully selected when Shakespeare found it expedient to discontinue the use of the Oldcastle name. Other resemblances between the historic Fastolfe and Shakespeare's Falstaff are noted in their both having been pages in the service of Sir Thomas Mowbray, and in their associations with the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Sir John Oldcastle had also been page to Sir Thomas Mowbray; yet in no sense is Falstaff a dramatization of either of these real historical figures.²⁴

From a majority of the Shakespearian critics Hal, later Henry V, has received full absolution whereas Falstaff has suffered from adverse criticism. In this respect Falstaff can be construed as one of Shakespeare's most unfortunate or most misunderstood characters. However, Falstaff will not be evaluated here since the problem of interpretation will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The Falstaff with whom this study is principally concerned appears as a character only in 1 and 2 Henry IV, and his death is reported in Henry V. The Falstaff of The Merry

24

"Fastolfe, Sir John," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. IX (Chicago, 1946).

Wives of Windsor is obviously not the same man. Goddard points out that with the exception of "a few dying sparks of the original" Falstaff, this later portrayal is of a different man. They are opposites. The Falstaff of The Merry Wives is an incalculably inferior person, whereas the original is the incarnation of wit and readiness.²⁵ Bradley states that The Merry Wives was done hurriedly and probably, as is traditionally accepted, on order of Queen Elizabeth, who wanted her favorite character resurrected and in love.²⁶ Such a reincarnation was an impossible accomplishment for Shakespeare, and this violation of the character of the true Falstaff is no more characteristic of plump Jack than is Ophelia of Fletcher's and Shakespeare's Two Noble Kinsmen another presentation of Othello's all-patient wife.²⁷ A few sentences worthy of the real Falstaff are assigned this imposter; yet Falstaff himself would never have been the victim of the tricks succumbed to by the Falstaff of The Merry Wives. The later Falstaff is not the same character at all; yet many critics have argued over his chronological position in relation to the historical plays. Some of these critics contend that he belongs between 1 and 2 Henry IV, and

²⁵Goddard, pp. 182-183.

²⁶Andrew Cecil Bradley, "The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1909), p. 247.

²⁷Ibid., p. 248.

others place him between 2 Henry IV and Henry V. Bradley states further that the separation of the two characters is now insisted upon in "almost all competent estimates of the character of Falstaff."²⁸

As Goddard points out, the original Falstaff is a dual personality; yet in spite of his duality in his historical role, Falstaff and the later interloper can never be conglomerate.²⁹ Falstaff has no equal in his private Utopia. It is only when he leaves his special world, his private vocation, that he becomes the butt for middle-class tradition. Falstaff cannot remain supremely humorous while seriously attacking feminine virtue. Had he only pretended to this assault, he could have remained loyal to the real Falstaff. But by taking his pursuits seriously, as he does in The Merry Wives, he leaves his "fourth dimensional" world to enter into the real world, and the result is the opposite of the transcendent and imaginative humor of Henry IV. This Falstaff of The Merry Wives is foolish enough to vie with people who take life seriously, and becomes a Falstaff deliberately dethroned by Shakespeare from his high position as Lord of Wit. Shakespeare even closes this play with a sermon on Falstaff delivered by the fairies. Baker says that such an action in Henry IV would be tantamount to "introducing a puritan as

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 247-249.

²⁹ Goddard, p. 175.

chief clown."³⁰ Thus it should be borne in mind that for the purposes of this study, the two characters are distinct and will be treated as such, with the main emphasis being directed toward the original Falstaff of the historical plays.

The King Henry IV plays are really one long play in two parts. The real Aristotelian beginning is found in Richard II and the end is found in King Henry V. If the plays are considered as a sequel to Richard II, then Henry IV is the central figure. If the drama is considered as a preface to Henry V, Prince Hal is the protagonist. But in reading the plays as separate works, they become "the Falstaff plays," as Falstaff easily becomes the most important and the most captivating figure in them, and the comic element easily³¹ overbalances the historical.

The two parts are more than one, however, for there is a completeness within each, and this point is important to grasp as it helps prevent one from falling into the serious misunderstanding of linking Falstaff of The Merry Wives of Windsor with Falstaff of either of these plays. As pointed out earlier, most modern critics, except Stoll, agree that there is no relationship between the witty and resourceful

³⁰ Harry T. Baker, "The Two Falstaffs," Modern Language Notes, XXXIV (1919), 472-473.

³¹ Goddard, p. 161.

Falstaff of the King Henry IV plays and the foolish and helpless Falstaff of the later play.³² Dover Wilson says that Falstaff of The Merry Wives may be left out of account and that the hero bore the name of Falstaff merely for "theatrical expediency, not for dramatic art."³³

In summing up this argument it is repeated that tradition tells that The Merry Wives was written very hastily at the request of Queen Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in love. The play itself bears out the tradition, as the farce comedy has every appearance of being hurriedly written, and it is Shakespeare's only play dealing primarily with contemporary life. Goddard sees Falstaff as both immortal and immoral. He sees Falstaff of The Merry Wives as relating to his predecessor in his being only the "end of an old soak,"³⁴ or the end only of the immoral side of the original Falstaff.

Before taking up the complex problem of interpretation, a preliminary summary of the plot of the Henry IV plays and a brief discussion of Falstaff's death in Henry V are in order. As the primary consideration of the study is with Falstaff, the following summary will deal principally with the comic scenes, and thereby place less emphasis on the historical portions.

³²Edgar Elmer Stoll, Shakespeare Studies, Historical and Comparative in Method (New York, 1927), pp. 455-456.

³³Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (New York, 1944), p. 5.

³⁴Goddard, p. 183.

Falstaff first comes on the stage in the second scene of 1 Henry IV. Henry, Prince of Wales, is conversing with an enormously fat man who is obviously on very familiar terms with the son and heir of King Henry IV. In very few words Shakespeare establishes the facts that this character is a heavy drinker of sack, a huge eater, a ne'er-do-well, and an exceptionally witty man with a fast repartee.

Falstaff's opening question, "Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?"³⁵ is answered by the prince in a mocking and sarcastic vein indicative of his subsequent attitude of tolerance combined with derision, in which is partially foreseen the eventual change of heart at his coronation.

Prince. Thou art so fat-witted, with drinking of old sack and unbuttoning thee after supper and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What the devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack and minutes capons and clocks the tongues of bawds and dials the signs of leaping-houses and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou should be so superfluous to demand the time of the day. 36

Falstaff replies to this censure in comic impudence. He implies that, as one who steals purses, it is reasonable that he should have no interest in the time of day. Night alone is of interest to him and his kind. An exchange of witticisms follows in which Falstaff intimates that the prince has no

³⁵ 1 Henry IV, I, ii, 1.

³⁶ Ibid., ll. 2-13.

more "grace" than would serve as prologue to "an egg and butter." At one moment the fat knight is honesty itself in his complete lack of conscience and in the confession of his rogueries; at another, he professes reform, and with great effrontery blames the prince for his wayward life.

Falstaff. Thou hast the most unsavory similes and art indeed the most comparative, rascalliest, sweet young prince. But Hal, I prithee, trouble me no more with vanity. I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought. . . O, thou hast damnable iteration and art indeed able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive thee for it! Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing; and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over: by the Lord, and I do not, I am a villain: I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom. 37

Prince Hal treats these incriminations and pious admonitions with a deserving contempt and uses Falstaff's own personal dodge of abruptly changing the subject. As the conversation continues, Falstaff's repartees suggest his self-love or love of life for itself alone. He instinctively evades all subjects that threaten his triumphant spirit of fun and his self-complacency. "His very size floats him out of all his difficulties in a sea of rich conceits; and he turns round on the pivot of his convenience, and at a moment's warning."³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., ll. 89-110.

³⁸ William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (New York, 1845), p. 119.

In the court Henry IV's plans for peace and for a crusade to the Holy Land to do penance for his murder of Richard II are interrupted by the uprising of the northern Percys, who had earlier helped Henry to the throne. Hotspur, the hot-headed son of Henry Percy, Lord of Northumberland, eventually leads a rebellion against the king. He is aided by the Archbishop of York, Owen Glendower, Edmund Mortimer, the rightful heir to Richard II, and the valiant Scot, Douglas. This plot, which Hotspur and his kinsmen instigate, threatens to fulfil the prophecy of the Bishop of Carlisle at the deposition of Richard II that "children yet unborn shall feel this day as sharp to them as thorn."³⁹ While Hotspur and his northern barons plot their attack, Prince Hal is plotting with Poins, one of the rogues, to play a practical joke at the expense of Falstaff.

After Sir John and three of his low companions have robbed the travelers at Gadshill, they are themselves set upon and robbed by the Prince and Ned Poins, masked, and disguised in buckram. It is commendable to Falstaff that he alone offers even a token resistance; yet many critics attempt to point out excessive cowardice in Falstaff because of his rout by two armed and far younger men.⁴⁰ In the

³⁹ King Richard II, IV, i, 322-323.

⁴⁰ Stoll, Shakespeare Studies, p. 160.

group's favorite tavern, The Boar's Head in Eastcheap, Falstaff later purposely tells a fabulous story of his daring exploits against as many as fifty-three attackers. Upon Hal's incredulous exclamation at this gross exaggeration, Falstaff continues:

I am a rogue, if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am eight times thrust through the doublet; four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw--ecce signum! . . . if I fought not with fifty of them I am a bunch of radish: if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature . . . I have peppered two of them. . . four rogues in buckram let drive at me. . . 41

Four finally become eleven, and egged on by the prince's derision, Falstaff is led into a hopeless maze of exaggerations and is reduced to abusing his tormentors. The prince's disclosure of the practical joke fails to put Falstaff out of countenance, and his complacency being completely restored upon hearing that the money is intact, he characteristically changes the subject to an immediate celebration. The ensuing fun-making is interrupted by the arrival of a message from the king summoning the prince to battle.

In conference in Wales the rebels plan their invasion and the subsequent division of the country which they are yet to conquer. In the meantime, the king in London has

41

1 Henry IV, II, iv, 182-213.

rebuked Hal for his wild ways, unfavorably comparing his wayward son to the honor-obsessed Hotspur. Prince Hal promises to redeem his reputation by overcoming Hotspur, and the king not only places him in command of a part of the royal forces, but also places a company of foot soldiers under the command of Sir John.

Hotspur's father, the Duke of Northumberland, feigns illness and deserts his allies. Glendower too is delayed for fourteen days, but despite these losses, the rebel faction determines to meet the king's forces under the command of the Earl of Westmoreland, Prince John of Lancaster, and the Crown Prince.

Through the Earl of Worcester and Sir Richard Vernon, high commanders in the rebel army, King Henry offers the rebels a full pardon if they will disband. However, Worcester's suspicions of the king are such that he treacherously conceals the king's offer from his leaders and delivers to them instead a challenge from the king for immediate battle. A furious engagement ensues in which Hal rescues his father from Douglas and then meets and kills the valiant Hotspur.

Shortly before the battle the prince had met Falstaff on the Coventry road with his ragged crew dubbed by Falstaff as "food for powder."⁴² Later at the king's camp in

⁴²
Ibid., IV, ii, 71.

Shrewsbury during the conference between Worcester and Vernon on the one side and the royal leaders on the other, Falstaff makes his classic remark directed toward Worcester: "Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it."⁴³ Such irrepressibility at so crucial a moment is typical of Falstaff.

Immediately following the conference Falstaff, unimpressed by the high negotiations, quips to the prince, "I would 'twere bed-time, Hal, and all well." Hal's reminder to Falstaff that he owed God a death inspires Falstaff to make his famous speech on honor:

'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 prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' 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.

Falstaff has no intention of dying before his time, and in this famous soliloquy he anticipates his later admonition of discretion's being the better part of valor. It is one of the high points of his wit, humor, and drollery. He clearly shows in practice how a man can live without honor, and yet he is admired, so perfect is he in his own way.

⁴³
Ibid., IV, iv, 28.

Shortly after this episode Hal, who has requested the loan of Falstaff's sword, is prevailed upon by the fat knight to take his pistol instead, and, searching his hostler, Hal discovers it to be a bottle of sack. Falstaff cannot resist playing the fool even in the heat of the battle.

Upon moving to a new area Hal encounters Hotspur, and Falstaff's enthusiasm is quickly submerged by Douglas, who attacks him. Falstaff dives to the earth and feigns death, and Douglas moves on. Hal kills Hotspur, and for the first time shows some compassion toward the "dead" Falstaff. Upon his departure Falstaff rises and compliments himself with "the better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life."⁴⁴ He stabs Hotspur in the leg and claims him as his victim. Hal later shows an amused tolerance towards Falstaff's lying relation of his victory, and Falstaff leaves this play carrying Hotspur on his back, self-confident and unabashed and looking for the acclaim that he in no way deserves.

In 2 Henry IV Falstaff comes into the foreground even more than in the first part of the play. A contrast of the number of lines spoken by the leading characters in each part, based on a study by Paul Kaufman and quoted by Law, is given below:

44

Ibid., 1. 120.

Characters	<u>1 Henry IV</u>	<u>2 Henry IV</u>
King Henry IV	341	294
Prince Hal	616	308
Falstaff	688	719
Hotspur	566	. . . ⁴⁵

In all scenes in which Falstaff appears, except the coronation scene, he is the central figure. In both plays there seem to be three central themes along which the action develops. The first two themes are historical, being concerned with (1) the rebellion and (2) the death of Henry IV and the accession of Hal as Henry V. The last is purely imaginative, recounting (3) Falstaff's relations with life, including his thoughts toward his friends and his enemies. Although the three themes are linked to a certain degree, they can be traced separately. In the second part ten scenes are devoted to Falstaff's actions, whereas only nine scenes have to do with history. Also he is portrayed consistently as a man of war experience. In 1 Henry IV the cordial familiarity between Falstaff and the prince is decidedly noticeable. The prince shows less good will, and his tolerance towards Falstaff's low habits is much less in 2 Henry IV.⁴⁶ Sir John remains a highly popular figure and some of his humor is at its

⁴⁵ Robert Adger Law, "Structural Unity in the Two Parts of 'Henry the Fourth,'" Studies in Philology, XXIV (April, 1927), 229.

⁴⁶Clark, p. 88.

highest point, but he does not dominate the scenes with the positive assurance that he exhibited in 1 Henry IV. It may be that Shakespeare recognized the necessity of subordinating the character to protect the balance between the three themes. Brandes advances this idea and states further that Shakespeare wanted to advance the moral character of the prince as a contrast to the deterioration of Falstaff.⁴⁷

Since Falstaff's humor has been illustrated by quotations in the preceding summary, no further emphasis will be placed on that aspect of his character in the following summation of 2 Henry IV. The brief resume below will be more concerned with the main plot of the play and those events which are more pertinent to the interpretation of the overall relationship between Falstaff and Hal.

In Act I, Scene 2, Falstaff first appears in a successful battle of wits with the king's Chief Justice. Falstaff has used his military status as an excuse for not heeding a summons for debt instigated by Mistress Quickly. The end result of the action is Hostess Quickly's discharging the suit and lending Falstaff more money. This scene is convincing proof of Falstaff's ability to gain the trust and goodwill of those with whom he is familiar.⁴⁸ The next scene shows Hal

⁴⁷ George M. C. Brandes, William Shakespeare: A Critical Study (London, 1899), pp. 184-185.

⁴⁸ Hazlitt, p. 123.

and Poins plotting to disguise themselves as waiters at a party given by Falstaff. The two plotters carry out their scheme during which Falstaff drives out Pistol for his drunken swaggering and brawling. Hal's identity is discovered and the ensuing conversations between Hal and Falstaff, as pointed out earlier, do not have the same cordiality as in 1 Henry IV. The prince is then summoned to his father's bedside and Falstaff is called to battle. Hal and Falstaff bid each other farewell for the last time, and from this point on the fortunes of Falstaff seem to decline.

Falstaff, on his way to the royal forces, visits a former schoolmate, Justice Shallow, in order to press soldiers into his company and subsequently accept remuneration for their discharge. His plan is interrupted and he is forced to continue on his way to meet his commanding officer, Prince John, but plans to revisit Shallow at his first opportunity. Next, Prince John behaves very treacherously toward the rebels, slaughtering them after tricking them into laying down their arms. This is the one completely villainous action in the entire cycle. In the engagement Falstaff captures a nobleman, and upon surrendering him to Prince John, Falstaff is treated very disrespectfully by the prince. Prince John, Hal's brother, is presented in a very unfavorable light. Upon returning to Swallow's estate in Gloucestershire, Falstaff borrows a thousand pounds from the justice in anticipation of the influence he is likely to have

with Hal after he is crowned king. It is then that Falstaff learns from Pistol of the accession to the throne in London of his erstwhile friend and playmate. In high expectation he hurries off to London for the coronation. An ensuing scene shows the downfall of Mistress Quickly and Doll Tear-sheet, whom Falstaff promises not only to release from jail but also to revenge by reprisals on their persecutors. The final scene combines serious and comic elements in its pitiless blast and condemnation of Falstaff. It is here that the play becomes tragedy, particularly in regard to the theme of the fortunes of Falstaff.

Falstaff, in the crowd along the streets, triumphantly hails the king: "God save thy grace, King Hal! My royal Hal! . . . God save thee, my sweet boy! . . . My king! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!"⁴⁹

The newly crowned king's heartless wrath is shown by his pitiless public condemnation which follows this acclamation:

I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
 How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
 I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
 So surfeit-swell'd, so old and so profane;
 But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.
 Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace;
 Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape
 For thee thrice wider than for other men.
 Reply not to me with a fool-born jest;
 Presume not that I am the thing I was;
 For God doth know, so shall the world perceive;
 That I have turned away my former self;
 So will I those that kept me company.

⁴⁹ 2 Henry IV, V, v, 41-50.

When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
 Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,
 The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
 Till then, I banish thee, on pain of death,
 As I have done the rest of my misleaders,
 Not to come near our person by ten mile.
 For competence of life I will allow you,
 That lack of means enforce you not to evil:
 And, as we hear you do reform yourselves,
 We will, according to your strengths and qualities,
 Give you advancement. Be it your charge, my lord,
 To see performed the tenour of our word. 50

The procession moves on, and for the first time Falstaff is momentarily staggered. He recovers some assurance in thinking he may be sent for in private, and that night he is sent for, but only to be carried off to Fleet Prison.

It is then that Prince John, the most despised man in the whole play, makes the following atypical observation:

I like this fair proceeding of the king's:
 He hath intent his wonted followers
 Shall be very well provided for;
 But all are banish'd till their conversations
 Appear more wise and modest to the world. 51

Falstaff's death occurs in the second act of King Henry V. In Scene 1 Falstaff's gang is quarreling in the street. Pistol and Hostess Quickly are now man and wife, and Nym is resentful toward both because he had been "troth-plight" to Mistress Quickly at the time Pistol married her. When the quarrel is at its height, Robin, Falstaff's page, summons Mistress Quickly to the sick room in the inn. He suggests at the same time that Bardolph's face between the sheets would serve as an excellent warming pan.

50
Ibid., V, v, 51-75.

51
Ibid., II, 103-107.

The remarks by these few remaining friends are the only source of information concerning Falstaff's condition since his rejection by Hal. Pistol remarks that Falstaff's heart is "fracted and corroborate."⁵² Hostess Quickly states that "the king has killed his heart."⁵³ The little party tries to "condole the knight"⁵⁴ but fails. Pistol announces later in front of the tavern that "Falstaff is dead,"⁵⁵ and Bardolph immediately pays Falstaff one of the most famous compliments in all of Shakespeare's works: "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell!"⁵⁶

Hostess Quickly then relates the death-bed scene and, as she had less reason to grieve over his death than any of those present, the reader is convinced that Falstaff had lovable traits that outweighed his ignoble ones. Her grief is genuine as she says:

Nay, sure, he's not in hell: he's in Arthur's bosom.
A' made a finer end an went away an it had been any
christom child. . . for after I saw him fumble with
the sheets and play with flowers and smile upon his
fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way; for his
nose was as sharp as a pin, and a' babbled of green
fields. . . So a' cried out God, God, God! three or
four times. 57

So passes Falstaff from the scene and from life.

⁵²King Henry V, II, i, 130.

⁵³Ibid., i. 192.

⁵⁴Ibid., i. 133.

⁵⁵Ibid., iii, 5.

⁵⁶Ibid., ii. 7-8.

⁵⁷Ibid., ii. 9-21.

This scene in which Hostess Quickly tells of Falstaff's death is filled with mingled humor and pathos. The unkindness of the newly-crowned king is freely dwelt upon; yet according to a recent interpretation of Leslie Hotson's, the pathos of the lines is limited by a lack of clarity. Sir John may have played "with flowers. . . and babbled of green fields," but Hotson has discovered, through diligent research, a completely new and revolutionary interpretation of the lines. He questioned the substitution of these lines by Lewis Theobald for the original lines in the folios from 1623 to 1635 which read "talk of floures. . . and a table of greene fields." Hotson interprets "table" in its sixteenth-century meaning of "picture," and construes "greene fields" to refer to "Greenfields," the popular appellation of Sir Richard Grenville, the contemporary national hero, who died at the island of Floures in the famous naval engagement commonly called "One-Against-Fifty-Three." Thus Hotson sees Falstaff carried away by his imagination, recreating in his mind the Gadshill fight, and placing himself in the role of Greenfield. Greenfield had been deserted prior to the suicidal engagement at Floures by Admiral Lord Thomas Howard just as Falstaff had imagined himself deserted by Hal. Falstaff counted or "smiled upon his fingers' ends . . . talked of Floures. . . and a table of green fields." Greenfield's ship, the Revenge, was, in reality, one English ship, deserted, and opposed by fifty-three Spanish warships;

Falstaff had been, in his imagination, deserted, and opposed by fifty-three men in buckram. The scene is even more touching in this light. Also, tradition placed Grenville or Greenfield in the Elysian Fields, which parallels Mistress Quickly's intuitively installing Falstaff in Arthur's bosom.⁵⁸

Of all the characters in Shakespeare's works Falstaff is among the most marvellous. He is portrayed with such a fullness and intensity that he almost overcomes the very laws of being. His early popularity is noteworthy. In the Shakespeare Allusion-Book, which summarizes all the best-known references to Shakespeare's works up to 1700, Falstaff had to be treated as a separate entry and is second only to the play Hamlet.⁵⁹ This popularity is all the more astounding when it is realized that Falstaff entered into the story by the classically illegitimate route of comic relief; yet he rapidly grew in complexity and interest. He is first presented as his lower or simpler self; then he develops into a super-Falstaff; from this point, the two sides of his character are presented together, with first one side predominating, later the other.

⁵⁸
Leslie Hotson, "Falstaff's Death and Greenfield's," Times Literary Supplement, April 6, 1950, p. 212.

⁵⁹
John Munro, editor, The Shakespeare Allusion-Book: A Collection of Allusions to Shakespeare from 1591 to 1700, I (London, 1909), 540.

The chief problem of the critics has been to characterize this dual personality, to express their fascination or their detestation. To some Falstaff is only a glutton, liar, and cheat. To others he is the incarnation of charm and freedom. As Goddard points out, it would seem that there are two Falstaffs,⁶⁰ and it is this dual nature that is responsible for the many theories that have been advanced in attempts at a logical interpretation.

The rejection scene at the end of 2 Henry IV is responsible for a large amount of criticism. The feelings of the reader or critic during this scene will depend on his feelings toward Falstaff that he has previously formulated during the reading of the two plays. If one has regarded Falstaff chiefly as an old soak, a coward, and a thief, he can see no injustice in the scene, and feels that the king acted magnanimously. However, if one has keenly enjoyed the Falstaff scenes, as Bradley implies that Shakespeare intended the reader to,⁶¹ and does not feel that Falstaff is only a reprobate, he cannot help feeling a deep resentment toward Henry V and even toward Shakespeare himself.

Some critics feel that Shakespeare let Falstaff run away with the action.⁶² They feel that Shakespeare "overshot

⁶⁰
Goddard, p. 175.

⁶¹
Bradley, p. 251.

⁶²
Henry David Gray, "Shakespeare's Conception of Humor," A Memorial Volume to Shakespeare and Harvey, Texas University Bulletin No. 1701 (Austin, 1917), p. 98.

his mark."⁶³ He created such an extraordinary character and set him so high on his "intellectual throne" that he could not dethrone him.⁶⁴ The reader cannot lose his sympathies for Falstaff, and his heart is inclined to go with Falstaff rather than with the national hero, Henry V.

The secret of Falstaff's transformation is that Shakespeare has bestowed upon him, especially in 1 Henry IV, his own mental perceptions. Falstaff seems to express Shakespeare's own sentiments to such an extent that the reader can never really believe in the utter degeneracy of this rich spirit. Hence Falstaff loses little in the unfolding of the plot in 2 Henry IV, even though he is presented in a less sympathetic manner. It is difficult to lose the first impression that the witty sinner is calumniated and calumniates himself. In the Falstaff of 2 Henry IV one cannot forget the earlier Falstaff of 1 Henry IV, especially when, at intervals, he is continually subjected to eloquent discourses reminiscent of Falstaff's earlier wit and humor. It is only by a close observation that one realizes that in Falstaff, as well as in the prince, there is a contradiction. If this is a fault, it is a fault of genius and an eloquent one, for Falstaff is a character whom the most liberal-minded must condemn to some extent, while even the most conservative moralist is charmed.

⁶³ Bradley, p. 259.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 259.

The numerous and varied opinions held by many critics about Falstaff, Hal, and the light in which Shakespeare wished the reader to perceive them will be the central issues in the remainder of the study. Thus the subsequent chapters will be devoted to a chronological analysis of the major Falstaff-Hal interpretations with particular emphasis on twentieth-century views in order to ascertain the extent to which criticism of the past fifty years conforms with or departs from earlier critical interpretation.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CRITICISM

Before the early part of the sixteenth century, English drama was concerned only with the topic of human salvation, which had been represented in two ways: historically, through the miracle plays; or allegorically, by means of the morality plays. In both these types of plays the forces of evil were given free play provided the requisite of poetic justice was fulfilled in the end. It is likely that the Elizabethan audience viewed the Falstaff plays in this light; yet even a few of the earliest critics did not limit Falstaff to this personification of vice.

As early as 1598 Francis Meres recognized in Shakespeare's plays the work of genius. He believed that they excelled everything that had been written previously, including the literature of the ancient Greek classicists. However, neither 1 Henry IV nor 2 Henry IV was included among the twelve early plays cited by Meres in his Palladis Tamia, 1598.¹

In the seventeenth century allusions to Falstaff were far more numerous than to any other Shakespearian character,²

¹Augustus Ralli, A History of Shakesperian Criticism, I (London, 1932), 1.

²Munro, II, 540.

and the terms in which he is referred to are not ambiguous. In 1668 Dryden described him as "old, fat, merry, cowardly, drunken, amorous, vain, and lying." Yet Dryden perceived that Falstaff's individuality was of a separate nature:

That wherein he is singular in his wit, or those things he says. . . unexpected by the audience; his quick evasions when you imagine him surprised, which, as they are extremely diverting of themselves, so receive a great addition from his person. ³

Nicholas Rowe wrote that even though Shakespeare had presented Falstaff as a thief, as "lying, cowardly, . . . and in . . . every way vicious, he had given him so much wit as to make him almost too agreeable."⁴ Most of the critics of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries wrote in this vein. There was usually no mention of Falstaff's being a personification of Evil, although his personal vices were pointed out. All of these early critics until Morgann in 1777 called attention to Falstaff's cowardice.

Two mid-eighteenth-century critics deserve mention before Morgann. Corbyn Morris, in his Essays on Wit in 1744, presented by far the most complimentary portrayal of Falstaff up to this time. His essay concentrates on Falstaff's higher

³ John Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Essays of John Dryden, edited by W. P. Ker, I (Oxford, 1926), 84.

⁴ William Shakespeare, Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, edited by Samuel Burkett Hemingway (Philadelphia, 1936), p. 433.

qualities of wit and humor, mentioning also his gentility and good sense. Morris saw no "fierceness, malice, reserve, or peevishness lurking in. . . [Falstaff's] heart. . . He is the most delightful swaggerer in all nature. You must love him for his own sake" as well as for "his own talent. He has nothing to disgust you and everything to give you joy."⁵ Like his predecessors, however, Morris attributed cowardice to Falstaff.

Dr. Johnson asked himself how he could describe the "unimitated, unimitable Falstaff." He saw Falstaff as a mixture of sense and "vice; of sense which can be admired but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised but hardly detested. . . ." Yet Johnson saw Falstaff as corrupt and despicable, nevertheless possessing "the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety."⁶ Johnson was one of the first critics to point out the unity between 1 Henry IV and 2 Henry IV.⁷ He felt that it was impossible to understand the character of either Falstaff or Prince Hal without a keen awareness of the continuity of the two plays.⁸ In Chapter I of this

⁵Ibid., p. 404.

⁶Walter Raleigh, Johnson on Shakespeare (Oxford, 1908), p. 125.

⁷Ibid., p. 113.

⁸Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff, p. 4.

study it was stated that there is a certain completeness in each play. This separate individuality does exist separately, but within the total unity of the combined plays. In this study Falstaff will be judged by the action in the entire Falstaff cycle.

To Falstaff's record of possessing the greatest number of early allusions can be added the record of receiving the first full discussion of any Shakespearian character. Thomas Seccombe, in the Dictionary of National Biography, says that for style and profound appreciation for Shakespeare, the essay in 1777 by Maurice Morgann has never been surpassed.⁹ In this year of 1777 the controversy began.

Morgann stated that he realized that Shakespeare, through appearances, had involved Falstaff in circumstances of "apparent dishonor."¹⁰ Falstaff was called a coward and was seen "in the very act of running away." The "lies and braggadocioes" into which he was betrayed are the usual "concomitants of cowardice in military men and pretenders to valour." Morgann stated that these characteristics were "thrust upon our notice as the subjects of mirth."¹¹ Morgann's grounds for his belief that Falstaff was not a coward were of a different

⁹ Thomas Seccombe, "Morgann, Maurice," Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XIII (Oxford, 1900).

¹⁰ Maurice Morgann, An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff, new edition (London, 1825), p. 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

nature, and he asked the reader's patience while he carefully and fully set forth what lay so "dispersed. . . and so purposely obscured."¹² He felt that much of Falstaff's character was puzzling and likely to lead to misunderstanding, but that Shakespeare did not intend cowardice to be the impression created on the reader's mind. Morgann perceived a higher nature in Falstaff beneath the apparent one, and he felt that this difference between reality and appearance was the "true point of humour in the character, and the source of all our laughter and delight."¹³

The central issue of Morgann's essay was that Falstaff was no coward. He felt that Shakespeare did not intend to make cowardice an essential part of Falstaff's constitution. The essay was also very important in another respect. It revealed for the first time how brilliant and far-reaching was Shakespeare's intellect. Morgann revealed by his method of interpretation that the Falstaff plays were pulsating with life. Seemingly careless words by Poins were subtly dramatic; Lancaster's harshness towards Falstaff reflected Lancaster's own treacherous character. Morgann proved that the play was a work of great inspiration and the finest art. Nichol Smith, who reprinted Morgann's essay in his Eighteenth Century

¹² Ibid., p. 4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 15.

Essays on Shakespeare, 1903, was quoted by Boswell as describing the essay "as the true forerunner of romantic criticism of Shakespeare."¹⁴

Although Morgann's ideas were to be accepted by the majority of the major nineteenth-century critics, they are not accepted by all today. Nor were they unopposed in his own day. Richard Stack wrote an essay entitled An Examination of Morgann's Essay (1788), in which he challenged all that Morgann had purposed. He argued that Falstaff was "a natural coward, a rogue, cheat, liar, and profligate"; yet he closed by saying that Falstaff "pleases, charms, and thoroughly engages our hearts."¹⁵

In answer to an enquirer, Johnson expressed his opinion on Morgann's essay. "Why, sir," Boswell quoted him as saying, "we shall have the man come forth again; and as he has proved Falstaff to be no coward, he may prove Iago to be a very good character."¹⁶ Malone, who disliked Morgann's essay, recorded in his copy of the essay, now in the Bodleian Library, another retort by Johnson to a query about Morgann:

¹⁴ James Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson, edited by G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, IV (Oxford, 1934), 515.

¹⁵ Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 417.

¹⁶ Boswell, p. 192, note.

"All he shd. [could] say was, that if Falstaff was not a coward, Shakspere knew nothing of his art."¹⁷

Tom Davies, by whom Morgann's essay was originally published anonymously,¹⁸ was one of the few critics of Morgann's own period who supported him.¹⁹

Mackenzie stressed Falstaff's grossness at the expense of his charm. He saw Falstaff as witty and sagacious, but also gross-minded. He considered Falstaff a coward by principle rather than one from weakness. Falstaff sensed his danger, but reacted according to its degree, not from any sense of fear. Mackenzie felt that Shakespeare had subjected wisdom to the control of buffoonery.²⁰ He overlooked the dual personality and the sublimity that existed within the coarse exterior.

From the preceding analyses it is seen that, with the exception of the opinions of Morgann and Davies, the early criticisms of Falstaff were rather general and did not deal with the possibility of the sublime side of his character, which was to occupy the bulk of later Falstaff criticism. Almost all critics agreed on his charm and his ability to

¹⁷
Ibid., p. 515.

¹⁸
Ibid.

¹⁹
Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 414.

²⁰
Ibid.

please, but, except for Morgann and Davies, they condemned his grossness, and particularly his cowardice. Prior to Morgann, Corbyn Morris was the first to recognize Falstaff's higher qualities, and was probably an influence on Morgann's later interpretation. In the light of later criticism, Morgann was the most important voice of the century. Mackenzie and a few other critics who partially accepted Morgann's view fall into a transitional group which lies between eighteenth-century interpretation and nineteenth-century romanticism. In this group were found Mary Wortley Montagu and Horace Walpole. It was the latter who said that he held "a perfect comedy to be the perfection of human composition, and . . . believed firmly that fifty Iliads and Aeneids could be written sooner than such a character as Falstaff."²¹

By the end of the century it can be seen that only one real trail-blazer in Falstaffian criticism had arisen. This luminary was Morgann. Mackenzie was inspired, but the theory proposed by Morgann had not as yet been followed up.

Schlegel neither followed Morgann nor anticipated the romantics. In his Lectures (1909), he portrayed Falstaff as lecherous, dissolute, lying, and cowardly. He called him a flatterer to the faces of his friends, but a slanderer of them behind their backs. He felt that Falstaff relied purely on

²¹ Horace Walpole, The Letters of Horace Walpole, edited by Peter Cunningham, VI (London, 1891), 395.

his wit for his livelihood. Schlegel, rather paradoxically, continued by saying that Falstaff would have made an admirable companion for youthfulness, idleness, and levity.²²

In the nineteenth century the study of Falstaff became even more popular, and early in the century, definite schools of interpretation arose, the most influential of which was the one that took form from the spark created by Morgann.

Coleridge was the first nineteenth-century critic to support Morgann, and the first major influence of the nineteenth-century romantic school of interpretation. Although he considered Falstaff as an example of complete moral depravity, he saw him as such a superior mentality that he outwitted all whom he met in spite of their fancied superiority.²³ He saw Falstaff as no coward, but only as a pretended coward merely for the purpose of testing the credulity of his associates. He was a liar for the same reason, and for the purpose of creating a humorous situation. According to Coleridge, he was not a chronic prevaricator.²⁴

Charles Lamb was the second major critic of the nineteenth century, but his comments on Falstaff were too limited

²² August Wilhelm Schlegel, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, translated by John Black (London, 1914), pp. 426-427.

²³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets, edited by T. Ashe (London, 1884), p. 8.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 28.

to warrant inclusion in this work devoted chiefly to Falstaffian criticism.

William Hazlitt was the third great critic of this period to write on Shakespeare, and the second to discuss Falstaff. Like Coleridge, Hazlitt had a great influence on the later critics of his century. He praised Falstaff even more than Coleridge, and saw him as the most substantial comic character ever invented. In Hazlitt's eyes, Falstaff was no mere sensualist, since Falstaff lived as much in his imagination as in reality, and his sensuality did not destroy his other faculties, but stimulated his brain. Falstaff's imagination continued on in full play after his senses had done with a situation, and he excelled much higher in exaggerated descriptions than in fact. His actions had no mischievous consequences. His wit was made sharper by his perfect presence of mind and by his absolute self-possession.²⁵

Hazlitt also pointed out that the heroic action, particularly in 2 Henry IV, equaled the comic. The prince and Hotspur were contrasted as the essence of chivalry, and Hazlitt felt that Hotspur was the greater man because he was more unfortunate.²⁶ Hazlitt condemned Hal's treatment of Falstaff, and saw Falstaff as the better man.²⁷ He condemned the young

²⁵ Hazlitt, pp. 117-119.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

King Henry V as careless, dissolute, ambitious, and as having no idea of right or wrong. He pictured Henry V as representing brute force combined with religious hypocrisy. Since Henry could not govern, he initiated an aggressive war on France. Hazlitt felt such actions portrayed the history of kingly power from the beginning of the world. To all but Falstaff, might was right in that chivalrous age.²⁸ Hazlitt was a forerunner of much of modern criticism and, as such, he deserves a high position in Falstaffian criticism.

William Maginn, who was close to both Coleridge and Hazlitt, held that Falstaff had no more cowardice than did Douglas. Neither did Maginn see Falstaff as a glutton since he was never known²⁹ to overeat, nor was he ever seen drunk.

Walter Bagehot's criticism, close to that of Coleridge, offered nothing to add to the romantic view; yet he is included because of his classic statement:

If most men were to save up all the gaiety of their whole lives, it would come to the gaiety of about one speech in Falstaff. 30

In this passage Bagehot paid Shakespeare as high a compliment as Bardolph did Falstaff upon Falstaff's death in Henry V.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

²⁹ Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 419.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 420.

³¹ See p. 28.

Herman Ulrici did not agree with the romantic interpretation, and viewed the Henry IV plays as similar to the historical miracle plays. He saw poetic justice in the rejection scene. He felt that Falstaff amused, but should have been punished for his vice. Ulrici stressed the propriety of the divine right of kings, even though he recognized the shortcomings of Henry IV. He disagreed with Hazlitt on the harshness of Henry V in his rejection of Falstaff. He thought that Henry V had an inherent noble disposition, and that he did right in choosing an honorable life, and in so doing such acquaintances as Falstaff and his crew had to be discarded. He felt that Falstaff received his just deserts.³²

Ulrici observed that Shakespeare had presented a picture of war in 1 Henry IV and politics in 2 Henry IV. He intimated that Shakespeare was satirizing these two leading pursuits of the nobility.³³ He saw deficiencies in Henry IV chiefly resulting from his earlier crimes, because of which he led an unhappy and tragic life. Ulrici felt that the retributive justice did not extend to Hal, however, who through his own efforts³⁴ became an honorable king.

The next major critic of the romantic school of interpretation was Henry N. Hudson, who appears to follow Coleridge's

³²Herman Ulrici, Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: and His Relation to Calderon and Goethe (London, 1846), pp. 378-279.

³³Ibid., p. 377.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 369-372.

ideas very closely. Hudson attributed Falstaff's success to his "amazing fund of good sense."³⁵ He praised Falstaff's wit as being not limited to specific fields like the wit of other men, but supreme in any field. Like Coleridge, Hudson did not consider Falstaff cowardly, but was persuaded that Sir John, at Gadshill, suspected the identity of his antagonists; yet he determined to fall in with the joke for the purpose of making "sport of the prince and himself."³⁶ Hudson agreed with Mackenzie in surmising that Falstaff's cowardice was more a principle than a weakness, and that he sensed danger, but knew no fear. After his fall to earth before Douglas in order to save his life, his wits were immediately at work, scheming to convert the fall into a financially profitable encounter. Surely his cowardice was not of a kind to interfere to any extent with the sharpness of his reasoning faculties. Hudson pointed out that Falstaff's sagacity never deserted him whether in pleasure or in danger. He also called attention to Falstaff's amazing calmness when confronted with danger and death all around him. That Falstaff's humor continued unabated, seemed to Hudson hardly reconcilable with the charges of cowardice generally attributed to him.³⁷

³⁵Henry N. Hudson, Shakespeare; His Life, Art, and Characters, 4th ed., II (Boston, 1872), 84.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 86-87.

³⁷Ibid., p. 94.

Falstaff impressed Hudson as acting a part, insomuch as the reader's consciousness of right or wrong stayed out of his immediate enjoyment of the play. Falstaff's art was a part of himself, and he could not lay it aside. When he had no one else to entertain, he had to continue the act for his own amusement. He was not respected, but neither did he concern himself with self-respect. The reader should not apply moral tests to Falstaff and his art, but should surrender to his fascinations.³⁸

Hudson recognized the cruelty in Henry's rejection, but he justified his action by Falstaff's earlier harsh treatment of Justice Shallow. Hudson felt that Shakespeare had to find some way to separate the two former boon companions; yet Hudson did not elaborate on this theory as he did on his other speculations. Finally, he saw Sir John as a multitudinous man who could "spin fun enough out of his marvellous brain to make all the world 'laugh and grow fat.'"³⁹

Victor Hugo interpreted Falstaff as a Caliban with the mind of Puck. He then compared Falstaff to Rabelais' Panurge, and saw a vivid satire on life within the drama of the plays, with Falstaff as the buffoon.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴⁰

Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 420.

Swinburne criticized Hugo severely, and wrote that Falstaff was as superior to Cervantes' Sancho Panza as Sancho was superior to Panurge. Panurge was the embodiment of lust and gluttony, and knew only self-love. Sancho was capable of love, but not to the extent that Falstaff was. Falstaff died from love. In Henry V, Act II, Scene 1, the Hostess gave the real reason for his death with the words, "The king has killed his heart." He compared Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare and concluded with "The greatest of these is Shakespeare."⁴¹

Swinburne praised Morgann and the thoroughness of his Essay. He felt that Morgann's arguments stood by themselves, and needed no further elaboration.⁴²

Sir Sidney Lee anticipated the twentieth-century outlook when he wrote that Falstaff's "perennial attraction" was the "personality. . . with which Shakespeare's imaginative power [had] clothed him."⁴³ Lee forgave Falstaff all of his indulgences and offenses and felt that these shortcomings were adequately purged by his "colossal wit and jollity, while the contrast between his old age and his irreverent way of life

⁴¹ Algernon Charles Swinburne, A Study of Shakespeare (London, 1920), p. 109.

⁴² Ibid., p. 111.

⁴³ Sir Sidney Lee, A Life of William Shakespeare, 14th ed. (New York, 1931), p. 245.

. . . supplied that tinge of melancholy which . . . was inseparable from the highest manifestations of humor."⁴⁴

In 1896 Boas saw Falstaff as the "greatest comic figure in ancient or modern literature."⁴⁵ He stated that Falstaff, like Don Quixote, was far more than a mere humorous creation. He was one of the most "complex of human beings and could only be described in seemingly contradictory antitheses."⁴⁶ He wrote that when a character could be described only by a series of paradoxes as used by Morgann and his followers, the baffling problem of interpretation was seen to be so subtle that only the most careful analysis could hope to solve it only partially.⁴⁷

Boas went on to say that Falstaff turned his irresistible weapon, humor, against the moral law of the world. Falstaff tried to dispense with all unpleasant or awkward facts through the creation of humor. Even his bodily appearance was a factor here as it also created mirth. Falstaff derived infinite pleasure in being able to make Hal laugh, whereas he could not tolerate the cold-blooded Prince John, in whom there was no laughter.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 245-246.

⁴⁵Frederick S. Boas, Shakespeare and His Predecessors (New York, 1904), p. 273.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 274-275.

Ralli cited Boas as believing that the personal issues in the plays were more important than the political, and that the king was not the center of the action. Henry IV's ambition and diplomacy could not bring him success, as man or king, or give him any inner peace. He pointed out that Northumberland was a foil, in whom caution and policy degenerated into cowardice. Boas thought that Shakespeare showed, through Henry IV, how the exclusive pursuit of material success would turn to bitterness even in the efforts of a king. Boas, like others of the century, saw Henry V as simple and sincere and possessing the grandeur of a king. ⁴⁹

⁵⁰Dowden and ⁵¹Brandes, both of whom were often associated with the romantic school of Coleridge, Hazlitt, Hudson, and others, had interpretations so similar that they will be offered together. They saw Falstaff as a rascal of genius. Brandes called him "one of the brightest and wittiest spirits England has ever produced." ⁵² He was always superior to his surroundings, always resourceful, and because of his inventive effrontery, never out of countenance. He sinned, but was so far above hypocrisy that all his actions were

⁴⁹ Ralli, II, 119-120.

⁵⁰ Edward Dowden, Shakespeare; A Critical Study of His Mind and Art (New York, 1880), pp. 325-327.

⁵¹ Brandes, pp. 179-187.

⁵² Ibid., p. 183.

lovable. Thus he charmed everyone even though he was the butt for the wit of all. Brandes saw Falstaff as being neither "led astray" by Hal, nor as the "misleader of youth,"⁵³ whom Hal made him out to be. However, he did see malicious intent in the prince. He felt that in 1 Henry IV Falstaff was a purely comical figure; yet he believed that Shakespeare felt the necessity of contrasting the moral strength of the prince's nature with the worthlessness of his Eastcheap companions. For this reason Brandes believed that Shakespeare let Falstaff deteriorate. Falstaff became coarser and his conduct less defensible in 2 Henry IV.⁵⁴

Both Dowden and Brandes thought that Shakespeare intended the audience to see a justification in Henry V's rejection of Falstaff. Henry V was the English national hero, and both critics felt that Shakespeare intended the reader to accept the morality of self-reform. Henry V later started an aggressive war, caused a hundred years of hardship on both England and France, and massacred thousands of French prisoners. Brandes, Dowden, and all nineteenth-century critics felt that Shakespeare must have condoned all of these actions.

The preceding study of the nineteenth-century critics shows that these critics felt that self-reform was the

⁵³1 Henry IV, IV, iv, 453-454.

⁵⁴Brandes, p. 184.

determining factor in life, and that morals and unconditional duty were necessary requisites to a good life. They felt that Shakespeare was as moral as he was aesthetic and intellectual. For these reasons criticism of the nineteenth century was unanimous in appreciating the artistry of Falstaff, while it unanimously approved the morality of Henry V. Falstaff's aesthetic nature had been recognized and appreciated, as had some serious shortcomings and actual degrading characteristics in the prince. Coleridge, Hazlitt, Hudson, and Brandes voiced the highest praise for Falstaff, and, in doing so, they disregarded all earlier criticisms but that of Morgann.

These critics were the first to be concerned with a poetic meaning within the play. The discovery of this poetic meaning led to much philosophic speculation which concerned character interpretations as well as the possible poetic meaning with which Shakespeare's motivating genius was primarily concerned.

Although the nineteenth century saw a further development of Morgann's ideas, its chief failing was in its lack of a sound philosophical argument concerning Falstaff, Hal, and the plays themselves. There was much speculation and opinion on the sublimity of Falstaff's character. A dual personality was discovered in both of the leading protagonists, Falstaff and Hal. Falstaff was recognized as the

better man in everything but honesty and personal morality. Yet no organized philosophy developed among nineteenth-century critics that could satisfactorily relate these discoveries to their conception of the central theme of the play. The nineteenth century failed to offer any corresponding new theme that might better suit the other discoveries that they had made concerning the personalities of Hal and Falstaff. The older miracle plays, although apparently not discussed in connection with the Henry IV plays during this century, still seemed to have some influence upon the critics' point of view. It seems that the critics took for granted the poetic justice in the punishment of open and obvious moral wrongs, but it did not occur to them to contrast these openly confessed sins of Falstaff's to the hypocritical sins of Hal, both as prince and later as Henry V. They took for granted that Shakespeare was presenting Henry V as heroic, and failed to see that there is the possibility of a far deeper meaning in the relationships between Hal and Falstaff, and between Henry V and Falstaff. This oversight does not mean that they were in error, or that the later developed interpretations of the relationships between the two were correct; it only implies that before the twentieth century there did not exist an acceptable philosophical conception of theme that could coincide perfectly with their interpretations of the characters.

CHAPTER III

TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISM

Falstaffian criticism in the twentieth century can be divided into three general chronological groups. The first group is comprised of A. C. Bradley, Walter Raleigh, F. W. Chandler, John Masefield and others who wrote in the period from the turn of the century to World War I, and who followed and expanded the views of Maurice Morgann. They also followed some of the interpretations of Falstaff that had been expressed in the nineteenth century by Coleridge and Hazlitt. However, they reacted against the idea of the traditional morality found in most of these critics' interpretations of the two plays. Prince Henry was losing much of his heroic significance; and Falstaff was gaining favor as a truly noble soul, through which Shakespeare expressed some of his own philosophy toward life.

In the second chronological group of twentieth-century critics are found Elmer Edgar Stoll, J. A. R. Mariott, Arthur Quiller-Couch, J. B. Priestley, E. K. Chambers, Henry B. Charlton, and many others who were the leading Falstaffian scholars between World War I and World War II.

The last group of critics includes those who have written from World War II to the present date--such

contemporary authorities as Edmund Spencer, Hardin Craig, and Harold C. Goddard.

The discussion of the twentieth-century critics and their opinions will be taken up in the chronological order as outlined above. However, there are two outstanding schools of thought in the twentieth century headed by two of the most prominent scholars in Shakespearian criticism, A. C. Bradley and Elmer Edgar Stoll. Since these two leading authorities' interpretations are diametrically opposed to each other, the majority of the critics will be indicated as belonging to one of the two schools of thought that resulted from their theories.

Not all critics can be so easily classified, however, and their points of view will belong to no particular group. The opinions of one or two critics may be the nucleus around which a minor group is developing. One such group includes E. M. W. Tillyard and J. W. Spargo, whose interpretations coincide with the probable Elizabethan conception. They and other revolutionary critics will be designated as not conforming to either the school of Bradley or Stoll.

The chapter will conclude with Goddard's recent and unique exegesis of the theme of the plays and his explanation of the dual nature of Falstaff. Goddard very definitely follows Morgann and Bradley, and gives them full credit for their influence in his exposition; at the same time, he

combines psychology and an ingenious poetic insight with a scholarly knowledge of the text of the plays to arrive at his conclusions. His interpretations may very well be the beginning of a third major group of thought. He most assuredly will not be ignored.

Modern Shakespearian criticism began with the lectures and writings of A. C. Bradley. He was possibly the greatest of all the English Shakespearian critics, and after Morgann, the second great revolutionary in critical interpretation of Falstaff. He combined "wide philosophic outlook with grasp of detail,"¹ and he never forgot that Shakespeare was not only an Elizabethan playwright, but also a man of the most comprehensive mind and soul. He believed that Shakespeare put into his plays far more than was needed to please a sixteenth-century audience. He felt certain that Shakespeare created men and women, not mere characters for a two-hour performance; and it was with this character interpretation that Bradley was chiefly concerned.

Bradley's stature is recognized today by even those critics who disagree with his aims or with his conclusions. His mind was capable of coping with the fundamentally poetic world created by Shakespeare. He never offered mere philosophy and always based his criticism on a precise and exhaustive knowledge of the text. Much has been discovered by the

¹
Ralli, II, 200.

"specially Shakespearian quality"² of his mind and his particularly ingenious poetic insight. He looked upon Shakespeare primarily as a poet. Of all the English critics, he was the ablest interpreter of the poetic meaning that makes Shakespeare one of the greatest interpreters of human life in all history. Bradley's expositions clarified the central themes in several of Shakespeare's plays, the poetic meaning of which had formerly been misunderstood.³ The Oxford Lectures On Poetry (1909) contain three lectures on Shakespeare, one of which, "The Rejection of Falstaff," offers new explanations for the problems of interpretation involved in the Falstaff plays.

Bradley was the first critic concerned with why Shakespeare ended his drama with a scene which pained the reader. He discarded, as unworthy of consideration, the idea that Shakespeare intended that the reader feel a disgust for Falstaff throughout the plays so that he could derive pleasure from the rejection scene. He felt it was a waste of time to argue with readers who could feel nothing more than disgust for the character of Falstaff.⁴

Bradley rejected the usual nineteenth-century interpretation of the prince. Following Hazlitt, he saw much in Henry that offset his few good traits.⁵

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 202.

⁴ Bradley, p. 256.

⁵ See pp. 43-44.

Bradley pointed out that Hal's rejection was in keeping with his policy-driven character, and that the reader's natural conclusion was that Shakespeare intended that he take offense at Hal's action. Bradley said this conclusion was erroneous since it implied that the play ended happily.

It was pointed out in Chapter I that the reader who had enjoyed the Falstaff scenes, and who did not condemn Falstaff, resented Hal's action in the rejection scene. Bradley felt that the resentment was heightened by Hal's sermon that accompanied the rejection, and by his subsequent action in having Falstaff locked up in Fleet Prison. Bradley also thought that this resentment was re-awakened when, in King Henry V, the reader learned that Falstaff died of a broken heart. He then stated that Shakespeare intended this series of events to be so tragic that not even Falstaff's humor could surmount them.⁶

Bradley then offered what he believed to have been Shakespeare's intentions. He thought that Shakespeare had meant for the play to end pleasantly. Thus the reader was expected to have lost his sympathy toward Falstaff during the falling action in 2 Henry IV, and to have been prepared to accept the rejection as Falstaff's just deserts. Bradley said Shakespeare "missed what he aimed at."⁷ When the time

⁶ Bradley, pp. 253-260.

⁷ Ibid., p. 259.

came for the reader to look at Falstaff in a serious light and to see him as a checkmated intriguer, the reader could not make the necessary change in his attitude. Bradley suggested that the reader might have wished Henry "a glorious reign and much joy of his crew and hypocritical politicians, but that his heart went with Falstaff to Arthur's bosom or wheresomever he is."⁸

Bradley felt that Hal lost most of his wit in 2 Henry IV, and he surmised that Hal's wit and humor depended on his association with Falstaff. Bradley disagreed with the critics who had seen in Henry, Shakespeare's own ethical code and his ideal man. Henry did not have "that light upon the brow which at once transfigured. . . Hamlet and marked. . . his doom."⁹ A particular failing of Henry's was his readiness at all times to use other people as a means for furthering his own ends. He started an aggressive war, as his father had advised him, merely to keep his nobles occupied. He obtained the sanction of the church in his unholy war against France, knowing that the Archbishop desired the war to prevent the spoliation of the church. Hal himself explained in his first soliloquy in Henry IV that his low tavern life was only a scheme on his part to win greater glory later. Bradley saw no affection in Hal for anyone,

⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

⁹ Ibid., p. 254.

"such affection as. . . [was recognized] at a glance in Hamlet and Horatio, Brutus and Cassius, and many more."¹⁰

According to Bradley, Hal's rejection of Falstaff was "in perfect keeping with Hal's character. . . and . . . [the reader] ought not to feel surprised at it."¹¹

Of Falstaff Bradley said that he was as amusingly absurd as many other great humorous characters, but that his preeminence lay chiefly in his abundance of humorous and ridiculous traits, of which no one was more aware than Falstaff himself. Falstaff remained continually in his bliss, and the reader shared his glory. Because he shared Falstaff's feelings, the reader was "made happy by him and [laughed] with him."¹² Bradley then brought out the pertinent observation that the ease and enjoyment of life that was Falstaff's were not characteristic of a mere man of appetite, but those of a humorist of real genius.

Instead of being comic to the reader and serious to himself . . . [Falstaff was] more ludicrous to himself than to [the reader] and he . . . [made] himself out more ludicrous than he . . . [was] in order that he and others may laugh . . . It . . . [was] this bliss of freedom gained in humour. . . [that was] the essence of Falstaff. 13

¹⁰
Ibid., p. 258.

¹¹
Ibid.

¹²
Ibid., p. 261.

¹³
Ibid., p. 262.

This humorous superiority over everything serious, and the freedom it engendered, was, to Bradley, the main source of the reader's delight; yet Bradley showed that Falstaff's freedom was limited in two ways. For one thing he was stung by any serious reflection or "imputation on his courage. . . and he. . . could not rid himself entirely of respect for all that he. . . professed to ridicule."¹⁴ Secondly, Falstaff was in the flesh and could not live without some means of income. Because of this necessity for food and drink his purse suffered "from consumption, a disease for which he. . . could find no remedy."¹⁵ Because of the necessity for money, he was driven to evil deeds, all of which were consistent with the immoral side of his character, and in itself created an ugly yet human picture.¹⁶

Bradley expressed the opinion that these evil deeds, when seen in the humorous atmosphere of the play, were not to be regarded morally any more than were the misdeeds of Punch or Reynard the Fox. The reader should not exactly ignore them, but occupy himself only with their comic aspect.

Bradley concluded his essay by¹⁷ disclosing his ideas concerning Shakespeare's aims and his success in accomplishing

¹⁴
Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁵
Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁶
Ibid.

¹⁷
Ibid.

what he set out to do. Bradley indicated that Shakespeare intended the plays to be mainly historical, and their chief hero to be Prince Henry. Hence, in the course of the action, Henry's finer qualities were to have been revealed; Falstaff, finally, had to be humbled, and he must no longer be seen as the invincible Lord of Wit and Humor, but as an object of
 18
 ridicule.

According to Bradley, Shakespeare did not fully succeed in his aim. In 2 Henry IV, Henry and Falstaff were separated as often as possible, and less emphasis was placed on the relationship between the two. Falstaff's immoral side was more often manifested, while Henry's virtues were exhibited. Nonetheless, in spite of Shakespeare's efforts, the reader fails to forsake his attitude of humor for one of seriousness, or to change his feeling of sympathy for one of disgust. Bradley said that Shakespeare was too much of an artist to use the only method that could have succeeded. He felt that Shakespeare would have had to convert Falstaff into the Falstaff of The Merry Wives for the reader to accept the rejection scene with no regrets. Bradley concluded his essay by stating that he believed that Shakespeare, in the creation of Falstaff, overreached himself.

He was caught up in the wind of his own genius, and carried so far that he could not descend to earth at the selected spot. . . . However the achievement

was Falstaff himself and the conception of that freedom of soul, a freedom illusory only in part, and attainable only by a mind which had received from Shakespeare's own the inexplicable touch of infinity which he bestowed on Hamlet and Macbeth and Cleopatra, but denied to Henry the Fifth. 19

Bradley was the progenitor of one of the two modern schools of thought on Falstaffian interpretation. Included among his followers are such well-known figures as Walter Raleigh, John Masefield, Albert H. Tolman, J. B. Priestley, H. B. Charlton, Hazelton Spencer, and Harold C. Goddard. Each of these critics, and others, will be discussed separately in the remainder of the chapter according to their chronological position in the century.

The father of the opposing school of thought was Elmer Edgar Stoll, whose views, and those of his followers, will be considered chronologically and not as a group.

In addition to these opposing schools of interpretation there are found such men as J. W. Spargo, E. M. W. Tillyard, and J. Dover Wilson who hold separate ideas, unrelated to either group. Their ideas do not entirely conform to each other's; yet all three related the Henry IV plays to the miracle or morality plays. They, too, will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Finally, a few critics, such as Brander Matthews or Arthur Quiller-Couch, who do not conform to any of the above

groups, will be included and pointed out as not following any previously developed trend of thought.

Following the theories of Morgann and Bradley was Walter Raleigh, who felt that Falstaff dominated the two plays from his first appearance. Raleigh said that the prince was invariably inferior to Falstaff in both wit and humor. Henry was "restrained, formal, full of fatigues and necessities, and ambitions; whereas Falstaff. . .²⁰ [was] free and natural, the home of zest and ease." Raleigh accused the prince of hypocrisy and treachery, and contrasted Hal's worldly ambition to Falstaff's world of "make-believe and fiction, all²¹ invented for delight." Hence Falstaff, after confusing all the moral issues by his humor, attracted the sympathies of the majority of the readers.

Raleigh called Falstaff a "comic Hamlet, stronger in practical resource, and hardly less rich in thought. He was in love with life as Hamlet was out of love with it [and] he was never for a moment entangled in the web of his own de-²²ceits." Raleigh concluded his discussion by saying that Shakespeare had to put Falstaff to death in Henry V in order

²⁰ Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, English Men of Letters (New York, 1907), p. 187.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., pp. 188-189.

to set Henry V free. No serious action could have been attended by an audience as long as Falstaff was in the background.²³

F. W. Chandler, in the Tudor Shakespeare (1911), is quoted in the New Variorum as having said that Falstaff was "a strange and fascinating bundle of humors, a creature of manifold incongruities. . . He was a combination rogue, clown, parasite, satyr, and miles gloriosus, but felt that he . . . [rose] superior to each."²⁴ Falstaff delightfully chose any role that pleased him. Like the child at play, Falstaff pretended: he pretended to have been led astray by the prince; he pretended to have conquered Douglas and Hotspur; and he pretended to have been robbed by Mistress Quickly. Chandler thought that the only time Falstaff was serious was when he gave his famous soliloquy on honor. At all other times he played a "merry game of make-believe."²⁵ Chandler was a follower of the Morgann-Bradley school of interpretation.

In 1913 Stopford A. Brooke wrote that Shakespeare was being ironical when he had Henry IV advise Prince Henry to imitate the warmongering side of his nature, and to be like the honor-obsessed Hotspur. Brooke explained that Hal understood the incongruity in his father's character and separated

²³
Ibid., pp. 189-190.

²⁴
Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 426.

²⁵
Ibid.

himself from the king. He had, however, inherited his father's craft. At times, Hal's wit was nearly up to Falstaff's, but only when he was in Falstaff's company. When war arrived, his wit, humor, and even his follies disappeared. Brooke thought that Shakespeare did not prepare the reader for Henry's rejection as he did later for the death of Othello.²⁶

Brooke, like Bradley, saw no malice in Falstaff. He added that the reader must think of Falstaff as Shakespeare drew him, as a knight originally of good repute, known even in Europe for his fame. He had fallen to the low state of a drunkard, liar, cheat, and profligate; yet the reader forgave him his fault because of his underlying pleasantry, good humor, and gay way of facing life.

Secondly, Brooke saw that Falstaff had the courage to face himself, and not give way to despair.²⁷

Thirdly, the reader enjoys Falstaff's intellectual power, wit, and fast repartee. Falstaff could change front immediately against an unforeseen difficulty, especially when he had been driven into a corner.

Lastly, Falstaff's amusing and captivating manner of commenting, when alone, on himself and the world appealed

²⁶ Stopford A. Brooke, Ten More Plays of Shakespeare (London, 1913), pp. 263-267.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 290.

to Brooke. Brooke pictured Falstaff in his reflective moments as exaggerating his vices into honorable actions for his own private amusement; weighing in private debate the value of honor and the value of life by comparison; and perceiving the foolishness that is in man and in much of what man held dear. Brooke said Falstaff saw little good in most men, but much that was foolish; and Falstaff cultivated the foolish part to his own advantages.²⁸

Following Bradley's school of thought was one of the most indignant of early twentieth-century critics, John Masefield. He felt that Falstaff, as a man, lived basely only because he was wise. To Masefield, Falstaff represented the world, and was able to endure because of his wit, intellect, and tremendous understanding of life and people. It is likely that Masefield saw the devil's major work as more concerned with human suffering in general than with the insignificant misdemeanors of one man. Falstaff refused to suffer and was thus an enemy of the devil. Since this world was in the devil's domain, Falstaff was betrayed in order that the devil could be free to betray others.²⁹

²⁸
Ibid., pp. 291-293.

²⁹
John Masefield, William Shakespeare, Home University Library of Modern Knowledge, II (New York, 1911), 113-114.

Masefield's condemnation of Prince Henry is as scathing as are most other critics' interpretations of Iago. He declared that Henry was not a hero, but a common, selfish man without feeling, who was able to change his habits whenever interest bid him. Masefield saw no good-fellowship, no sincerity, and no whole-heartedness in him. When Hal realized that his conduct had put him in jeopardy of losing his prospective crown," he. . . passed a sponge over his past, and . . . fought like a wildcat for the right of not having to work for a living."³⁰

Masefield considered this series of historical plays as beginning with Richard II and ending with Henry V. He called the reader's attention to Richard III's action at Coventry when he gave up his crown at Bolingbroke's command rather than let his friends risk their lives in battle. From this generous act there resulted the loss of his kingdom, his death, Mowbray's death, Hotspur's death, the murder of the leaders at Gaultrie, and countless deaths throughout England. Masefield went on to say that this slaughter was stopped momentarily at the end of 2 Henry IV "so that a callous young animal. . . could bring his country into a foreign war to divert men's minds from injustice at home."³¹

Masefield adjudged that the plays belonged to the kingdom of vision, greater than Shakespeare, through whose mind

³⁰
Ibid., p. 113.

³¹
Ibid., p. 119.

they came. He considered the series of plays the most marvellous work ever done by man, but that as drama they had never been staged as the "tragic processional" that Shakespeare intended them to be.³²

A contemporary of Masfield's, Brander Matthews, belonged to the nineteenth-century romantic school of thought. He echoed Coleridge's and Hazlitt's interpretations to a great extent, but did not give Falstaff quite the aesthetic interpretation that they had ascribed to him. Matthews thought Falstaff great as both a verbal and intellectual wit, in which respect he was incomparable. He assigned no scruples or morals to Falstaff, but welcomed him as a friend. However, his admiration or friendship did not extend to sympathy, and Matthews said he would not have lifted a hand to stay Falstaff's well-deserved punishment. Matthews anticipated Stoll more than he followed Bradley.³³

Elmer Edgar Stoll, whose school of thought currently comprises the minority group, wrote in his Shakespeare Studies (1927) eighty-one pages which castigate not only Falstaff but also many of the critics who had been influenced by Morgann's essay. In these eighty-one pages Stoll had nothing constructive to say about Falstaff. In Stoll's eyes he was a

³²
Ibid., p. 120.

³³
Brander, Matthews, Shakespeare as a Playwright (New York, 1913), pp. 128-129.

coward, cheat, thief, liar, glutton, and deserved an even worse fate than he received. Stoll belittled Morgann and his theory, stating emphatically that Morgann, and later critics who adopted Morgann's views, were romanticists who completely misunderstood Shakespeare. Stoll was somewhat dogmatic and opinionated in his article. Morgann had insinuated that the critics who could not see the higher personality of Falstaff were dupes of their own systematic reasoning. Stoll himself insisted that Shakespeare had intended that Falstaff be interpreted only as a low buffoon, a cowardly type of braggart military captain; thus, he was included among Morgann's "dupes," as explained above. In reciprocation, Stoll called Morgann confused and contradictory, totally unaware of dramatic method, and unable to read score. He even reproved Morgann for having thought that Shakespeare was written to be read. Although these aspersions were cast at Morgann, they indirectly reflect his opinions of his learned fellow-critics, such as Swinburne, Raleigh, Bradley, Masefield, Kittredge, and Charlton.³⁴ In fact, Stoll does belittle the opinions of all of these scholars in a later work, From Shakespeare to Joyce (1944), in which he reprimands his contemporaries for using "bitter" language toward Hal.³⁵ Stoll was a learned

³⁴ Stoll, Shakespeare Studies, pp. 408-409.

³⁵ Elmer Edgar Stoll, From Shakespeare to Joyce; Authors and Critics; Literature and Life (New York, 1944), pp. 210-211.

critic who was aligned against many great critics. There has been only a handful of critics to agree with Stoll, whereas many critics have followed Morgann and Bradley.

It is necessary to add that in the last section of his long essay on Falstaff in his Shakespeare Studies, Stoll himself proclaimed the virtues of Falstaff. As Goddard later pointed out, Stoll devoted twenty-six sections to proving Falstaff a coward and a reprobate; yet in his twenty-seventh and last section, in the first two paragraphs, Stoll calls Falstaff "the king of companions," the "very spirit of comradeship," and "the prince of good fellows."³⁶

It is strange that Stoll devoted so much space to adverse criticism of Falstaff, and then closed his essay with one section dedicated to praising him. In his article Stoll has both condemned and praised Falstaff, but he will be considered in this study as looking upon Falstaff as a coward, liar, and cheat, which is Stoll's conception of Falstaff's true nature. Stoll's complimentary remarks about Falstaff were offered primarily as explanations for Falstaff's universal appeal.

Stoll was an eminent Shakespearian scholar. He based all of his judgment on Shakespeare's having written the Henry IV plays to be staged, and not to be read and interpreted. He looked upon Falstaff as evil, and felt that

³⁶
Goddard, p. 176.

Shakespeare had intended him to appear as evil on the stage. He thought that any other interpretation was romantic, and that those modern critics who loved Falstaff and disliked Hal were like some character out of Freud or Dostoevsky.³⁷

Stoll saw no poetic meaning in the plays and based his interpretations on the dramatic meaning as it appeared in the foreground. Falstaff's flight at Gadshill, and Stoll's interpretation of this flight as cowardly, was in the foreground for Stoll. He insisted that the reader should look upon Falstaff in the same light as the Elizabethans did.

Stoll said that, besides Gadshill, there was the action at Shrewsbury and even the word of Poins, Hal, and Falstaff himself to prove his cowardice.

In Ralli's History of Shakespearian Criticism, Sir J. A. R. Marriott is cited as having called 1 Henry IV Shakespeare's most perfect work. He observed that the play combined a high order of history with some of the finest English comedy, and, consequently, it was a remarkable development in the evolution of the chronicle play. Marriott saw Falstaff as the greatest figure ever created in literature and as the despair of critics. Falstaff was no coward, but his valor was limited by his reason. He was a liar, but used his lies only as humorous deceptions. He was always sure of himself and never defeated except by the rejection.

37

Stoll, From Shakespeare to Joyce, p. 210.

He had loved Henry more for himself than for what he could get out of him. Marriott justified the rejection because of Falstaff's effrontery in disrupting the splendid coronation ceremony. Marriott felt that Henry could not have done otherwise.³⁸

Marriott partially follows Bradley, but he is influenced by the moral justifications that Coleridge and Hazlitt felt were necessary for a correct understanding of the Hal-Falstaff relationship.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's interpretations of the plays were unique in the light of the previous groups of thought. He felt that the plays were based upon the morality plays; yet he also condemned Henry for his treatment of Falstaff. Quiller-Couch thought that Henry had known happiness, but that he had renounced it upon his accession to the throne. Henry has also become an ingrate to those who had been responsible for his happiness. It was after Hal's change that Quiller-Couch perceived the resemblance to the morality plays. As king, Henry then looked upon Falstaff as Gluttony; Bardolph as Drunkenness; Shallow as the Country Justice; etc. For the rejection, Quiller-Couch condemns Henry, not Falstaff and his crew. He believed that Shakespeare had to kill Falstaff because, in Henry V, as a living example of Henry's

³⁸
Ralli, II, 382-383.

wrongs, he would have disrupted the whole play. Henry's rejection hurt Falstaff to death. Falstaff had never hurt Henry; and Henry's reason for his cruel action, according to Quiller-Couch, was the fact that Falstaff merely continued to be "in fault and foible, the same man in whose faults and foibles. . . [Henry] had delighted as a friend."³⁹

Quiller-Couch's conceptions fall somewhere between Bradley's and Tillyard's. He combined Bradley's liberal point of view with Tillyard's implications that the plays are based on the morality plays. He is closer to Bradley than to any other group, but he is basically original.

John Middleton Murry looked upon Falstaff of 1 Henry IV as the "greatest creation of Shakespeare's yet undivided being."⁴⁰ The Falstaff of 2 Henry IV, Murry thought, was only mechanically inspired and closer to the Falstaff of the Merry Wives than to the Falstaff of 1 Henry IV. Falstaff of 2 Henry IV could not please, but only profit from the after-glow which remained from the first part. Murry felt that 2 Henry IV was a poor play, and that the Falstaff that Henry rejected was not the same Falstaff that Shakespeare had created in 1 Henry IV. It is obvious that Murry considered the plays as unrelated. In this respect he follows Stoll's idea that each play was written only for its contemporary

³⁹ Ibid., p. 377.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 438.

audience appeal. However, in his praise of the Falstaff of 1 Henry IV, Murry is closer to Bradley. It follows that he must not be considered as belonging to either group, but as individual in his interpretations.

John Bailey was an early follower of Stoll. He appreciated Falstaff's infinite freedom and the fact that Falstaff, in his most triumphant scenes, triumphs at his own expense. Bailey recognized Shakespeare's own genius in Falstaff, which is more than Stoll did, but felt that Morgann, Bradley and their school were blinded to Falstaff's grosser elements. In Bailey's estimation Falstaff was a coward and a liar, with his intellect serving his baser nature.

Bailey, like Stoll, thought that the plays were written primarily for the stage, and not for the critics. He also thought that Shakespeare's introduction of genius into the drama through Falstaff brought about the death of the old semi-official chronicle plays.⁴¹

An ardent follower of Bradley, John William Cunliffe, made the wise observation that the reader, by all means, should know how Shakespeare's characters appeared to the Elizabethan audience and how they appeared to Shakespeare himself, but that he should be chiefly concerned with the

⁴¹
Ibid., pp. 456-457.

impressions the characters make on his own mind in his own day. Cunliffe agreed with Bradley's interpretations, and thought that Shakespeare's genius created this glorious Falstaff before Bradley excavated him.⁴²

In an article entitled "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?" Albert H. Tolman wrote that Falstaff was a central element and an organic part of the structure of the two parts of the Henry IV plays. In addition, Falstaff was a fun-maker whom the reader laughed with and whom he laughed at, "almost in the same breath."⁴³

Tolman agreed with Bradley in all respects except in his account of the robbery at Gadshill. He thought that Falstaff originally intended to deceive the Prince and Poins in his relation of the encounter; but that, when Falstaff became aware that they evidently knew more than he had surmised, he then expanded his previously concocted story into an obviously untrue account. Falstaff was sensitive about any suggestion of cowardice, and he created one lie after the other in order to divert the prince's attention from his flight.⁴⁴

⁴² Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, p. 433.

⁴³ Albert H. Tolman, "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?" Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXIV (January, 1919), 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Tolman then followed very closely Bradley's feelings that Shakespeare was not able to divert the sympathies of the reader in the second part so that he could accept Falstaff's rejection as deserved.⁴⁵

Henry David Gray, in 1917, in an essay written partially in answer to Stoll's articles, said that a "supreme genius always transcends his time and creates characters who may by no means be judged by a set of contemporary standards."⁴⁶ He disagreed with Stoll's idea that the Elizabethan interpretation was the only one to take. He believed that the Elizabethan audience found humor in the very scenes that today create sympathy. He also felt that Shakespeare may have only intended Falstaff as humorous, but that Shakespeare himself must have seen Falstaff "looking up at him a living man."⁴⁷ Gray thought that the twentieth century looked upon Falstaff as a man, much differently from the way that the sixteenth-century audience had. Like Tolman, Gray believed each age had a right to interpret Falstaff by its own standards. Gray followed Bradley, but added some original observations that are both conservative and sensible.

A German critic, Levin Schücking, saw Falstaff as a character who could shrewdly and aptly express his particular personality and its relation to its environment. To explain

⁴⁵
Ibid., pp. 8-13.

⁴⁶
Gray, pp. 111-112.

⁴⁷
Ibid., p. 113.

Falstaff's place in the drama, Schücking quoted Falstaff's own lines: "I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men."⁴⁸ However, Schücking said that Falstaff was not principally a swaggerer and boaster, but the king of all clowns. He saw Falstaff as possessing the sagacity of old age and the versatility of youth, but Schücking credited the large portions of sack for their stimulation. Schücking thought that Falstaff was continually in a drunken good humor.⁴⁹

Stoll called Falstaff a drunkard, but Schücking is the first major critic of those considered in this study who advocated, in a complimentary manner, the idea of Falstaff's being always pleasantly inebriated.

Schücking's exposition is very close to that of Stoll, even though he may be a little more kindly disposed toward Falstaff than was Stoll.

According to John Webster Spargo, the Henry IV plays were written shortly after the Armada engagement, when English patriotism was at its highest. The Elizabethan audience knew the story of the play, and they thereby knew that Hal would overcome his bad habits and mature into England's hero-king. They were obsessed by the theory of the divine right

⁴⁸

2 Henry IV, I, ii, 11-12.

⁴⁹

Levin L. Schücking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1922), p. 33.

of kings; therefore any means Hal used to improve himself could not have been wrong in their eyes. In any event the future of England depended upon Hal, so that any policy he might adopt would have been countenanced because the audience felt it was for the glory of England.⁵⁰

Spargo was not influenced by any of the usual nineteenth- or twentieth-century interpretations of the plays, and suggested that Falstaff should be regarded as an emanation from the Vice of the Morality Plays. Spargo pointed out what were to him remarkable similarities. The Chief Justice represented Virtue, with Hal functioning as Mankind or Everyman, that is to say, the Morality type for the human race. Of course Falstaff represented Gluttony. The Elizabethans did not necessarily see the allegory, but Spargo felt that there was reasonable possibility that they at least perceived Falstaff as emanating from the Vice of these earlier plays.

Spargo based his opinion on the strong morality play tradition extant in England (in 1600); on the evidence in Hal's first speech (1 Henry IV, Act I, Scene 2, Lines 1-13); on further evidence in Hal's first soliloquy (1 Henry IV, Act I, Scene 2, Lines 218-240); on the reciprocal relationships between Hal, Falstaff, and the Chief Justice, which are

50

John Webster Spargo, "An Interpretation of Falstaff," Washington University Studies, IX (April, 1922), 124-126.

paralleled in many morality plays; and on the final fate of Falstaff.⁵¹

Thus Spargo, by developing the relationship of the Henry IV plays to the morality plays much further than had Quiller-Couch, became the first twentieth-century critic to revert to this sixteenth-century point of view. He was to be followed by two prominent scholars, Dover Wilson and E. M. W. Tillyard.

E. C. Knowlton discussed Falstaff's military aspects, and disagreed with Stoll's conception of Falstaff as a coward. Knowlton contended that modern-day front line soldiers would see no more cowardice in Falstaff than they would in themselves. He felt that Stoll placed too much emphasis on the traditional conception of the miles gloriosus, and too little emphasis on the real-life front line action. In the heat of the conflict, Knowlton explained, the soldier thinks not only of his life, but also of any comfort he may acquire at any cost.⁵²

Knowlton cannot be easily assigned to either Bradley's or Stoll's group, since his available criticism is chiefly concerned with Falstaff's military reputation. He definitely disagreed with Stoll in the matter of Falstaff's presumed

⁵¹
Spargo, p. 133.

⁵²
E. C. Knowlton, "Falstaff Redux," The Journal of English and German Philology, XXV (1926), 197-198.

cowardice. However, he did not evaluate Falstaff's other qualities extensively enough to place him among Bradley's disciples.

Arthur B. Walkley made a statement in More Prejudice (1923) that, thirty years later, Harold C. Goddard was to discuss at considerable length. Walkley ventured the opinion that Falstaff on the stage would tend to prove boring. He based his theory on his idea that Falstaff had to be read, to be imagined in the reader's mind's eye, and "to be turned over on his tongue." He felt that all the "business" that actors considered humorous in a grossly fat man was only ugliness, and conducive to boredom. Walkley's revolutionary observations isolate him during his generation, but he can be said to have anticipated Goddard, who later elaborates considerably on his deductions.⁵³

In contrast to Walkley, E. K. Chambers felt that Falstaff was supreme on the stage because his only purpose was to create laughter. Chambers said that Falstaff was a sot, a coward, a cheat, and a hypocrite; Falstaff was not only eternally thirsty but also ridiculously fat. Both of these characteristics were hilariously funny to the Elizabethan audience. Chambers thought Falstaff was at his best when attempting to justify his wayward life. His quick wit continually aided him in this endeavor, and continually saved

him from "some dire humiliation, to the brink of which he had been led by his cowardice or greed."⁵⁴ The only constructive thing Chambers said for Falstaff was that he had a genuine affection for Henry.

Chambers must be included in Stoll's school of interpretation although he did not condemn Falstaff quite as conclusively as did Stoll.

Similar to the opinions expressed by Cunliffe and Gray, J. B. Priestley considered that Falstaff had many levels of interpretation which resulted in many Falstaffs, all of which were praised from the viewpoint of comedy. Priestley surmised that the character of Falstaff changed as the reader's sense of humor changed. The first impression of Falstaff as a buffoon and colossal liar gradually evolved into that of a comic genius. Priestley referred the reader to the essays of Morgann and Bradley as excellent discussions through which he might discover this comic genius.

Priestley attached little importance to the many discussions on the subject of Falstaff's cowardice. He thought that if the reader looked upon actual cowardice as being as funny as pretended cowardice, he would continue to look upon Falstaff as a coward. To Priestley, the reader's interpretation of Falstaff's character was a test of his own sense of humor.

⁵⁴
Ibid., pp. 436-437.

Falstaff appeared to Priestley as the "embodiment of masculine comradeship, ease, and merriment."⁵⁵ He was the supreme example of good fellowship. Falstaff had escaped the net of moral and social order, and escaped into his private Utopia; yet he shared the delight of his Utopia with his friends.

Priestley proposed that Falstaff owed his prominent place in comic literature to the fact that the crowd saw in him something to laugh at, whereas the philosopher perceived in his subtle character something to laugh with. The first attainment is a tribute to Shakespeare's ability to write for the theatre of his day. The second is a tribute to Shakespeare's power of subtle characterization and dramatic genius.⁵⁶

Bradley and Morgann were the two major critics from which Priestley drew his conclusions. He agreed with Bradley that Falstaff had a larger heart and better mind than Henry V. He closed his essay with the observation that Falstaff "was rejected once, but he has never been rejected again."⁵⁷

Contemporary with Priestley was John W. Draper, who, unlike Priestley, echoed many of the opinions of Stoll. Draper looked upon Falstaff as representative of the typical Elizabethan army officer. He disagreed with Stoll as to Falstaff's

⁵⁵ J. B. Priestley, The English Comic Characters (New York, 1931), p. 97.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

being merely a portrayal based on the tradition of the miles gloriosus. Draper argued that Falstaff's behavior conformed to the conduct of the Elizabethan military leader. He regarded Falstaff and his actions to have been aimed at contemporary realism intermixed with comedy. Draper limited his discussion of Falstaff to his military activities; yet his observations showed that he accepted Stoll's conception of Falstaff in all respects except Stoll's theory concerning the miles gloriosus.⁵⁸

Another critic who was even closer to Stoll's theory was the former professor of English literature at the Sorbonne, Emile Legouis. Legouis saw Falstaff as representative of the Bacchanalian creed of the Renaissance, although not as a drunkard. Legouis construed Prince Hal as an indubitable hero, whose greatness derived from his early wildness. Also, Legouis admired Henry for his magnanimity in associating with Falstaff, whom Legouis looked upon as a coward, cheat, liar, and buffoon.⁵⁹

Although there can be no specific division between the critics of today and those who wrote earlier than World War II, the remaining critics will be discussed from a contemporary standpoint. It should be borne in mind by the

⁵⁸ John W. Draper, "Sir John Falstaff," The Review of English Studies, VIII (October, 1932), 414-424.

⁵⁹ Emile H. Legouis, The Bacchic Element in Shakespeare's Plays, The Annual Shakespeare Lecture, 1926, from the Proceedings of the British Academy (London, 1926), pp. 11-13.

reader that some of these critics wrote articles prior to the war, whereas a few of those critics already discussed have had articles published since the war. The writings of all of the critics from 1900 to the present day are still read, some of which, such as those of Bradley, Stoll, Masefield, and Priestley are held in as much regard as those of any recent writer. Bradley, in particular, is still considered as one of the greatest of all Shakespearian critics.

John Dover Wilson could have been placed in the earlier group of critics that wrote between the two world wars. However, because of the date of his latest book, The Fortunes of Falstaff (1944), he is included with the more recent writers. Henry B. Charlton, whose essay "Falstaff" appeared in 1935, is also included in this group because of the post-war influence of his theories, and because of his influence on Harold C. Goddard.

John Dover Wilson looks upon Shakespeare as primarily a poet, and upon Falstaff as one of Shakespeare's greatest comic expressions. To better illustrate his conception of the poet, Wilson, in his book The Essential Shakespeare, quotes from a passage in Rupert Brooke's Memoirs. Wilson is explaining his idea of how Falstaff came into being, and Brooke is explaining what a poet must think and feel:

It consists of just looking at people and things as themselves--neither as useful nor moral nor ugly nor anything else; but just as being. At least that's a philosophical description of it. What happens is

that I suddenly feel the extraordinary value and importance of everything I meet, and almost everything I see. . . I roam about places--I . . . sit in trains and see the essential glory and beauty of all the people I meet. I can watch a dirty middle-aged tradesman in a railway-carriage for hours, and love every dirty greasy sulky wrinkle in his weak chin and every button on his spotted unclean waistcoat. I know their states of mind are bad. But I'm so much occupied with their being there at all, that I don't have time to think of that. I tell you that a Birmingham gouty Tariff Reform fifth-rate business man is splendid and immortal and desirable. 60

Wilson attributes this type of mood to Shakespeare in his creation of Falstaff. Shakespeare saw Falstaff as splendid and desirable, and caused the whole world to see it. Wilson says that Shakespeare endowed Falstaff with such "gaiety of spirit, such nimbleness of wit, such a varied flow of imagery, such perfect poise and self-assurance, and above all such magnificent vitality, that he has become a kind of god in the mythology of modern man."⁶¹ To Wilson Falstaff is a poetic creation and a thing of beauty, even if "he hath monstrous beauty like the hindquarters of an elephant."⁶²

In a later work, The Fortunes of Falstaff, Wilson, while not contradicting any of the above conceptions, attempts to put Falstaff back into his proper place, the place Wilson thinks Shakespeare designed for him, and from which Morgann,

⁶⁰ John Dover Wilson, The Essential Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 87-88.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶² Ibid.

Bradley, and the romantics had delivered him. In spite of Wilson's poetic conception of Falstaff, he looks upon him also as a devil disguised as a jolly fat man.

Wilson's interpretation of the plays is different from any now generally accepted. He appreciates Falstaff's higher qualities, but believes that Shakespeare chiefly concerned himself with giving an Elizabethan audience a picture of their national hero, Henry V. His conceptions of Falstaff as Vanity and Hal as Government reflect the themes of the early Morality plays.⁶³ Wilson looked upon Prince Hal as the prodigal, and Hal's repentance is not only to be taken seriously, but also to be admired.⁶⁴

Peter Alexander, in a review of Wilson's book, remarks that Hal was a much more business-like sojourner in a far country than was the original prodigal. He adds further that it would be hard to imagine the biblical prototype's announcing upon his departure that he was going to enjoy just enough debauchery and profligacy to make his father happy to see him return to the fold. Alexander thinks that such a revision of the parable would better illustrate Hal's case.⁶⁵

⁶³Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff, p. 17.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁶⁵Peter Alexander, Review of The Fortunes of Falstaff, by J. Dover Wilson, Modern Language Review, XXXIX (October, 1944), 409.

Henry B. Charlton follows Bradley and Morgann. He sympathizes with Masfield in his scorn for Hal and his offense against humanity in his rejection of Falstaff. Charlton does not feel that Shakespeare intended for the reader to feel so bitterly toward Hal. He proposes that Shakespeare, unlike the anonymous author of The Famous Victories, always depicted his characters in relation to life. In 1 and 2 Henry IV the characters act their historical parts, but, through Shakespeare's genius, they also become alive, and act according to human nature. Hal's conversion, his rejection of Falstaff, Falstaff's lies, and Hotspur's rebellion must all follow credible motives or some convincing motivations from their inner selves. Charlton contends that Falstaff has upset the whole scheme of things in the plays, unless the reader can find some "motive" in the predicament created by Shakespeare with the rejection scene.⁶⁶

Charlton refers to Stoll's solution as the easiest way out of the dilemma. Charlton then criticizes Stoll for implying that his fellow critics were ignorant, and he also wonders if Shakespeare wrote only for those critics, called professional by Stoll, who saw nothing but stage pieces in his plays. Charlton questions Stoll's contentions that the plays were written exclusively for the Elizabethans and

66

Charlton, "Falstaff," pp. 50-56.

those rare critics of today who are convinced they know Shakespeare's purposes to be purely historical. Charlton believes that Shakespeare was a creative artist with his own comprehension of life.⁶⁷

In Charlton's estimation Falstaff is at first a mere historical intruder, but soon asserts his right to a leading role in the play. Falstaff's business as a comic character is to "maintain the corporation of Sir John."⁶⁸ His problem is of the same order as that of Henry's political problem of maintaining the "Community of England."⁶⁹ Falstaff applies Henry's principles to the domain of private life. Virtue to Falstaff consists of his using every effort to overcome all obstacles, and to free himself from all dangers. The accomplishment of his purpose by wit is contrasted to Henry's achievements by craft.⁷⁰

Falstaff has absolute self-possession, and the ability to use every element in his make-up for furtherance of his own welfare. His counterfeiting death was as much policy to him as the king's disguising many men as kings on the battlefield to protect his own person. Charlton sees no cowardice in Falstaff. He calls Falstaff a master at improvisation,

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁶⁸Henry B. Charlton, Shakespeare Politics and Politicians, The English Association, Pamphlet Number 72 (April, 1929), p.15.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

who would adopt any scheme that would mean the saving of his life as the only reasonable course to follow. He was the opposite of Hotspur, who would adopt any scheme for the attainment of honor. Strangely enough, Shakespeare has Hotspur rushing into battle seeking honor. Falstaff fights only when he cannot avoid it. Yet Falstaff comes from the battle with honors, whereas Hotspur finds only death.⁷¹

Charlton reverts to nineteenth-century thought in seeking a reason for Shakespeare's including the rejection scene rather than allowing Falstaff to retire or disappear before Hal's coronation. Charlton assumes that Shakespeare intended Henry V to emerge a hero in the subsequent play Henry V, in which he is the central figure. For this reason Charlton finds what he considers Shakespeare's reasons for humbling his brain child. He decides that Falstaff had none of the higher qualities that mankind has always esteemed--faith, love, truth, and self-sacrifice. Charlton feels that Falstaff's failure was in his lack of these qualities.⁷²

Hazelton Spencer calls Falstaff "the gypsy king of all lovable stage rogues and literary vagabonds,"⁷³ and feels that Shakespeare redeemed Falstaff's vices with his humor.

⁷¹ Charlton, "Falstaff," p. 84.

⁷² Ibid., p. 88.

⁷³ Hazelton Spencer, The Art and Life of William Shakespeare (New York, 1940), p. 180.

Falstaff is referred to as the "laughing philosopher."⁷⁴
 Spencer saw in his attitude toward life Shakespeare's own
 outlook.

Spencer, following Morgann, sees no cowardice in Falstaff, and does not feel that Shakespeare intended any of his failings to be damnable. Spencer criticizes the severer critics who attempt to praise and condemn Falstaff at the same time. To Spencer the result of these combined efforts would result only in sentimental comedy.⁷⁵

Spencer feels that Falstaff's one unamiable vice was his tendency to swindle his friends. However, Spencer goes on to say that Justice Shallow deserved his loss, and, as part of the hostess' income was itself illicit, Falstaff's victims were always portrayed as undeserving of sympathy, and Shakespeare meant to invoke "a laugh, not offer a moral lesson." Falstaff had too much of Shakespeare himself in him "to be subjected to too much rough treatment at the hands of the critics."⁷⁶

E. M. W. Tillyard, in Shakespeare's History Plays, sees Falstaff as the "epitome of the Seven Deadly Sins."⁷⁷ He views the two parts as one long play based on the Morality plays. Prince Hal is Magnificence of the Morality Play and

⁷⁴
Ibid.

⁷⁵
Ibid., p. 181.

⁷⁶
Ibid., pp.182-183.

⁷⁷
 E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays
 (London, 1951), p. 265.

the middle character between the two extremes, Falstaff and Hotspur. Justice is represented by the Lord Chief Justice, whom Hal finally chooses to follow.

Thus E. M. W. Tillyard, J. W. Spargo, Dover Wilson, and to some extent, Arthur Quiller-Couch comprise a separate group that views the Falstaff plays as Shakespeare's one great morality play.

In his book An Interpretation of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig expresses the opinion that Shakespeare was portraying Prince Henry in his traditional glory. He says that in 1 Henry IV, the first stage of Henry's reformation is accomplished by his action against the rebellious Percys. Craig sees this action as only the first stage in the hero play, but also as the tragedy of the noble Hotspur. He calls the action in 2 Henry IV a sorry spectacle in comparison to the rebellion in 1 Henry IV, and cannot see how anyone could sympathize with the opposing factions because they are in rebellion against the king. Craig feels that Shakespeare was presenting serious history and nothing more.⁷⁸

Craig asserts that Falstaff had to be given wit and perfect repartee in order to fit his role as the misleader of princes. However, he does not feel as did Bradley, Morgann, and their followers that Shakespeare had overdone his

78

Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare (New York, 1948), pp. 136-138.

creation and made his readers unwilling to have Falstaff sacrificed to the character development of Hal. Craig alleges that Falstaff's rejection was a "symbolic act appropriate to the new king"; ⁷⁹ Falstaff had served his term, and he was not needed in France. Craig thought Shakespeare's killing off Falstaff an appropriate ending for the play, and not the result of the necessities of drama.

Craig maintains that the excellence of the play is found in the father-son relationship between Hal and Henry IV. Craig admires the way Hal receives his father's reproaches, and feels that in Hal's reformation not only Henry IV but also England won. According to Craig, Hal then developed qualities that made him the greatest of all English kings.

Craig's interpretations are not dependent solely on any school of thought. He parallels Stoll but cannot be considered to have been influenced by him. He sees in the plays more than a stage production; he interprets them as presenting English history with Henry V as the hero. Craig's ideas are far removed from Bradley's, however, and can be considered as much closer to Stoll's school of interpretation.

The last interpretation to be presented is that of Harold C. Goddard. In his extensive work, The Meaning of Shakespeare, Goddard has offered many revolutionary ideas;

⁷⁹
Ibid., p. 142.

yet he considers the text in detail. He concentrates his study on Shakespeare the poet rather than on Shakespeare the dramatist, and treats Shakespeare's complete works as a single organism. He considers that too much emphasis on the meaning of Shakespeare to the Elizabethan has caused many critics to forget what Shakespeare might mean today. To Goddard, poetry means creation, and creation is still going on.

Goddard sees as the source of Falstaff a combination of Shakespeare's own Puck and Bottom from Midsummer Night's Dream. The dreamer in Falstaff is Bottom but the dreams themselves are Puck. Falstaff is then a combination of ass and angel. Goddard points out that this miracle is created on a much grander scale in the character of Falstaff, not just momentarily as in Bottom's case, but perpetually. Falstaff is imagination conquering matter and spirit overcoming flesh. Goddard says he is "levitation overcoming gravitation. He is Ariel tossing the terrestrial globe in the air as if it were a ball." ⁸⁰ Still, Goddard says, he is an old sinner, and it is Falstaff's sins that make his existence a miracle. Goddard contends that there are two Falstaffs fused into one being, just as sodium and chlorine are the component parts of one compound, salt. There exist in the same being both the Immortal Falstaff and the Immoral Falstaff.

80
Goddard, p. 178.

Falstaff has to be seen with the imagination, and for this reason he can never be seen on the stage. There, Goddard points out, he is physically repulsive, and the miracle of melting flesh into spirit just cannot occur. The reader's imagination has to be the stage of the play, and there the miracle can and does occur. The reader's imagination soars, and he is free from the routine of things as they are. As Goddard implies, the reader's imagination presides over fact⁸¹ and he is victorious over fate itself.

In Goddard's eyes, Falstaff is creative play; he is the opposite of all-destroying War. He represents peace in its creative sense, not merely in the absence of physical conflict, but in the creation of human happiness as is found in the artist, or the child engaged in imaginative play. Falstaff went through life in imaginative play. He even preferred a joke on himself, which he could develop infinitely in his imagination, to a joke on another with the fun ending with the incident. Goddard advises the reader not to consider Falstaff as "taken in" by a situation. He says the reader would be safer to attribute Falstaff's silence to his reflection on the imaginative possibilities of the⁸² situation.

81
Ibid., pp. 178-179.

82
Ibid., pp. 183-184.

Goddard alleges that Hal, in the early part of 1 Henry IV, was in a central position between his companion, Falstaff, and his father, Henry IV. Goddard has little respect for the hypocritical king, and advances the opinion that, whereas Falstaff at his worst was fundamentally honest, Henry IV at his best was fundamentally dishonest. Thus Goddard says that Falstaff at his worst was a better man than Henry IV at his best.

Goddard portrays Youth, or Henry, standing between Imagination, Falstaff, and Authority, Henry IV, between Freedom and Force, and between Peace and War.⁸³

Goddard contrasts Falstaff with Hotspur, and maintains that, whereas the prince actually killed Hotspur, Falstaff killed Hotspur's soul. In this observation Goddard is pointing out that the spirit of Freedom triumphed over a human code of honor in battle. Hal, looking down at the dead Hotspur, momentarily saw that life is time's fool.

Dover Wilson had asserted that Hal had finally adopted the Lord Chief Justice as his father.⁸⁴ Goddard disagrees with Wilson's statement, and contends that Hal followed the advice of his own father, Henry IV. In this action, Goddard points out that Hal is not only obeying his father's commands,

⁸³
Ibid., pp. 185-186.

⁸⁴
Wilson, Fortunes of Falstaff, p. 121.

but also following in the footsteps of the Immoral Falstaff that he thought he had rejected.⁸⁵

Goddard adds that, prior to the rejection, Falstaff had been both tutor and tempter to Hal. The Immortal Falstaff had instructed Hal, without Hal's awareness of the fact, "in wit, humor, good fellowship. . . human nature, and. . . an imaginative love of life for its own sake."⁸⁶ As a result of his decision to side with the authoritative, war-like nature of his father, he advanced from purse-snatching in fun to crown-snatching in dead seriousness.⁸⁷

In Henry IV's final admonition to Hal he advised him to busy his nobles' minds with foreign wars. He follows this unholy advice with

How I came by the crown, O God, forgive!
And grant it may with thee in true peace live!⁸⁸

Goddard points out the paradox in this twofold advice. Hal followed the advice to wage wars, and initiated an aggressive war against France that lasted one hundred years. He who could have brought peace to England listened neither to the Lord Chief Justice as he had promised nor to the Immortal Falstaff.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Goddard, p. 211. ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 209.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 211. ⁸⁸ 1 Henry IV, IV, iv, 219-220.

⁸⁹ Goddard, pp. 210-211.

Goddard's interpretations are interposed with textual references to authenticate his observations. He is unquestionably a follower of Morgann and Bradley. He is also as liberal in his opinions as was Masefield. At the same time, Goddard's estimation of Shakespeare's poetic intention and his evaluation of the characters are revolutionary. He combines a deep poetic insight with a keen apprehension of psychological prognosis. Although he may eventually become the progenitor of a new school of thought, he is included in the twentieth-century school founded by Bradley.

The study of twentieth-century criticism is concluded with Goddard. The early critics of the century seem to have reacted against the nineteenth-century insistence upon poetic justice in keeping with their traditional morality. Reactionary writers such as Bradley, Masefield, Priestley, Charlton, and Goddard show a progressively more liberal interpretation. Stoll and his followers insist upon a conservative interpretation based upon the Elizabethan audience's conception of the play. A third group of critics propose a probable sixteenth-century interpretation that has its source in the medieval morality play. There are others who cannot be put into any of the above groups, and who are original enough in their views to be considered separately.

In a character as complex and as artfully designed as is Falstaff, many different interpretations are to be expected.

No one group is necessarily closer to a correct evaluation than is another. The social traditions of the critic's generation added to the emphasis of his own particular criticism have much influence on the value of his observations. Many other factors influence the critics' points of view. The wide divergence of opinion is not at all surprising in view of the many necessary considerations: the complexity of Falstaff; the many problems offered in an interpretation of his character; his relationship to his associates; and his proper role in the play itself. The trends of these opinions, their influence upon subsequent opinion, and the present-day trend of interpretation will all be discussed in the following concluding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Although most of the controversy that has arisen about Falstaff has concerned the interpretation of his character, the question of his origin has caused quite a divergence of opinion. Since Falstaff is the main feature in Hal's Bohemian background, his origin is of considerable importance, particularly with respect to the historical action in the two plays, 1 and 2 Henry IV.

Whereas much of the historical action came from Holinshed's Chronicle (1587), Shakespeare also used the anonymous play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. From the play he took many of his details, including the name of "Sir John Oldcastle," which he changed before publication to "Sir John Falstaffe". The historical Oldcastle was a Lollard martyr who had been executed for heresy in 1417. Shakespeare's change of the name of his character to Falstaff was supposedly done because of the displeasure of the martyr's descendant, the contemporary Lord Cobham.

The new name closely resembled that of another historical figure, Sir John Fastolf, who was a famous leader against the French. During the French wars, he had been charged with cowardice, and Shakespeare had portrayed this historical

Fastolf in Henry the Sixth, Part I. Like Oldcastle, he had been a Lollard; yet the consensus of opinion is that Shakespeare was not intentionally portraying either man in the Falstaff plays. The Falstaff of 1 and 2 Henry IV and Henry V is chiefly a creation of Shakespeare's brain.

Falstaff's early popularity earned him a separate entry in the Shakespeare Allusion-Book, and in total number of known references to Shakespeare's works, Falstaff ranked second only to the play Hamlet.

Falstaff had originally been brought into the plays through the classically illegitimate channel of comic relief; yet he rapidly grew in complexity and interest. He is at first presented as his simple self, but he then develops into a super personality. The chief problem that has confronted the critics has been the interpretation of this duality in his personality. He has been looked upon with both fascination and detestation. The most liberal-minded critic has to condemn him partially, whereas even the moralist is charmed by him.

There is no way to know the reaction to Falstaff of the Elizabethan audience, but their interpretations are assumed to have been influenced by the earlier morality plays. The most striking fact is that Shakespeare did not impress himself upon the soul of the century. The function of the imagination in poetry had not been discovered, and all impressions were based on ancient Greek or Roman values. The

writings of these contemporary authorities had little influence on the trends of later criticism.

In the eighteenth century Corbyn Morris wrote some of the earliest praise of Falstaff, but he and his contemporary, Dr. Johnson, wrote only in a general way, and they failed to see most of the controversial aspects in Falstaff's character that were to become the subject of so much later criticism. Dr. Johnson had seen the perpetual gaiety combined with sense and vice.

The first revolutionary in Falstaffian criticism was Maurice Morgann, whose key-note in his celebrated essay was that Falstaff was no coward, even though all the outward appearances seemed to portray him as such. Morgann was the first known critic to study Falstaff in detail. His conclusion that Falstaff was no coward has caused a greater amount of controversy than has any one other point in question. On the problem of the interpretation of Falstaff, he is the greatest voice of the eighteenth century, and has been widely followed by many critics of the two subsequent centuries.

Mackenzie, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was inspired, but he missed the dual personality and the sublimity that existed within the coarse exterior of Falstaff. He felt that Shakespeare had subjected wisdom to the control of buffoonery.

The first definite trend of thought toward Falstaff developed in the early nineteenth century. Its chief exponent

was Coleridge, who was followed by Hazlitt, Maginn, Bagehot, Hudson, Swinburne, Lee, Brandes, Dowden, and Boas. Coleridge and his followers agreed with Mackenzie in thinking that Falstaff's cowardice was more a principle than a weakness. They differed from the earlier critics in seeing some cruelty in the actions of Hal. They condemned Hal's treatment of Falstaff, and some, like Hazlitt and Hudson, saw Falstaff as the better man of the two.

Some of the critics of the nineteenth century, such as Schlegel, Ulrici, and Hugo, disagreed with the romantic school discussed above. Schlegel and Ulrici both looked upon Falstaff as evil, and deserving of no praise or sympathy. Hugo, on the other hand, saw much admirable humor in Falstaff, but thought he represented the traditional clown-satirist as did Panurge in French literature.

Although there were differences of opinion in the nineteenth century (even though the bulk of the criticism followed that of Coleridge), there was one point upon which they all agreed. They all sought to justify Hal's rejection of his erstwhile bosom friend. They regarded Henry V as the English national hero, and they thought that he had earned the respect of his subjects by self-reform. The nineteenth-century critics looked upon morals and duty as absolutely necessary in the maintenance of a good life. They considered Shakespeare as being as moral in his outlook as they were themselves. Therefore they all approved of Henry, and disapproved of Falstaff.

Some, like Hudson, did not go so far as to approve of Hal's actions; nevertheless, they justified the rejection on moral grounds.

These critics discovered that poetic meanings could be found in Shakespeare's plays, but they were unable to find in 1 and 2 Henry IV any satisfactory poetic meaning that would uphold any philosophical values when related to their interpretations of the characters of Falstaff and Hal.

Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Frederick S. Boas anticipated one group of the twentieth-century critics by seeing Falstaff as a most complex person whose descriptions always created seemingly contradictory antitheses. Boas saw the personal issues involved between Falstaff and Hal as more important than the political issues, and in this respect his ideas presage the opinions of Masfield, Priestley and Goddard.

During the early part of the twentieth century new and original theories arose, but there were none that did not agree in many respects to the ideas that had been inherited from the nineteenth-century critics.

Bradley was the first of these critics to look more deeply into the characters of both Hal and Falstaff. He followed Hazlitt and Hudson in seeing much in Hal's character that was objectionable. He was also aware of the complexity of Falstaff's nature, and felt that Falstaff transcended Shakespeare's original intention. According to Bradley,

Shakespeare had not intended an unsatisfactory ending, but the character of Falstaff had overridden all of the conventions of a serious historical play.

In Bradley's interpretation there is found for the first time an attempt to dispense with the use of poetic justice. According to Bradley and his school, if Hal's rejection of Falstaff was intended to be justifiable, this intention must have been overshadowed by the final conception of Falstaff's immortal greatness.

The major critics of the twentieth century who have followed Bradley are Walter Raleigh, Stopford A. Brooke, John William Cunliffe; Albert H. Tolman, Henry David Gray, Arthur B. Walkley, J. B. Priestley, Henry B. Charlton, Hazelton Spencer, and Harold C. Goddard.

Opposed to Bradley and his followers is Edgar Elmer Stoll, one of the leading Shakespearian authorities of the early twentieth century. Stoll looks upon the plays as being written chiefly for the stage. He does not believe that Shakespeare meant any more than was actually portrayed in the foreground of the plays. He considers Shakespeare as having intended Falstaff to be a coward, liar, and cheat, and he feels that any critics who look upon Falstaff in any way other than historically are lifting Falstaff out of the reach of even Shakespeare.

Stoll's followers are few, and included among this minority group that advocates cowardice are John Bailey,

Edmund K. Chambers, John W. Draper, and Emile Legouis. Critics who do not follow Stoll, but whose opinions are closely related are Brander Matthews, Levin Schücking, and Hardin Craig.

A third group of twentieth-century critics is comprised of John W. Spargo, E. M. W. Tillyard, and John Dover Wilson, who maintain that the plays are based on the medieval morality plays with Falstaff representing Vice. This modern group represents the only trend that adopts an earlier interpretation, which, in this case, is the probable Elizabethan conception of the plays. Of the three critics included, only Wilson denies that Falstaff is a coward.

The final critic discussed is Harold C. Goddard, who follows both Morgann and Bradley. Goddard, however, elaborates on their interpretations, and perceives a deeper psychological significance in the Hal-Falstaff relationship, which places the plays on a psychological level with the later writings of Freud and Dostoevsky. Goddard sees Falstaff as standing for Peace as opposed to Henry IV, who represents War. Henry V, by following his father, Henry IV, rather than Falstaff, plunged England into one hundred years of war, with an inestimable loss of lives.

Goddard thinks that Shakespeare purposefully contrasted the triviality of the humorous crimes of Falstaff with the monstrous crimes of the king and a misguided government.

The new psychological view presented by Goddard is very likely the beginning of a new and even more revolutionary

school of interpretation than any that has been advanced up to the present time. Whether Goddard's theories are accepted or not, all evidence shows that the twentieth-century trend is definitely toward not only a more liberal conception of this most controversial literary character, but also toward a more profound interpretation of the poetic meaning of the plays themselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Boas, Frederick S., Shakespeare and His Predecessors, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904.
- Boswell, James, Life of Samuel Johnson, Vol. IV, edited by G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell (6 volumes), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934.
- Bradley, Andrew Cecil, "The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, London, Macmillan Company, Ltd., 1909.
- Brandes, George, William Shakespeare, London, William Heinemann, 1899.
- Brooke, Stopford A., Ten More Plays of Shakespeare, London, Constable and Company, Ltd., 1913.
- Charlton, Henry B., Shakespeare Politics and Politicians, The English Association, Pamphlet Number 72, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1929.
- Clark, Cumberland, Falstaff and His Friends, Shrewsbury, Wilding and Sons, Ltd., 1935.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets, collected by T. Ashe, London, George Bell and Sons, 1884.
- Craig, Hardin, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, New York, The Dryden Press, 1948.
- Dawtre, John, The Falstaff Saga, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1927.
- Dowden, Edward, Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1881.
- Dryden, John, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Essays of John Dryden, Vol. I, edited by W. P. Ker (2 volumes), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926.

- "The Famous Victories," Chief Pre-Shakespearian Dramas, edited by Joseph Q. Adams, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1924.
- Goddard, Harold C., The Meaning of Shakespeare, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Gray, Henry David, "Shakespeare's Conception of Humor," A Memorial Volume to Shakespeare and Harvey, Texas University Bulletin No. 1701, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1917.
- Hazlitt, William, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, New York, Wiley and Putnam, 1845.
- Hudson, Henry N., Shakespeare; His Life, Art, and Characters, 4th ed., Vol. II (2 volumes), Boston, Ginn and Company, 1872.
- Lee, Sir Sidney, A Life of William Shakespeare, 14th ed., New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931.
- Legouis, Emile, The Bacchic Element in Shakespeare's Plays, The Annual Shakespeare Lecture, Proceedings of the British Academy, London, Oxford University Press, 1926.
- Masefield, John, William Shakespeare, Home University Library Series, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1911.
- Matthews, Brander, Shakespeare as a Playwright, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.
- Morgann, Maurice, An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff, new ed., London, Wheatley and Adlard, 1825.
- Munro, John, editor, The Shakespeare Allusion-Book, Vol. II (2 volumes), London, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1932.
- Priestley, J. B., The English Comic Characters, New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1931.
- Raleigh, Walter, Johnson on Shakespeare, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1908.
- _____, Shakespeare, English Men of Letters Series, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1907.
- Ralli, Augustus, A History of Shakespearian Criticism, Vol. I (2 volumes), London, Oxford University Press, 1932.

- Schlegel, August Wilhelm, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, translated by John Black, London, George Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1914.
- Schücking, Levin L., Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, London, George G. Harrap and Company, Ltd., 1922.
- Shakespeare, William, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, edited by Hardin Craig, New York, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1951.
- Shakespeare, William, Henry the Fourth, Part I, Variorum Edition, edited by Samuel Burkett Hemingway, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1936.
- Spencer, Hazelton, The Art and Life of William Shakespeare, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940.
- Stoll, Elmer Edgar, From Shakespeare to Joyce; Authors and Critics; Literature and Life, New York, Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1944.
- _____, Shakespeare Studies, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles, A Study of Shakespeare, London, William Heinemann, 1920.
- Tillyard, E. M. W., Shakespeare's History Plays, London, Chatto and Windus, 1951.
- Ulrici, Herman, Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: and His Relation to Calderon and Goethe, London, Chapman Brothers, 1846.
- Walpole, Horace, The Letters of Horace Walpole, Vol. VI, edited by Peter Cunningham (9 volumes), London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1891.
- Wilson, John Dover, The Essential Shakespeare, Cambridge, The University Press, 1932.
- Wilson, John Dover, The Fortunes of Falstaff, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1944.

Periodicals

- Alexander, Peter, Review of The Fortunes of Falstaff, by J. Dover Wilson, Modern Language Review, XXXIX (October, 1944), 408-409.

- Baker, Harry T., "The Two Falstaffs," Modern Language Notes, XXXIV (1919), 470-474.
- Baldwin, Maxwell, "The Original of Sir John Falstaff, Believe It or Not," Studies in Philology, XXVII (1930), 230-232.
- Charlton, Henry B., "Falstaff," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XIX (January, 1935), 46-89.
- Draper, John W., "Sir John Falstaff," The Review of English Studies, VIII (October, 1932), 414-424.
- Knowlton, E. C., "Falstaff Redux," The Journal of English and German Philology, XXV (1926), 193-217.
- Law, Robert Adger, "Structural Unity in the Two Parts of 'Henry the Fourth,'" Studies in Philology, XXIV (April, 1927), 223-242.
- Monaghan, James, "Falstaff and His Forebears," Studies in Philology, XVIII (1921), 353-361.
- Spargo, John Webster, "An Interpretation of Falstaff," Washington University Studies, IX (April, 1922), 119-133.
- Stoll, Elmer Edgar, "Falstaff," Modern Philology, XII (October, 1914), 197-240.
- Tolman, Albert H., "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?" Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXIV (January, 1919), 1-13.

Encyclopedia Articles

- Chambers, Kercher, "Shakespeare, William," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XX, Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1943.
- "Fastolfe, Sir John," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. IX, Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1943.
- Seccombe, Thomas, "Morgann, Maurice," Dictionary of National Biography, edited by Sir Leslie Stephens and Sir Sidney Lee, Vol. XIII, London, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1900.
- Tait, James, "Oldcastle, Sir John," Dictionary of National Biography, edited by Sir Leslie Stephens and Sir Sidney Lee, Vol. XIV, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1900.

Newspapers

Times Literary Supplement, April 6, 1956.

Times Literary Supplement, January 9, 1919.