***Henry IV, Part 2***

Induction by Rumor

1. i. Conspiracy at Northumberland’s

ii. Falstaff and the Chief Justice in London

iii. Conspiracy in the palace of the Archbishop of York

1. i. Mistress Quickly, Falstaff, and the Chief Justice in London

ii. Prince Hal and Poins at the Prince’s house in London

iii. Northumberland with his wife and daughter-in-law

iv. Mistress Quickly, Doll, Falstaff, Pistol, Bardolph, Prince Hal, and Poins, at the Boar’s Head

1. i. King Henry IV with his loyal lords at Westminster

ii. In Gloucestershire, Falstaff, Bardolph, Shallow, and Silence meet

1. i. Westmoreland parleys with conspirators on Shipton Moor, in Gaultree Forest

ii. Prince John enters negotiation with the same conspirators at the same place

iii. Prince John speaks with Coleville and Falstaff at the same place

iv. King Henry lies ill in the Jerusalem Chamber, with others around him

v. King Henry sleeps alone in the Chamber; Prince Hal enters; the king awakes

1. i. Falstaff, Shallow, and Davy, in Gloucestershire

ii. Chief Justice with Prince Hal and the other princes at Westminster

iii. Falstaff, Pistol, Shallow, etc., in Gloucestershire

iv. Beadle with Mistress Quickly and Doll in London

v. Near Westminster Abbey: Falstaff and Shallow; King Henry V (formerly Prince Hal), Chief Justice, and Prince John

Epilogue by dancers

Time and Age

There were useful references to time in *Richard II*, V.v.42-49, and in *1 Henry IV*, I.ii.2-12 and V.iv.77-83, but this play abounds with them, beginning with II.ii.142-143 and II.iv.361-66. Issues of age, especially Falstaff’s, belong with the time references: the Chief Justice and Falstaff discuss the latter’s age or youth; courtiers worry that “unseasoned hours” increase the king’s illness; Shallow and Falstaff recall how long ago their youth was; and the new king says, “How ill white hairs become a fool and jester.”

Historicity

The conspiracy of rebels in this play resembles the one that historically occurred in 1405. The Archbishop leads an army against Henry IV, surrenders to Prince John, and is executed; Northumberland flees to Scotland. Annually thereafter, as Glendower continues to raid western England from Wales, Northumberland raids northern England from Scotland. In 1408, Prince Hal drives Glendower into a mountainous part of Wales, and he never reappears; in the same year, Northumberland dies in battle in Yorkshire. Henry IV faced no more battles on English soil until his death in 1413. As is often the case, Shakespeare has elided the gaps between significant events and accelerated the passage of time in the play so that the eight years described in this paragraph seem to occur in rapid sequence.

Intentionality & Assessment

There are two related disputes in the criticism of *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2.* One concerns the extent to which Shakespeare had the second play in mind as he wrote the first; the other concerns the relative merits of the two plays. Generally, critics who view the second part as the planned completion of the first often view both parts as admirable; they tend to interpret the first part in the light of developments that occur only in the second part. (The Archbishop of York scene late in *1 Henry IV* is perhaps evidence the second part was being planned already.) On the other hand, critics who view the second part as an unplanned sequel, written to profit from the first part’s popularity, often view it as inferior to the first part; they tend to interpret developments in the second part as distortions of the first part’s characters, events, and themes. (As mentioned in the *1 Henry IV* document, the conflation of the 1403 and 1405 conspiracies in the first part is perhaps evidence the second part wasn’t planned.)

Student papers taking sides in these disputes have pointed to repetition, loss of tension, and the deterioration of Prince John’s character in Part 2 as evidence against its being planned along with Part 1. Other students have produced evidence in favor of Part 2: the necessity of Hal’s completing his reformation, including his rejection of Falstaff; the final defeat of all rebels; the redemption of guilt-ridden King Henry IV; and the deterioration in many characters. I would point out that a play’s characters and events are like ink-blot tests. Is King Henry IV repentant? Is he redeemed? Is the deterioration in Part 2 of many characters found in both plays an intended phenomenon on Shakespeare’s part? And does it make Part 2 worse than or better than Part 1? Most of the evidence for answers is indeterminate; it depends on how you read. Both of these history plays are inclusive of places, classes, factions, and viewpoints, to a greater extent than is true of Shakespeare’s other history plays. This inclusiveness produces indeterminacy for the audience, since we may feel that Shakespeare sides with one or another of the differing points of view. But does he? He did create them all.