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The Prince's Misleader: The Role of Falstaff in the *Henry IV* Plays

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Abstract of the Thesis

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Shakespeare's history plays, *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*, include the fictional character of Falstaff. This study examines Falstaff's role in the plays, considers his comedic placement in historical events and his role's relation to English nationalism. The study shows Falstaff's unique ability to provide great entertainment while remaining a symbol of evil and immorality, creating a conundrum for audiences. Falstaff's unique role is analyzed including the background of his naming, his relation to the theme of counterfeiting in the plays, the significance of his physical size, and his relationship with the prince which wanes as the two parts of the play progress. Ultimately, Falstaff is a character, who according to Johnson, is to be "admired but not esteemed." This study analyzes to what degree Falstaff should be both admired and esteemed.

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Though Falstaff, the fat rogue of the *Henry IV* plays, is oftentimes a hilarious diversion in the two parts of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare could never have meant for him to make it through the two-part play unscathed, as critics such as Bradley and Bloom wish. Falstaff is able to capture the audience's hearts at times, and to a non-Elizabethan audience under Falstaff's spell, his rejection in *2 Henry IV* can seem brutal, and "apparently heartless" (McDonald 92). Shakespeare's motive in writing his history plays is nationalism, writing with not only Prince Henry as his protagonist, but the entire English nation. Falstaff's character provides political purpose in addition to the comedy he adds; he poses a threat to the welfare of the English nation in misleading the future king. Because Falstaff's role is largely a political one, his demise and rejection are inevitable to serve Shakespeare's motives as dramatist. He clearly develops Falstaff's downward shift as the two parts progress, giving audiences ample time to come to terms with Falstaff's decline to eventual rejection by King Henry V. In *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff is charming and witty. Part 2's Falstaff still possesses traces of his charm and wit, but those qualities become overshadowed by the depravity of which audiences knew he was capable.

Falstaff is often thought of in a positive light, perhaps because he is so positive about his own negatives. After all, he does not consider himself a nighttime evildoer but more euphemistically "Diana's forester," a "gentleman of the shade," a "minion of the moon" (I.ii.26-8). His perpetually jolly spirit and his wit can be endearing. Samuel Johnson, an esteemed early Shakespearean critic is often quoted, attaching two adjectives to Falstaff's character, naming him "unimitated, unimitable Falstaff." He is completely unique, but not necessarily always in a favorable way. Johnson further explains his view of Falstaff's complexity: he is a "compound of sense and vice; of sense which may be admired but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested" (Tomarken 16). This makes Falstaff a complex character, to be

admired and simultaneously not esteemed. The faults are apparent in Falstaff, but it is difficult for audiences to see them clearly, as Falstaff's power to entertain and entice can muddle his true meaning. Johnson also refers to Falstaff when he writes that "no man is more dangerous than he that with a will to corrupt hath the power to please" (Tomarken 15). Falstaff's power to please and corruption are his two most noteworthy qualities, making him clearly dangerous by Johnson's standards. Close analysis of *2 Henry IV* explicitly shows Shakespeare's intentions with Falstaff and guides audiences through his journey from fun-loving friend to necessary castoff.

The early subtitles of the play from the first surviving edition of *1 Henry IV* suggest that the comedy Falstaff provides is a portion of the play that receives much credit due to its popularity on stage. The title page includes three elements of the play: "*The History of Henrie the Fovrth; With the battell at Shewsburie, between the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humorous conceits of Sir Iohn Falstalffe*" (Kastan 4). These three parts of the play do not seem parallel to one another. The first two are concerned with historical people and historical events, but the dramatic component of comedy listed here is from a third character not included in historical accounts of King Henry IV. It seems almost thrown in at the end, citing no connection between Falstaff and King Henry IV or between Falstaff and the battle at Shrewsbury. The title page gives attention merely to Falstaff's "humorous conceits" which do not seem completely relevant in this history play about a turbulent reign and civil war. This comedy's placement in the history plays has been greatly debated.

Falstaff's role is a complex one. He serves many purposes in the play, but it is logical to wonder why Falstaff appears in the *Henry IV* plays at all. A variety of reasons have been offered

for the creation of Falstaff. He clearly possesses many of the qualities of a typical Shakespearean clown. He provides the audience with much enjoyment, “tak[es] care that the audience does not become too deeply involved emotionally,” and “provides us with the possibility of a cooler and more analytical outside view” (Videbaek 154), but his role is much more than that of clown. He and his comedy dominate the plays so much that Harold Bloom goes so far as to say that the middle two plays of the Henriad should be considered the “Falstaffiad” (275). Though it is clear that Shakespeare’s tetralogy follows the line of Lancastrian kings, he does allow Falstaff to upstage the historical figures in many a scene.

Falstaff is a clown whose comedy is popular to audiences, but over the course of the play, audiences can see that Falstaff is not just a clown but a catalyst. His clowning is part of his frivolity, his distracting Hal from his higher, royal purposes. It is this disruption in Hal’s life that is Falstaff’s purpose. He must succeed in amusing and diverting Hal so that Hal can eventually make his transformation from wastrel to hero king. The most important part of Falstaff’s complex role is to function as a symbol—that of unsavory character and deeds that Hal will eventually renounce. He is necessary to the plot. Barber notes that “it is from the prince that he chiefly gets his meaning” (148). This is certainly true; if it were not for this connection to the prince, Falstaff would not have even the slightest business being in these plays. The plays are about Henry IV and Henry V, and Falstaff represents what Hal’s life includes, in sharp contrast to what his life will become in order to be a successful and admired king. As Falstaff “gets his meaning” from the prince, Hal uses the knight to “construct his own political identity” (Kastan 39). Hal announces his plan to wait until he is “wanted” and then

...break through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.” (I.ii.209-10)

Hal will shine after being “strangled” by Falstaff, a “foul and ugly mist” of his youth. Though Hal does not get to choose the time in which he is “wanted” and needs to “break through” due to his father’s death, he must still purge himself of Falstaff in order to reach his end goal of being a noble king.

The role of Falstaff evolved from its original creation in that the role was initially attributed to an actual historical man and then given a name-change shortly after the play was written. It is well-documented that the character of Falstaff was originally named Sir John Oldcastle, also the name of a famous Protestant who was martyred in 1417. It has been speculated that Shakespeare’s penning of a slovenly, disreputable knight bearing the same name could simply be a blow to Oldcastle’s family. It appears that Shakespeare’s intentions in creating the knight named Oldcastle were to have him serve as political and religious commentary, though to what degree remains unknown. Falstaff’s quoting of biblical passages can be connected to the Lollard leader after whom he was originally named, but the character of the disgraceful Falstaff does not seem to align at all with the actual life of Sir John Oldcastle. Perhaps Shakespeare meant not to disparage the Protestant leader so much as to get a rise out of Oldcastle’s descendents with whom he is said to have had some conflict. Shakespeare apparently succeeded in doing so since he was pressured to change the character’s name to Sir John Falstaff (Kastan 55).

With the character’s renaming, this possible political commentary in the character of Falstaff does not lend itself to exactly the same interpretation. The historical Sir John Falstolf was an English soldier who seemingly bears only one resemblance to Hal’s drunken friend; he was at one point deemed a coward. He was proven in battle but accused of cowardice after a defeat at Patay but later cleared of those charges (Sir John). This is not exactly akin to Falstaff’s

behavior of openly admitting that “honor comes unlooked for” (V.iv.64-65) and going to battle with no intention of finding a fight, but the trait of cowardice in general could be the only common bond between Falstaff and the historical Falstolf. Audiences are left to speculate why Shakespeare settled on this name after being dissuaded from using the name of Oldcastle. For whatever reason, he chose this other contemporary of Prince Henry Sir John Falstolf. Again, the character of Falstaff bears little significance to the actual history of King Henry IV and his son, demonstrating that the history genre was a plaything of Shakespeare’s to develop as he saw fit.

It is not just Falstaff’s existence in the play but the structure which Shakespeare employs to include him that leads audiences to question his role in the histories. He appears not just intermittently, but in nearly alternating scenes with the actual historical figures, giving him a very significant role. Shakespeare may be offering this lengthy glimpse into the tavern and non-courtly life to show the social world that existed simultaneously with the royal one, to create a broader picture of medieval English life. Though it is well known that the plays do not present a precise picture of the historical events of the reign of Henry IV, a depiction of this entire historical context can be appreciated. Kastan calls the blended comical-historical setting that Shakespeare creates “not only the variegated play world but history itself as a brilliantly polychromatic pageant” (4). Audiences see different aspects of the England that Henry V will eventually rule.

The history play genre was a new form for Shakespeare. It was mostly “being invented at the very moment Shakespeare began working in the form” (McDonald 90). The name “history play” perhaps makes modern audiences ponder the choices of fictional elements in the plays. Shakespeare’s audiences may not have had trouble with the fictional Falstaff gallivanting with Hal because this dramatic form was mostly new to them too, but Shakespeare’s model was the

English political-morality play in which tyranny or insurrection was depicted in order to emphasize the well being of the body politic. The *Henry IV* plays certainly do this, and Falstaff is a large part of this message. This dramatic format that “strikes audiences as alternately comic and tragic” (McDonald 91) was experimental for Shakespeare, thus new but possibly not questioned especially due to its resemblance to the political-morality play. Written at a time of great English nationalism after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, plays fostering that nationalism were perhaps the main focus for the audience.

The comedy in the plays can be seen as relevant to the history regardless of its fictional content. Praising Shakespeare’s unique structure in the *Henry IV* plays, C. L. Barber sees the comedy as “far from being forced into an alien environment of historical drama.” He believes the comic scenes to be “begotten by that environment, giving and taking meaning as it grows” (143). Barber suggests the worlds of rule and misrule go hand-in-hand, and this justifies the stage time given to Falstaff in a play that is supposed to be about King Henry IV and his son, the Prince of Wales. Barber quotes Sidney, that these two plays are “neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns” (145). This “mingling” creates a coherent and well-blended drama, as Falstaff himself offers coherence in his reinforcement of the themes of the plays.

One theme that Falstaff underscores is that of stealing and counterfeiting. Henry IV usurps a throne and Falstaff steals Hal from courtly life, money from travelers, money from the king in his recruiting scams, and glory for the killing of Hotspur. Connecting the play with the theme of stealing, it is “not an alternation of historical scenes and comic relief. The history and the comedy are concerned with the same thing” (Goddard 108). Goddard even goes one step further, jesting that Falstaff’s “stealing” of the show is appropriate when looking at the plays in

this way.

Falstaff has much to say on counterfeiting after his “resurrection” on the battlefield. “To die is to be a counterfeit” (V.iv.117-118). Falstaff claims that he is no counterfeit since “to counterfeit dying when a man thereby liveth is to be no counterfeit” (V.iv.119-121). In these lines, he convolutes the idea of falsifying oneself. This, like the theme of stealing, can be easily compared to King Henry IV’s questionable power. Falstaff is indeed a counterfeit in so many ways; he counterfeits stories, the role of a soldier, the role of the king and the prince in the play-within-the-play, a representation of John Oldcastle, and his own death. Audiences can easily compare this falsehood surrounding his character to the falsehood surrounding Henry IV’s reign, the turbulence of which drives the action of the plays. It is the instability of Henry IV’s crown that causes the rebellion that begins in *1 Henry IV* and continues through *2 Henry IV*. This disorder in the kingdom gives Prince Henry the opportunity to prove himself as a worthy royal. The prince must rise above all of these issues of counterfeiting, concerning both his father and his friend, in order to become the upright King Henry V.

Through Falstaff, Shakespeare subtly, and of course humorously, demonstrates the opinion of King Henry IV as a usurper, continuing in the vein of highlighting hypocrisy and counterfeiting. During the tavern “play extempore,” Falstaff first plays the role of the king. Before Shakespeare even has him speak in this scene, by assuming this role, Falstaff is himself symbolically usurping the throne. When Hal wants to trade parts in their playful drama, Falstaff asks “Depose me?” (II.iv.449), calling attention to the ousting of Richard II by Bolingbroke. As Falstaff plays the king toying with the idea of Hal’s legitimacy in birth, legitimacy can be seen in two different contexts, but each has huge implications for the royal family. As king he teases, “That thou art my son, I have partly thy mother’s word, partly my own opinion” (II.iv.415-17).

It is a serious accusation to claim that any man is a bastard, but hinting at the illegitimacy of Hal as a son also points to one view of illegitimacy in Bolingbroke's claim to the throne, the idea that neither of them can be rightful king. The action of the two *Henry IV* plays displays the unrest that King Henry IV faces during his reign, largely due to the debate of legitimacy. He ousted a "legitimate" king, Richard II, with help of the Percy family, and now they rebel against him. They helped create Bolingbroke as king and they can easily help to take him down, using the idea of legitimacy as part of their defense. Of course the issue of legitimacy caused much debate during and after the reign of King Henry IV, so Falstaff, the catalyst in exposing hypocrisy, is the one to point to it in the play.

Falstaff further mocks the established conventions of his time by pointing to the grim realities of warfare and how he sees wartime practice as counterfeit. He sees the entire concept of chivalry to be false. His opinion of his "ragamuffin" soldiers is that they are mortal and thus worthy enough for battle, mocking notions of chivalry that the valiant are preferable in fighting wars. His soldiers are "food for powder, food for powder. They'll fill a pit as well as better" (IV.ii.66-68). Alvin B. Kernan aptly deduces this as "war's reality [being] paraded before war's pretense" (224). Here, Falstaff is the opposite of a counterfeit, exposing the customs of his contemporaries for what he sees them to actually be. Though in many ways he is a counterfeit, he is also the character to point out the counterfeiting that he sees happening around him.

Again Falstaff looks to expose pretense and false appearances in a brief line during the parley with the rebels in Part 1's Act V, Scene i. Shakespeare folds in the fictional Falstaff with many of the historical players of this uprising. Falstaff is on stage with the king, the prince, Blunt, Lancaster, Worcester, and Vernon, and dares to speak during this meeting on the battlefield. The one, simple line, "Rebellion lay in his way and he found it" (V.i.29) is

meaningful, and Shakespeare's inclusion of it is, through Falstaff, "working out attitudes towards chivalry, the state and crown in history" (Barber 145). First, the fact that he speaks in a recreation of a historical moment in this history play emphasizes his role in this dramatic historical world. Falstaff's appearance here bolsters Shakespeare's intentions of having Falstaff and what he represents closely connected to the mostly historical plot. The simple hilarious line he speaks is audacious yet meaningful. Falstaff, who audiences well know has no business being next to these dignitaries on such a momentous occasion, dares to open his mouth, and what he says is bold and impudent to both the rebels and the king. Worcester claims not to want war. He would rather have another option to settle his troubles with the king, and has not "sought the day of this dislike" (V.i.27). The king replies rhetorically, "You have not sought it. How comes it then?" (28). Falstaff does not miss the opportunity to be impishly literal and comical: "Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it" (29). In this single line, Falstaff calls out the Percies for starting a rebellion and then not taking full responsibility for it. He takes a dignified and noble part of a serious event and mocks both it and its participants. Falstaff continues to highlight hypocrisy and the keeping of appearances. Here, it is the appearances kept in the parley of battle. Falstaff's sarcastic remark during this serious parley demonstrates "his own distrust in all this lofty stuff" (Videbaek 153). Again, he mocks convention, and he shows a lack of respect in the serious occasions of the nobility.

Falstaff's famous "honor speech" offers more of his realistic view of pretense. He concludes his musings on honor as nothing other than a useless abstraction with the statement: "Honor is a mere scutcheon," only an ineffectual label (V.ii.141). It all comes down to the fact that his society puts much weight on appearances and on this system of battling that kings

depend on to maintain their positions. This system of power and bravado is reduced to appearances, to hypocrisy, and it is obvious that Falstaff, this “huge hill of flesh” (II.iv.253), is not overly concerned with appearances.

Falstaff is not the only character to highlight counterfeiting and the legitimacy of Henry IV. More explicit accusations of counterfeiting exist in the plays, such as Douglas’ on the battlefield in a more blunt attack on King Henry IV as a usurper and an illegitimate leader. Douglas encounters many of the king’s men disguised as decoys at Shrewsbury. His battlefield remarks are actually directed at the true king and not one of his impersonators, and taken in another context, could be direct comments that any subject could make concerning Bolingbroke’s rise to kingship. He yells out to his foe “Another king! They grow as Hydra’s heads” (V.iv.25). Douglas asks him,

...What art thou
That counterfiet’st the person of a king?” (V.iv.27-28)

In this context, Douglas speaks of battlefield decoys, the words themselves point directly at the idea of legitimacy. Though this was a common practice in the middle ages, the decoys that the king himself employs elicit thoughts of counterfeiting a true and rightful king. The idea of counterfeiting abounds in the play, and Shakespeare employs Falstaff to underscore it in his comedic manner while actual historical figures such as Douglas do so more explicitly.

Falstaff’s further function in the plays is to provide a relatable figure for the audience amongst aristocratic ones. Falstaff is often described as very “human” with all of his weaknesses. He has faults, part of human nature, which are exhibited in his mass. Like his other vices and weaknesses, his weight can make him a likeable character. He is of the earth and composed of flesh, as compared to his foil Hotspur, who is all spirit and fire (Kernan 224). This

earthliness is attractive to audiences. Audiences also enjoy Falstaff so much because they watch him “defy or evade the social pressures which make life so uncomfortable for the rest of us” (Ellis 102). Falstaff, unlike the king, prince, and aristocratic rebels is “one of us;” audiences can relate more to him than to the other characters.

Falstaff’s role is also an essential one in the plays’ system of father/son figures. *1 Henry IV* begins with the overt comparison of the father/son relationships between the king and the prince and Northumberland and Hotspur. The king sins

In envy that [his] Lord Northumberland
Should be the father to so blest a son. (I.i.78-9)

He hopes to learn that they were switched at birth so that he can be proud of his son instead of seeing “riot and dishonor stain the brow” of the prince (I.i.84). The “riot and dishonor” is largely the fault of the prince’s surrogate father, Falstaff, and the scene goes directly from the king’s discussion with Westmoreland about the prince and his foil to a scene in which the prince and Falstaff have their own discussion about said general “riot and dishonor.” Falstaff soon stands in for Hal’s true father when he plays the king in their play extempore. Falstaff is quickly “deposed” by Hal, and Hal himself attributes many names to Falstaff, clearly defining the Falstaff/father connection: “that father ruffian, that vanity in years” (II.iv.470-1). In addition to his gray hairs, it is noted that Falstaff could be father to Hal regarding age alone. He further calls him the “misleader of youth” (II.iv.279-80), pointing to his unfatherly qualities. The unraveling of this relationship is integral to the play, and Falstaff is replaced by the king and later the Chief Justice as Hal’s father figures, as must be Shakespeare’s goal in a drama about the rise of the respected Henry V to the throne.

Another view of Falstaff’s role in the play is Kastan’s “triangulation of forces” theory.

Kastan deems Falstaff's an important role in connection with the other clearly significant main characters of the play. In a very complicated system of a father, son and foils, Kastan presents Hal at the center of this "triangulation" (5). He notes the nearly equal weight of King Henry IV, Hotspur, and Falstaff, both in number of lines spoken and influence in the young prince's life. They are at the three points of the triangle. Hal must glean pragmatism from his father, heroism from Hotspur, and escapism from Falstaff, and find a balance in the three (5). When viewed as a crucial point in this triangle, Falstaff's role is essential to the meaning of the play. Kastan does not simply put Falstaff in a comic realm of his own in the *Henry IV* plays; he is an essential character and plays an equally important role in the action of the play as does the king, prince, and Henry Percy.

Though Falstaff is fiction among history, for most, the fiction wins out over the history for sheer entertainment value. Falstaff's popularity can be easily compared to the popularity of the other funny knight of his time, Don Quixote. Like Quixote's, Falstaff's fantasy world is attractive because it is an escape for the audience as well as for Prince Hal. Goddard contends that a major achievement of Falstaff's is serving as a "symbol of the supremacy of imagination over fact" (75). Goddard likens Shakespeare's knight to Cervantes' because they are both enemies to facts. Audiences are enamored with Falstaff because he stands for "liberation from the tyranny of things as they are" (75), much like Don Quixote. As Quixote is both enchanted and enchants readers, Falstaff is intoxicated and intoxicating.

Falstaff and Quixote do have a major difference though: propensity for wickedness. They both see things as they want them to be, Quixote through his invented exploits, Falstaff through his invented versions of his own exploits, and as Lewis observes, they differ greatly in their motivations for finding an alternate view of the world in which they live. Quixote's eyes

are closed and dreaming; Falstaff's are too wide open, "beyond normal common sense" (117). However, they both present a fantasy world for self-preservation. Quixote relies on insanity for sanity while Falstaff relies on his own fiction to save his skin. This is where they differ; Falstaff cannot use insanity as defense; his tricks and rhetoric are not completely innocuous. He is constantly using his wit to weasel himself out of a troublesome situation or simply to gain favor with his companion, Hal, who will do that for him. Falstaff sees things for what he wants them to be, in a more worldly way than his Spanish counterpart. Though they are popular for their captivating and humorous fantasy worlds, Falstaff's humor is intentional, self-serving, and dangerous.

Falstaff embodies many of the ideals of Don Quixote, but he clearly bears more of a resemblance to Quixote's squire, Sancho Panza. Falstaff's role in the play is that of the portly sidekick, and his sheer size has elicited much response from readers and audiences. It seems to be his most noted characteristic within the *Henry IV* plays. Falstaff is commonly dubbed "the fat knight," and there is much to the girth of the funny character. He is heavier and bigger than any heroic figure in the plays, and this bolsters his dramatic dominance over them. Physically, Falstaff will rule the stage by taking up more of its square footage than any of the other characters: he is "a landmark in any scene he's in" (Lewis 117). Falstaff's size may be the result of misbehaving, but the extra weight on Falstaff can be transformed by his power to charm.

Of course, on the most literal level, Falstaff's size is a result of overeating and overdrinking. This makes him a symbol of gluttony and sin that is to be later abhorred by his regal companion. Throughout the plays, it seems that Shakespeare created Falstaff as large in stature to simply provide light and innocent comedy. Obesity is a superficial quality and therefore innocuous fodder for laughter. The number of jokes about Falstaff's appearance

comprises numerous lines in the play. In both Part 1 and Part 2, Hal wastes no time mocking Falstaff's size, even if in Part I, Hal goes about it in puns at first, calling Falstaff "fat-witted" instead of inebriated, "superfluous" in asking the time of day, and asking him to "come roundly, come roundly" to his point (I.ii). Soon after, Hal insults Falstaff's size more directly, calling him as "gross as a mountain," (II.iv.235) a "trunk of humors," and "a bolting-hutch of beastliness" (II.iv.466). In Part 2, his initial greeting to Falstaff is to call him a "globe of sinful continents" (II.iv.309). Falstaff's size is a trait lightly mocked by others as well as Falstaff himself and provides playful amusement. It is all the more playful since Falstaff will comment on his size self-deprecatingly as well, as in Part 2 when he notes his monstrous size compared to his page that "set[s] him off": "I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelm'd all her litter but one" (I.ii.11-13). Falstaff is fat possibly just because Shakespeare had an overweight clown character in his company to play the part, but the trait definitely adds a large portion of amusing lines to the play.

Of course, in true Falstaff fashion, he comments on his size in order to get what he wants out of others as well. Turning his obesity into a quality deserving of sympathy, Falstaff pleads with Hal not to give him the harassment he deserves when caught in a lie about the contents of his pocket and their theft. Now looking for sympathy, because that is what serves him in this situation, he says to Hal "Thou seest I have more flesh than another man and therefore more frailty" (III.iii.176-8). This is just one example of Falstaff's ability to selfishly make "commodity" of "disease" (I.ii.275-6), as he arrogantly says he has the ability to do in *2 Henry IV*.

Falstaff's unsavory ways certainly deflate his character, but as Goddard cites Stoll, audiences "take to his charm, not his virtue" (72). Falstaff simply has an "infectious personality"

(76). Especially in *I Henry IV*, it is easy to enjoy Falstaff. He tells innovative and witty tales and delivers humorous lines and puns. He entertains by finding a clever explanation for absolutely everything. Furthermore, audiences can feel confirmed in forgiving Falstaff his misdeeds because he never truly gets in trouble with the prince or any other authorities in *I Henry IV*. Falstaff's demise is slowly taking place among these events, but serious change for Falstaff occurs in Part 2. Wilson contends that Shakespeare had the intentions for *2 Henry IV* in mind during the entirety of Part 1, never straying from his purpose, ever "serious, moral, and didactic" (22). If Shakespeare is to teach audiences a moral, sometimes much to their chagrin, Falstaff necessarily will suffer a sharp decline as Part 2 progresses.

Audiences are introduced to Falstaff in Part 2 with a comparison of Falstaff's mortality to Hotspur's. Shakespeare alternates the serious and the comic making connections between the two, as he did in Part 1. *2 Henry IV* opens with first a speech from Rumor and then the serious business of the events at Shrewsbury. Northumberland is receiving accounts of his family and allies' fortune in battle. He must deal with the loss of the battle and the death of his son, Hotspur. As the second scene begins, Falstaff is facing his own mortality, of course not in a solemn manner but in a playful way. His first line in the play asks "What says the doctor to my water?" (I.ii.1-2). The doctor who analyzes his urine jokes with Falstaff, the master joker, telling him that the water "is a good healthy water, but for the part that owed it, he might have more diseases than he knew for" (I.ii.3-5). The mood of the play, as always, is much changed when Falstaff enters a scene, but Shakespeare still makes connections from the courtly scenes to the tavern scenes. As Hotspur's real death is dealt with in the previous scene, Falstaff is now presented concerned with his own health and mortality. His death is foreshadowed not to be a

somber, noble death in battle but a demise from venereal disease and dissolute living.

Shakespeare introduces Falstaff in Part 2 as a mortal who will eventually face a disgraceful end, and he ends this play with King Henry's reference to Falstaff's death as well:

Leave gormandizing. Know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men. (V.v.54-55)

Falstaff himself reminds audiences of his approach to death in other scenes. In Act II, Scene iv, he plainly says to Doll Tearsheet "I am old. I am old" (II.iv.294). In this conversation he seems quite vulnerable to Doll; he feels that she "flatters" him, further evidence that he is losing his edge. He is not as secure in himself as he was in Part 1, no longer completely unembarrassed by who he is or how he lives. Though Falstaff does not die in *2 Henry IV*, Shakespeare points to Falstaff's death in early acts to foreshadow his symbolic death, his banishment. Both references from the doctor and from King Henry point to his errant lifestyle, evidence that he will not get away with living badly. He will face an end, a punishment. Falstaff himself says to Master Shallow later in the play that they "have heard the chimes at midnight" (II.iii.228), himself signaling that his time is almost up.

Right from the start, Falstaff is not the same easy-to-watch, easy-going Falstaff. He opens with his famous lines about himself, exhibiting too much pride in the qualities that made him so popular in *1 Henry IV*: "The brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent anything that tends to laughter more than I invent, or is invented on me" (I.ii.7-10). He calls attention to his wit and comes off somewhat pompous in the process, not just in his claim to be at the epicenter of all things humorous, but that all of mankind cannot come up with any better comedy than that which revolves around Falstaff. Whereas Falstaff was proud of his ability simply to make Prince Hal laugh in Part 1, he now is all too boastful that he is "witty in

[him]self” and “the cause that wit is in other men” (I.ii.10-11).

He continues with his pompous talk in this speech. He speaks of how insulting it is to have been given such a diminutive page by the prince, one that was “put into [his] service for [no] other reason than to set [him] off” (I.ii.14-15). He continues on to insult the prince, for his inability to grow facial hair, thus his youth and immaturity. In this, his first mention of the prince in *2 Henry IV*, he makes a strong statement: “He may keep his own Grace, but he’s almost out of mine, I can assure him” (I.ii.31-3). Falstaff finds himself in a position to be provided for by the prince, yet insults him and announces his new disgust for him, nearly renouncing him. Audiences know the real renouncing is soon to come, and it will be reversed on Falstaff.

In this same scene, Falstaff appears in a confrontation with the Chief Justice. This is not the playful, light-hearted banter through which the audience was introduced to Falstaff in Part 1. Hal elicited lies from Falstaff and appreciated watching and listening to his wit at work, but the Chief Justice does not revel in Falstaff’s skillful use of language. He shows it in a realistic and negative light. He sees it mostly as an ability to stretch the truth, noting his “manner of wrenching the true cause the false way” and the “throng of words that come with such more than impudent sauciness” (II.i.118-122). The Chief Justice’s appearance in this scene alone is a buzz-kill. Not only has the action shifted out of the raucous and carefree tavern, Falstaff is no longer taking part in witty repartee with a friend; he is speaking to a serious man of serious stature. The audience is taken from the pleasurable tavern of Part 1 to this “realistic world where crimes are punished” (Videbaek 145). Falstaff is gradually being brought to justice.

Where the prince is concerned, Falstaff undergoes more major changes as the ten acts of *Henry IV* progress. For all of Falstaff’s misbehavior and antics at improper times, Hal looks past them or dismisses them in *1 Henry IV*. When the sheriff comes to ask about the Gadshill robbery,

the prince allows Falstaff to sleep behind a curtain while he takes care of things, then affectionately in a later scene tells Falstaff he has rectified the matter, calling him “sweet beef” and describing himself as “good angel” to Falstaff (III.iii.188-189). Though Hal knows that Falstaff is a scoundrel, he is nonetheless kind in using his power to help his friend. The prince is on Falstaff’s side in *I Henry IV*.

Later at Shrewsbury, Falstaff commits his two heinous acts of Part 1: the leading of poor, unfit soldiers to their deaths in battle and the stabbing of Hotspur for false glory. Falstaff’s greatest Part 1 faults may lie in these acts, but the prince surprisingly excuses both. When the prince sees what Falstaff has gathered up as a semblance of an army, he does state that he has never seen “such pitiful rascals” (IV.ii.65), but this does not amount to even the slightest chiding. In the end of this scene, Falstaff admits that his men are poor and threadbare, at which Hal does not waste the opportunity to make a joke about Falstaff’s heaviness. He puns of course on the word “threadbare” to comment on Falstaff’s being not bare, “unless you call three fingers in the ribs bare” (IV.ii.74-75), but the prince never reprimands Falstaff for his gross offense. When Falstaff carries dead Hotspur on his back claiming to have finished him, though others may suspect it, only Hal truly knows that Falstaff is a liar. He does not get angry at him for trying to steal his glory; he even goes along with it, saying,

For my part, if a lie may do thee grace,
I’ll gild it with the happiest terms I have. (V.ii.160-161)

Hal is surprisingly easygoing during these events. Shrewsbury is the location of Hal’s transformation into a hero prince. He is proving himself in battle, proving himself a worthy heir to the throne. He is too busy in these affairs to deal with Falstaff; he knows that he will deal with him at a later date.

Hal is only exasperated with Falstaff's bottle of sack joke on the battlefield. It is increasingly obvious that the prince is waxing valorous and honorable as the play goes on, transforming into the noble hero king Henry V, and Falstaff must begin to fall out of favor with the prince. The prince is unable to find Falstaff's joke on the battlefield funny when he is in the throes of passionate fighting. Falstaff draws what should be a sword but is actually a bottle of sack, punning that "there's that will sack a city" (V.iii.57-58). The prince shows his disapproval of the quip, responding "What, is it a time to jest and dally now?" (V.iii.59). The prince deals with Falstaff's offensive behavior on the battlefield, but not with this direct joke during crucial fighting time. The prince throws the bottle at him and exits, but still Falstaff never really faces serious consequences for all of his antics, even in this life or death situation.

In the following scene, Hal's "eulogy" for the "fallen" Falstaff fails to show any affection that he seemingly once had for the man. Hal expresses five sentiments in this brief speech over Falstaff's falsely deceased body, and none of them puts Falstaff in a positive light.

What, old acquaintance, could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell.
I could have better spared a better man.
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity.
Death hath not struck so fat a deer today,
Though many dearer in this bloody fray.
Emboweled will I see thee by and by;
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie. (V.iv.104-12)

The prince begins, of course, with a jab at Falstaff's fatness. This is followed by one of three comparisons of Falstaff to other men: "I could have better spared a better man." He also points out that "Death" claimed "many dearer in this bloody fray." Also, the prince implicitly compares Falstaff to Hotspur, that he will "by noble Percy lie." There is absolutely no praise for Falstaff in these lines, only tribute to other men as opposed to Falstaff. Aside from the

commendation of noble Percy, the other men praised are even anonymous, and this during a supposed eulogy. He further insults Falstaff by calling him vain, then adds one more insult to his size before stating his plans for the dead body. This speech, even if delivered when the prince's attention is called to more important wartime matters, hardly demonstrates feelings for a dear friend or even likeable acquaintance. It lacks any spontaneous emotion that one should feel at learning of the death of a friend. The brief shows of bitterness such as the short retort to Falstaff's sack joke and the lackluster eulogy demonstrate the waning Hal/Falstaff relationship, but overall, even in these scenes, Hal is still kind to his friend and helps him out tremendously. As Prince Henry takes part in the battle at Shrewsbury, his noble and royal qualities are becoming more apparent, edging out Falstaff and his errant ways in the process. His eulogy painfully shows that there are few positive things to say about the rogue.

The prince's transformation to duty-focused heir-apparent continues in *2 Henry IV*; audiences first hear from the prince in Act II, Scene ii. He enters with Poins, his other wayward companion, and expresses his qualms about spending time with such "vile company" (II.ii.54). He is concerned about the common appearance of drinking small beer, and he tries to speak to Poins about his sadness over his father's sickness. He has proven himself at Shrewsbury, but he does deign to consort with his low friends again. This would be his only fault in this scene though. Hal is associating with his old dissolute crowd but is reluctant to do so, as he says to Poins that "for fault of a better" (II.ii.46), he calls him a friend. Hal and Poins discuss the hypocrisy that Hal would be accused of if he lamented the sickness of his father, and the cause of this alleged hypocrisy falls directly on Falstaff. Those around the prince would not believe any grief of his at the king's failing health "because [he has] been so lewd and so much engrafted to Falstaff" (II.ii.67-8). The prince's problem is here again exposed, and he has already announced,

both in his Part 1, Act I soliloquy and during the play extempore of Part 1, that he will rectify it. The events of Part 2 show that the prince is moving toward a solution. He is concerned about his appearance while in the company of these men, and he is expressing sorrow for his ailing father, thus he is showing distance from his low acquaintances and strengthening his ties to his family and royal duties.

Falstaff is presented as more blatantly self-serving as Part 2 begins, as is evidenced in his brief letter to Hal which Hal and Poins share with the audience. In his letter, Falstaff warns Hal of the dangers of consorting with Poins, most likely so that Falstaff may gain more of the prince's attention for himself. Falstaff describes himself in the letter as "Sir John Falstaff, knight, to the son of the King nearest his father, Harry Prince of Wales" (II.ii.127-9). Poins remarks that this sounds "like a certificate" (II.ii.131). Falstaff seems to be reminding, in print, like a contract, that he is closely connected to the future king. The prince is of course unmoved by anything Falstaff says, or writes in this case, acknowledging that he is writing to "hold his place," and Hal admits regretfully that he "allow[s] this wen to be as familiar with [him] as [his] dog" (II.ii.114-5). Prince Henry likens Falstaff's attachment to him to a wart grown on his princely person, and his words are increasingly less affectionate toward Falstaff and even remorseful at associating with him at all. This is a change from Part 1; before, Hal admitted Falstaff was completely immoral, but showed no regret in befriending him.

In his first encounter with the prince in Part 2, Falstaff commits a rather small offense in comparison to his deeds of Part 1. He merely badmouths the prince and Poins to the common Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet; he is not participating in a robbery and then lying about what happened during the crime or being completely irreverent during grave battle. While listening to Falstaff's insults, the prince makes brutal and aggressive threats such as dragging

him out of the room by his ears and also having his ears cut off (II.iv.222, 252). When the prince and Poins present themselves after eavesdropping on Falstaff, Falstaff's greeting to the prince is a very bold one, calling him "a bastard son of the King's" (II.iv.307). Whereas Falstaff joked about Hal's legitimacy in Part 1's play extempore in the guise of the king, he now explicitly abuses the prince to call him a bastard, and this upon his first greeting of him in the play. His next name for the prince is a "whoreson mad compound of majesty" (II.iv.319). Falstaff has become much ruder to the prince, and the prince has become much less forgiving with Falstaff. Falstaff's insults are not veiled or even slightly justified in this scene, making him a target of deserved retaliation.

The battle of wits in which the prince and Falstaff engage in this scene is bland in comparison to the lively tavern scene of *I Henry IV*. Hal asks Falstaff why he was speaking so badly of him, and Falstaff does somewhat entertainingly weasel himself out of the situation by explaining that he only aimed to make "the wicked not fall in love with thee" (II.iv.348-9). In his quick excuse, he adds that he has "done the part of a careful Friend and a true Subject" (II.iv.349-50). Falstaff is still on his game, but he delivers only a few amusing lines in this diversion between himself and the prince. The fun is decreasing in comparison to *I Henry IV*. This scene does not deliver the entertainment of the Gadshill practical joke and play extempore that took place in the tavern scene of Part 1. The prince hardly even participates in this battle of wits. The game is interrupted by Peto, and the prince is called away.

Shakespeare continues to illustrate the prince's transformation in this scene; Hal exits the tavern to go to his more serious duties, and he expresses feelings of guilt for

So idly profan[ing] the precious time
When tempest of commotion, like the south
Borne with black vapour, doth begin to melt

And drop upon our bare unarmed heads.” (II.iv.394-7)

The prince not only leaves but has grown a conscience about wasting his time so “idly” with Falstaff. Peto brings more news to the tavern, that “a dozen captains” are “asking everyone for Sir John Falstaff” (II.iv.390-2). Not only is the prince moving on, Falstaff is being sought, no longer able to hide from answering to his misdeeds. This time, the prince exits before the authorities catch up with Falstaff, leaving him to fend for himself and not taking care of his troubles for him. The exchange between the Prince and Falstaff is both brief and dull compared to previous interactions between them. Though there is little friendliness in this scene, Shakespeare’s most poignant proof of the decline in the relationship between Hal and Falstaff may be the absence of any scenes that they share between this tavern scene and the final scene of Falstaff’s repudiation.

Falstaff, as a character, suffers a decline to parallel the waning love that Hal has for him. Instead of witnessing more of Falstaff’s power to charm, as in Part 1, Shakespeare presents more of Falstaff’s propensity for deception and immorality in Part 2. His association with a prostitute is clearly illustrated in the second play. He spends much time with Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly. His other new companions are Shallow and Silence whom he vows to use and “fetch off” (III.ii.322). This may be partially because Shakespeare was in need of characters through which Falstaff could practice his humor, with the absence of Hal in his tavern life. Through these new cohorts, Shakespeare also shows Falstaff’s darker side. As Falstaff himself says in Act V, Scene i before the rejection scene, “It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught, as men take diseases, one of another. Therefore let men take heed of their company” (V.i.83-6). The company he keeps throughout 2 Henry IV does not bode well for him.

He is becoming more “diseased” to audiences and is certainly so in Hal’s eyes.

Falstaff’s immorality is further illustrated in his proscription of soldiers in *2 Henry IV*. In Part 1, Falstaff only speaks generally of his “ragamuffin” soldiers. Westmoreland describes them as “exceeding poor and bare, too beggarly” (IV.ii.70). They are only discussed in a few lines, and the subject is dropped. Falstaff himself delivers the sad news that “he has led his ragamuffins where they are peppered. There’s not three of my hundred and fifty alive, and they are for the town’s end to beg during life” (V.iii.38-41). Falstaff is presented here as a heartless leader; he has no qualms about his misdeed in recruiting. It is a brief mention of his wrongdoing though and dismissed as almost humorous, but in Part 2, Shakespeare illustrates Falstaff’s recruiting methods, and little humor can be found in his process.

Falstaff crudely selects soldiers based solely on the potential for his own financial gain. Of the five men Shallow has gathered for Falstaff to choose soldiers from, Falstaff at first finds no fault in any of them, though their faults are plentiful. Shakespeare even names them so that audiences know their usefulness or lack thereof: Mouldy, Wart, Feeble, Shadow, and Bullcalf. The factor that separates any of them from the others, for Falstaff, is Bullcalf’s and Mouldy’s offering of bribes to avoid going to war. As Falstaff dismisses Bullcalf and Mouldy, Shallow points out the obvious, that “they are [Falstaff’s] likeliest men” (III.ii.272). The audience disgustedly sees that it takes only three pounds to quickly sway Falstaff, and he of course offers a Falstaffian justification for his decision. He claims to care not about the stature, the physical abilities of a man, but the spirit. He finds further reasons to support his decisions; a gaunt soldier “presents no mark to the enemy” (III.ii.283-4), and the weak and feeble will at least be good at retreating (286). He ends his speech, furthering his false motives, with “Oh, give me the spare men, and spare me the great ones” (287-8). Even his witty rhetoric will not disguise his

deceptive and despicable actions in this case.

Shakespeare gives too much substantial evidence on stage of Falstaff's immorality for him to free himself of blame with some well-delivered lines. Falstaff twists his misdeeds into positives as he claimed in Part 2's beginning, to be able to "turn diseases into commodity" with his "good wit" (I.ii.274-6). He has given weak reasons why his recruiting practices are good for the king's army. Shakespeare does not let Falstaff's weak reasoning stand in this scene, he follows up the bribing and recruiting with a pathetic display from the newly selected soldier, Wart. Falstaff of course finds Wart's skill in holding his weapon to be "exceeding good," but the dim-witted Shallow again points out the obvious, that "he is not his craft's master" in wielding the cavalier (III.ii.292-6). Falstaff quickly ignores these statements: "These fellows will do well" (306). With ragamuffin selection illustrated, Falstaff's behavior is being revealed for the immoral practice that it is. Shakespeare is not allowing audiences to be bewitched by Falstaff's charm, as they may have been in *1 Henry IV*. His witty lines are decreased, and his iniquities more exposed.

Not only are Falstaff's wicked actions more overt, Falstaff's dramatic power is also in decline in *2 Henry IV*. Some of Falstaff's most well-known lines are those on "honor" in Part 1, delivered as a monologue in battle time. He presents a thought-provoking question in this speech. Should the abstract quality of honor be held in such high esteem? "It hath no skill in surgery" (V.i.134) and cannot physically do anything to help a man. It is merely "air" (136). This speech does more than reveal Falstaff's opinions; it is also brilliant piece of Shakespearean writing, and it is Falstaff's to impart. Additionally, this monologue shows Falstaff's true character as an enemy of false appearances, and it makes audiences laugh. He is unashamed to admit that he is not honorable and does so wittily, and he rationally explains the reasons for his

behavior on the battlefield. But perhaps most significantly, it also furthers his commentary on politics and hypocrisy. He does not put much stock in outward shows, and eloquently explains why by disparaging honor. The soliloquy depicts Falstaff as a foil to Hotspur; Hotspur is honor personified, and Falstaff is defiantly opposed to the entire idea of honor. It also is delivered at a point in the play to keep audiences detached from the battle action so that a moral lesson is the emphasis of the play. Falstaff's honor soliloquy is meaningful and entertaining, a dramatic high point for his character.

Shakespeare seems to be following the same pattern by penning another humorous monologue for Falstaff in *2 Henry IV* at about the same point in the play. In Act IV, Scene ii, Falstaff philosophizes on another matter: drunkenness. When Lancaster tells Falstaff he will speak on his behalf, Falstaff arrogantly responds that Lancaster is incapable of this, for he does not have Falstaff's wit and therefore cannot speak as well as he could. Falstaff then goes on to explain in his monologue the benefits of drunkenness, one of which is that it produces wit like that which Lancaster lacks because he "drinks no wine" (IV.ii.79).

This soliloquy definitely has brilliant lines, but it can never measure up to the honor soliloquy of Part 1. Though his honor soliloquy depicts Falstaff as an ignoble man, he does offer the realistic point that honor can lead to death, that war is wasteful. His Part 2 soliloquy does not measure up in content; he merely praises sack. Though again, there may be some truths in the comedic monologue, trying to convince audiences that drunkenness is the state in which everyone should be is hardly a serious topic. This soliloquy is nothing more than a playful diversion. The brilliance in comedy exists in his notion that wine makes the drinker courageous and that non-drinkers are all but impotent. Falstaff credits alcohol with drying up "all the foolish and dull and curvy vapors" in the brain and making it "apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of

nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes which...becomes excellent wit" (IV.ii.88-92). His hilarious claim that "skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work" (101-103) seems ludicrous, but it may contain traces of truth since alcohol is considered "liquid courage." The ending of the speech is the most preposterously humorous part. Falstaff claims his first teaching for his sons, if he had them, would be to "addict themselves to sack" (111). This speech definitely amuses but does not carry any political weight or relate to any deeper themes or characters of the play; it is simply frivolous and funny, reinforcing that Falstaff is a glutton with no hope of reforming. In his famous honor speech of Part 1, audiences can relate to his questioning of abstractions. In this lengthy praise of alcohol, audiences see Falstaff's continued decadence.

Further justifying Falstaff's decline in Hal's eyes and the audiences' is his non-participation in battle. Falstaff's participation goes from tardy and futile, armed with a bottle of sack and useless soldiers, to non-existent. In Part 2, he shows up after the rebels have been charged with treason and led away. He happens upon Sir Coleville of the Dale and tries to pass off the knight's passive surrender as heroic capture. He overconfidently likens himself to Julius Caesar in that "[he] came, saw, and overcame" (IV.ii.36). This time however, Falstaff is called out for his misrepresentation of his wartime deeds. Lancaster points out that this achievement "was more of [Coleville's] courtesy than [Falstaff's] deserving" (IV.ii.37). In spite of Falstaff's attempts at self-aggrandizing rhetoric, he gains nothing from this babble. Falstaff's success as a humorous storyteller is coming to its end. Evidence mounts that Shakespeare is moving Falstaff in a "melancholy direction" in preparation for the prince's final rejection of him (Ellis 106).

Of course, the rejection of Falstaff by Henry was already more than foreshadowed in Part 1. Hal explicitly explains in the first scene in which he appears that he plans to "throw off" his

“loose behavior” (I.ii.215). Also in the play extempore in the tavern, Hal promises to someday banish Jack Falstaff, and the decline in the relationship between the prince and Falstaff can be noted throughout both parts of *Henry IV*. Act V, Scene ii reinforces that this rejection is coming and it will be big. The scene also adds more suspense, or dread, leading up to the actual rejection. We can imagine a disheartened and downtrodden Falstaff, were he on stage to witness it, at the newly crowned king’s forgiveness of the Lord Chief Justice. Throughout the plays, Falstaff is likened to a father to Hal. He is seen as a surrogate father due to his white hairs and the tutelage and lack of guidance that he provides. Now in Henry V’s dealings with the Chief Justice, after the death of his own father, he not only reconciles with the Chief Justice, he directly calls him “father” on two occasions.

...There is my hand.
You shall be as a father to my youth,
My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear,
And I will stoop and humble my intents
To your well-practiced wise directions. (V.ii.117-20)

This new upright father figure for Henry V is the polar opposite of the “villainous abominable misleader of youth” who Falstaff has been in Hal’s life. The king has placed his trust now in a “bold, just, and impartial spirit” (V.ii.115) and a “limb of noble counsel” for the “great body of [his] state” (V.ii.135). Henry even addresses the Chief Justice directly as father, cementing his new role in Hal’s life.

...War, or peace, or both at once, may be
As things acquainted and familiar to us,
In which you, father, shall have foremost hand. (V.ii.139)

By adopting the Chief Justice as father in this scene, Henry V is already rejecting and replacing Falstaff even before the notorious final scene.

The scene immediately preceding the final rejection scene serves as one last

demonstration that good will triumph over evil. Just as Falstaff will not prosper, his disreputable cohorts are brought to justice as well. Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly are being charged with murder. In spite of their pleas of innocence, the beadle hauls them in. Both Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly implicitly claim that Falstaff is father to Doll's supposed unborn child whom she is afraid she may miscarry, giving one more glimpse of a possible sin of Falstaff's before he suffers his ultimate repudiation. The beadle accuses Tearsheet of stuffing her dress with a couch cushion though, also hinting at just how low in character Falstaff's friends are. This brief scene conveys how despicable Falstaff and his friends are as well as justice for all of their sinfulness.

The final scene of the plays includes the rejection of Falstaff. There are critics such as Bradley who wish it to have been carried out differently, to see Falstaff's snubbing in private, but it is generally accepted that though unpleasant, the rejection is necessary. Thelma Greenfield reminds audiences and readers that they must remember that Falstaff appears in a history, not a comedy, and history "keeps front and center the concerns of the body politic" (143). Though the body politic's welfare requires Falstaff to be cast off, audiences may still feel for the prince's misleader. Greenfield admits that Falstaff has a "gift for socializing" that does not "generate distancing (145)," thus his viewers and critics are inclined to think of alternative fates for him, but in the end they know he cannot survive in Henry V's world.

Yet, the rejection can still leave some disheartened. Choosing to remember the fun-loving friend to Hal, some audience members sympathize with Falstaff in spite of all of his proven misconduct. Moody Prior notes the anomaly that Falstaff is. Seeing Falstaff as a prototype would allow audiences to easily come to terms with his rejection, as Elizabethan audiences probably did. The typical braggart soldier, Vice character, or clown would seemingly be "dismissed without any waste of sympathy" (159). It has already been established that

Falstaff resembles any one of these prototypes, yet he is a unique character who does garner the sympathy of some. No matter the reasonable justification for Henry's dismissal of Falstaff, because of the audience's love of the "goodly portly man" (II.iv.435), it is still just downright unpleasant to witness. Prior examines the sadness in this; it is because "our great master of the quick recovery is reduced to impotence" (168). This is truly the end of the audience's relationship with Jack Falstaff; his spirit dies at his rejection from the king.

Falstaff's power to entertain can outshine his depraved ways, and Wilson points out that some critics' main problem in examining Falstaff is that they are "bewitched" by him and do not look at the entire play's events when considering his end. Ignoring the facts of the play creates critical problems. Stoll's poignant analogy likens the danger of taking Falstaff out of context to another danger: "So it must be when we take a character out of an old play like a pet out of the jungle—we must extract his sting" (41). Shakespeare's intentions may have become derailed by the juggernaut of a character that he created. His "old white-bearded Satan" (II.iv.480) is so beloved that he has repeatedly "had his claws pared" by those who would rather see his charm than his evil (Stoll 41). Audiences must not forget that Hal has alluded to Falstaff's likeness to Satan on more than one occasion, and this is no light charge. In addition to being a "white-bearded Satan," Hal, under the guise of the king, calls Falstaff a "devil that haunts thee in the likeness of an old fat man" (II.iv.463-4). Poins says of Falstaff's health in Part 2 that "the immortal part needs a physician, but that moves not him" (II.ii.111-2). Reminders abound that Falstaff is not meant for heaven. Such an ungodly and immoral man cannot remain in the good graces of the divine and holy king.

It is not only Falstaff's despicable behavior throughout the plays that reminds audiences that Falstaff must meet his demise. Historically, Oldcastle was a fellow soldier of the prince's

who was burned at the stake by him as Henry V. Shakespeare's original naming of Falstaff as Oldcastle is a subtle reminder of the character's fate of banishment (Wilson 16). Also, Shakespeare's audiences would never have thought of disapproving of Falstaff's fate due to their background in drama. They had a knowledge of miracle plays and morality plays, signaling to them that the "Lord of Misrule must have an end" (Wilson 22).

Critics such as Bradley and Bloom are quick to side with Falstaff at the rejection scene, but it is important to note that there are myriad valid reasons for the newly crowned king's behavior in this final scene. At the solemn occasion of his coronation, Henry V sees his old crony thrusting himself into the ceremonies, violating decorum. Furthermore, Falstaff addresses the king as "King Hal, my royal Hal" (V.v.42). Falstaff's address of the king is not only inappropriate, but shows Falstaff's state of mind. He cannot come to terms with Hal's taking his new role seriously, his new direction of uprightness. He is stuck in his ways, wrapped up in himself, so much so that he is not even able to see the prince's transformation (Bell 46). This is confirmed for the audience in Falstaff's behavior at the news of Henry's ascension.

Forever selfish, overconfident, and immoral, Falstaff exhibits all of these qualities in the short space of dashing to London to see his friend, the king. His second comment at the news is "Shallow, choose what office thou wilt in the land, 'tis thine" (V.iii.120-1). Immediately, his thoughts of the prince's new role are selfish ones: "I am Fortune's steward" (V.iii.128). He sees himself as part of the divine king's inner circle, yet his intentions are hardly moral or upright, as is usual. He yells to Shallow, "Let us take any man's horses. The laws of England are at my commandment" (V.iii.134-5). What Falstaff assumes Henry V to feel is completely off: "I know the young king is sick for me" (V.iii.133-4). Indeed audiences already know from Henry's

dealings with the Chief Justice that Falstaff has been forsaken, and rather the young king is sick of Falstaff. The dramatic irony in this scene makes Falstaff's behavior all the more pathetic; he puts on an egregious show of self-entitlement.

The end comes for Falstaff in a speech from the king resulting in banishment for his former friend. Henry's words to Falstaff during the coronation are harsh. The newly crowned Henry V very publicly scorns Falstaff's "white hairs" that ill-become a "fool or jester" (V.v.44). He calls him a "surfeit-swelled" and "profane" dream that he now despises (46). It might seem superfluous at this time to preach to him on "gormandizing" and to present the imagery of an overly wide grave gaping for the fat Falstaff (49-50). Perhaps the king just cannot help himself since he has always made such references to Falstaff's size, in every playful interaction and in his supposed funeral speech for example. Here though, the jab at Falstaff's fatness is much more serious; it points to death, further solidifying this as the end for the portly knight.

The essential part of Henry V's speech is the middle part:

Presume not that I am the thing I was,
For God doth know—so shall the world perceive—
That I have turned away from my former self. (V.v.52-54)

It is necessary to make this announcement to both Falstaff and his subjects, since Falstaff has instigated this confrontation in a public arena, so that they all know his transformation that he promised into honorable and upright king is complete. Henry is then generous enough to furnish Falstaff and his other roguish companions with funding to keep them out of trouble while working toward reform, "for competence of life" and to direct them away from "evils" (V.v.57-8). Here, Henry is all politician; he is reinforcing his image of a good and honest king and making decisions for the welfare of his people. In this, it is difficult to find fault with Henry's motives.

But for Falstaff, even this opportunity for reformation has a melancholy air. According to Bell, “Falstaff has no hope of fulfilling Henry’s condition for reconciliation” (47). Falstaff embodies the “folly” in the play; this is his true meaning. To eradicate the rogue in himself “for Falstaff means death” (47). Audiences can see evidence of this throughout the plays. He is given chances to reform, but he cannot. First of all, the play extempore provides for Falstaff the crucial, telling foreshadowing that this rejection is going to occur. Hal breaks the humor of the game he is playing with Falstaff, the witty exchange of praise and insults to Falstaff’s character while alternately posing as King Henry IV. The mood changes abruptly when Hal breaks character, back to playing himself, to announce that he will banish “poor Jack Falstaff.” His tone is solemn: “I do, I will” (II.iv.499). Falstaff’s response is cut off, for the Sherriff and his attendants are knocking at the door. At precisely the time of Hal’s putting his foot down that the law will prevail over Falstaff’s antics, half in play, half seriously, the actual law has come for answers to Falstaff’s crimes. This moment in the scene should be jarring to Falstaff, but it is not. He continues in jest, to wish to “play out the play,” of course to speak more “in behalf of that Falstaff” (II.iv.502-3). Then he escapes the reality of the law and its consequences by having Hal actually speak on his behalf. There is little chance of Falstaff heeding this warning as he should and working toward reform.

At the end of Part 1, Falstaff is unprompted to reform, except for selfish gain, but actually vows to mend his ways after taking his glory for Hotspur’s death in battle. He fully expects his lie to hold up, the elaborate lie that upon Prince Henry’s departure after defeating Hotspur, both Falstaff and Hotspur, merely out of breath from fighting, rose again to fight with Falstaff as the final victor. Falstaff’s all too confident goal is to “be either earl or duke” (V.iv.145-6) as payment for his phony deed. The prince’s approval of Falstaff’s lie is an extremely lucky break

for him. Instead of gratefulness for this luck, he is far too proud of his ability to twist the truth and too secure in its ability to persuade, and goes to the king “for reward” (V.iv.166). Already expecting to be graced with a new title, though audiences know he could never realistically be granted one above the rank of knight due to lack of birthright alone, Falstaff claims that he will “purge and leave sack and live cleanly as a nobleman should do” (V.iv.168-9). Perhaps it is because he will never earn an earldom or a dukedom for his deeds or misdeeds that he will not follow through with this, but it is fair to assume, knowing his history, that he would not have followed through regardless of the situation. He should recognize his extreme luck at this point, that Hal is willing to “gild” his lie after all of his misbehavior in battle and indeed he should change while he is in Hal’s favor, especially considering that looming warning Hal gave during the play extempore.

Falstaff does not listen to the warnings he is given, and at this point is reaching supreme hubris, to be followed with his opening in Part 2 that he is above “this foolish-compounded clay, man” (I.ii.7-8). To reform would be wise, but it is just not something that the character of Falstaff can broach. Shakespeare explicitly highlights Falstaff’s inability to heed warnings by emphasizing the sense of hearing and Falstaff’s lack thereof. The very first line of *2 Henry IV* is Rumor’s bold exclamation “Open your ears!” (Prologue 1). Falstaff later pretends to be deaf and arrogantly explains to the Chief Justice that he has “the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking” (I.ii.134-5). This is in direct response to the Chief Justice’s charge that Falstaff “hear[s] not what [he] says to [him]” (I.ii.131-2). This can be contrasted to the prince’s response to the Chief Justice, just after the death of King Henry IV that his “voice shall sound as [the Chief Justice does] prompt [his] ear” (V.ii.118). The Chief Justice stands for reason and order in *2 Henry IV*, and Shakespeare clearly depicts Hal’s ear as open to reason and Falstaff’s as

resolutely closed; therefore, the possibility of reformation for Falstaff is less than hopeful.

The play ends on the somber note of Falstaff and his companions being led away to jail; Falstaff has fallen. His attempts to explain the king's behavior are not as convincing as his twisted views of truth often have the ability to be. He makes the excuse for the newly crowned Hal that he must pretend to despise Falstaff, but no one in Falstaff's company pretends to believe Falstaff's explanation. Even Shallow knows that Henry V will never send for Falstaff and will never grant him any favors. Shakespeare throws in one final joke at Falstaff's expense even at his moment of misery. Falstaff, still reeling from Henry's treatment of him, attempts to make Shallow believe that he "will be the man yet that shall make [him] great" (V.v.81-2). Shallow must take his lines and turn them into a pun at the expense of his size because Hal will never again be the man to do it. Shallow knows Falstaff will not do this "unless [he] should give [him] his] doublet and stuff [him] out with straw" (V.v.83-84). This, more than anything perhaps, portrays Falstaff as extremely crestfallen; he cannot find humor at this point in the play. His inability to return a pun or joke in this final scene is further evidence of the symbolic death of Falstaff.

Falstaff's spirit is dead at Part 2's end, but his physical death comes in *Henry V*. Nym and Pistol discuss the cause of Falstaff's deathbed illness. His "heart is fractured and corroborate" because the "king hath run bad humours on the knight" (II.i.125-8). Falstaff never appears in the play; his death is described by Mistress Quickly. Even this brief, informal funeral speech is not a very favorable one. In it, the hostess says he is not going to hell, but audiences know her reasoning is often misguided. She imparts some of the final words of Falstaff, forsaking women and sack, and garbles his meaning in the process. The old cronies of Falstaff's cease to speak of him, and decide to move on: "Shall we shog? The king will be gone from Southampton"

(II.iii.47-8). Again the king prevails and Falstaff is eradicated; attention is turned to Henry V, and Falstaff along with his memory are no longer.

Falstaff's scandalous misconduct and gloomy rejection are often explored in criticism, but his intellect, charm, individuality, and vitality are also commonly praised, making Falstaff a unique character. Bell sums up the conundrum of Falstaff's character simply: "One man's holy fool is another man's humbug" (40). It is important to keep in mind that Falstaff is a character in a history play and not a comedy, as Greenfield states. The comic element of the play is entertaining, but it is not meant to eclipse Shakespeare's points about English history and his own contemporary commentary on England. Shakespeare writes to promote English nationalism, not wastrel knights. Bell is another critic who lauds the entertainment Falstaff provides, but also observes that "the struggle between folly and reality is great theater but no contest" (42). In reality, King Henry IV and King Henry V have a title to uphold and duties to carry out. Shakespeare did decide to name the plays after Henry IV, making the crown the central issue of his work and Falstaff a noteworthy symbol and diversion. The adage that actions speak louder than words certainly applies to Falstaff. He has a truly superior way with words which is praiseworthy, but his more significant actions are less than commendable, making him a character that is enjoyable yet inevitably expelled from the king's company.

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