

contest each enigmatic item of evidence. This important biography is thus not only a solid reference work, but also an enjoyable and occasionally thrilling read.

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Tom McAlindon. *Shakespeare's Tudor History: A Study of Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001. Pp 225.

Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays feature two of his most famous characters, Falstaff and Hal, who metamorphoses into the legendary Henry V, victor of Agincourt. The fact that Shakespeare wrote the plays as a twin set is in itself significant. No other two works in the canon are quite this closely linked, since the action of the second play connects seamlessly with the penultimate scene of the first play. When Rumour, famously painted full of tongues, enters at the start of *2 Henry IV* we are returned to the inside of the first play. Traditionally the two parts are played off against each other, with *Part 1* almost invariably coming out on top as the more interesting of the two. This is due in part to the prominent roles played in it by Hotspur and Falstaff. Hotspur in particular is not only Hal's glamorous 'changeling' (a phrase ruefully applied by Bolingbroke about his feckless son), but he is married to the affectionate Kate and engages in a battle of wits with the Welsh warrior Owen Glendower.

When Glendower notes portentously that he can 'call spirits from the vasty deep', Hotspur replies, 'Why, so can I, or so can any man, / But will they come when you do call for them?' After this we love him and cease to care whether or not he is of the devil's or the rebels' party. His political recklessness suddenly matters as little as his cheerfully grating remarks on poetry. The sheer verve of Shakespeare's portrayal of Hotspur carries all before it, including his politics. These may well be misguided; at least Bolingbroke thinks so, but then we can never be sure about how much we are meant to trust him. This is after all the same Bolingbroke whose claim to the throne is extremely precarious. Shakespeare never lets us forget that, and the three Henry plays that follow *Richard II* all revert to his usurpation, and not just in the drawn-out death-bed scene in *Part 2*. In *Henry V*, before Agincourt, Hal as Henry V prays that his men may not on the morrow have to pay the penalty for his father's usurpation and promises to do even more than he has to honour the remains of Richard.

As so often in Shakespeare (for example in *Antony and Cleopatra*), the play's imaginative dynamic pulls in the opposite direction from its historical and political frame. But it is with the 'frame' that this new and comprehensive study

of the two *Henry IV* plays starts. As its title promises McAlindon's book touches base with the critical tradition and Tudor history (not, he stresses, of the 'new historical' nature, but the older more orthodox mainstream history).

McAlindon's coverage of the reception of the plays and their relation to real life history is uncontentious, if at times a bit understated. His use of the word 'enabling' sounds a note that is almost bold in a book that generally steers clear of modish vocabulary. The following sentence is not unrepresentative of the book's tone and approach. It comes toward the end of the chapter on the critical fortunes on the two *Henry IV* plays and enunciates its thesis:

The pioneer work of critics such as Ulrici and Simpson established a historical context for *Henry IV* which remains enabling. Simpson's conviction that Shakespeare saw political conflict in England during the late Middle Ages in the light of the religio-political conflicts and changes of his own time, and the concomitant suggestion that there is a religious subtext in the sceptical and oppositional quality of Shakespeare's political thought, opened up a line of inquiry which has not, I believe, been pursued far enough, although [the critics] Campbell and Scoufos have made valuable contributions. (24)

McAlindon's survey of the critical tradition is followed by a study of the Tudor historical and political framework in which the plays were written. That Shakespeare's sense of England's late medieval past is stamped by the present is undeniable; and his 'present' now includes above all the writings of Machiavelli, even though no English translation was readily available to Shakespeare or his contemporaries. Closer to home Shakespeare owed a huge debt not only to his favourite chronicler of British history, Raphael Holinshed, but also to Foxe's protestant polemic *The Book of Martyrs*. McAlindon judiciously assesses the period context in a manner which recalls Geoffrey Bullough's monumental study of Shakespeare's narrative and dramatic sources as well as the writings of E. M. W. Tillyard. This is a brave thing to do in the present climate of Shakespeare studies, but he does it well, and he resists drawing direct parallels between context and Shakespearian text.

The argument that Shakespeare had a strong sense of history is irrefutable. Why else would he write no fewer than ten history plays, including two tetralogies which cover the historical period from *King John* to *Henry VIII* and even Queen Elizabeth I in Cramner's prophecy in that play? But we also need to guard against concluding therefore that he necessarily fell in with the *Zeitgeist*, assuming that such a thing ever exists. McAlindon is fully alert to the pitfalls of just this kind of study and the entire second part of his book is dedicated to a close reading of the two *Henry IV* plays. The title of this section,

'Text', and the three sub-titles and chapter-headings 'Time', 'Truth', and 'Grace' signal his wish to keep the plays' rhetorical texture separate from the wider discourse of period politics. While the close readings of the two *Henry IV* plays that follow rely on the foundations of the book's historical section, they do so at arm's length.

At his best, as in the discussion of Falstaff whom McAlindon calls 'a comical parody of the famous protestant hero', his gently persistent readings repay close attention. Like a number of editors and writers on *Henry IV, 1 & 2*, he sees the Falstaff of the first play as a more dynamic figure than the ailing lord of misrule of *Part 2*. In the first play Falstaff shadows the Prince of Wales throughout. Their double act in and out of the Boar's Head tavern underlines the play's obsession with duality and doubles: Westminster and Eastcheap, father and son, king and counter-king, honour and shame, and finally Kate Hotspur's Harry squaring up to that other Harry who will also, in Shakespeare at least, marry another Kate at the end of *Henry V*. All this is true, and yet Falstaff speaks more lines in the second part, enjoys a larger stage presence, and the old reprobate is as much a source of comedy as he was in *Part 1*. A point that might have been made in this book is that Shakespeare's contemporaries were perfectly aware of the hegemony of Falstaff in *Part 2*, since a play called 'Sir Iohn Falstaffe' (in the chamber accounts for 1612–13) was almost certainly *Henry IV, Part 2*. During the same season a play called 'The Hotspur' (probably *Henry IV, Part 1*) was also put on.

Although McAlindon acknowledges the importance of the controversy around Falstaff's original name of Oldcastle, he does not run with it. And yet the forced change of nomenclature in this play has become the most celebrated case of Elizabethan stage censorship and therefore warrants a more extensive discussion. Nothing, after all, moves Shakespeare closer to the Catholic recusant fold than his treatment of Sir John Oldcastle, *if* he indeed wrote Oldcastle in the full knowledge that the protestants would identify with him as one of theirs. McAlindon's implicit argument is that the character is fictional and that he does not resemble the historical character of Oldcastle, a view marshalled already in a number of different places, notably in David Bevington's 1987 Oxford edition of *Henry IV Part 1*. If one grants, as I think one must, that this position is basically correct, then McAlindon's readings come into their own. He is acutely alert to Falstaff's biblical, and particularly Pauline, tags, and notes suggestively that Falstaff resembles Castiglione's courtier rather more than a royal fool. It is hard to disagree with this, although it is also the case that such a position may well underestimate the sheer anarchic force that is Falstaff.

Moreover, Shakespeare censures Falstaff rather more sternly than McAlindon admits. Falstaff's corrupt recruiting practices in *Part 2* show the character at his most reprehensible. If there is something amiss in this otherwise scrupulous study, it may be that its focus is too top-heavy in its readings of the texts. There is not quite enough here about Mouldy, Feeble, Wart, and Bullcalf. For Falstaff these men are just cannon fodder. As he cheerfully notes, 'Go to, peace, Mouldy. You shall go, Mouldy; it is time you were spent'. By structuring his argument around the political and historical theories of the time McAlindon is almost inevitably pushed towards the court and clergy. And yet Shakespeare does give a voice to the yeomen and yokels here as much as in *Henry V*. When the king is challenged by Williams the night before Agincourt, we know that Shakespeare means us to take note. For him the Henry plays are 'condition of England' works as surely as the novels of a later century.

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Timothy Raylor. *The Essex House Masque of 1621: Viscount Doncaster and the Jacobean Masque*. Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000. Pp xv, 204.

The Jacobean court masque presents a special challenge even to a serious reader. The texts are so sparse and allusive, so dependent on visual and musical contexts, that an unmediated reading is almost a waste of time. Mere footnotes, however, do little to convey the complex interplay of political, aesthetic, social, and economic forces at work behind the scenes of any important court entertainment. Most of these masques were commissioned and sponsored by James I's courtiers as subtly coded communications of loyalty and flattery, involving topical references framed within a system of animated emblems drawn from classical mythology. To do the job of interpretation properly, even for a minor masque, requires an entire volume.

In *The Essex House Masque of 1621: Viscount Doncaster and the Jacobean Masque*, Timothy Raylor has presented a compelling argument for identifying a manuscript found among the Portland Papers at the University of Nottingham as the missing text of the masque in question. Although the libretto is still unattributed, Raylor makes a good case for including it among the masques (which include Jonson's *Lovers Made Men*) that were performed to the order of James Hay, Viscount Doncaster.