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DOUBLING AS THE DEVICE OF FOCALIZING IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HENRY IV*

Prince. Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf
(*IH4* 3.2.147–148)

Following the events of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* brings a sense of *déjà vu*. Scenes refer often to each other, the "great world" of the fragile kingship finds a parallel in the base yet wonderfully vivid lives of Falstaff and his companions, and often there are in two neighbouring scenes an account of an event, and the event itself (not necessarily in this order). Why is this so?

John Russell Brown claims in his *Writing for Performance* that each Elizabethan play was written with an "argument" in the author's mind. The argument of a play is 'what its action makes clear, what it manifests... something more substantial than its story as a sequence of events taking place on stage... In a word, it is what a play *does*' (Brown 1996: 149). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, for instance, Brown has traced the argument as 'an alteration of formalities which fill the stage, and private talk' (Brown 1996: 152). It seems that Shakespeare's crucial decision about the presentation of the history of Henry IV was 'doubling'—that is, constant cross-references of scenes and some characters; parallels between the subplots; and also projection, a kind of "linear doubling", preparing the audience for the events that will come, or explaining what has happened. This essay will deal with cases of doubling as devices of focalizing the audience's attention.

Shakespeare presents the events of Henry IV's reign in two plays, written towards the end of the sixteenth century: *Henry IV, Part 1* (1596–97) and *Henry IV, Part 2* (1597–98). The two parts of *Henry IV* are counted among history plays, but they reach far beyond the limits of the category, as the following comments on the generally accepted features of history plays will show.

Brown outlines the basic topics of histories as 'the tales of death and succession of kings', in contrast to comedies, which are preoccupied with wooing, and tragedies—the tales of killing (Brown 1996: 121). Smallwood presents a more detailed view—history plays are concerned with human political behaviour, with the desire for power, which is in English history equalled to kingship, and with

the response to gaining and losing it (Smallwood 1987: 147). In *Henry IV*, the mischievous world of ‘Sir John Sack-and-Sugar’ Falstaff (*IH4* 1.2.125–126), a most un-royal companion to the young Prince Harry, takes up just as much space as do the grave royal issues, and most successfully draws our attention away from them (just as Falstaff draws Harry away from his royal tasks). The number of the play’s scenes preoccupied not with kingship but with Falstaff’s little mischiefs, pub adventures, and idleness thus makes it quite plausible to support Brown’s view that ‘there is no such thing’ as a Shakespearean tragic, comic or history play form (Brown 1996: 116).

Let me present in detail the elaborate interweaving of the “king’s” and “Falstaff’s” worlds that battle for the heart of Prince Hal (or Harry), the later King Henry V. In the following chart, **h** stands for the Prince, **A** and **A’** represent the main narrative (**A** marks the King’s party, **A’** the rebels) and **B** is the symbol for the stage situations dominated by the Falstaff’s “base world”:

Henry IV, Part 1

1.1: **A + A’**
 1.2: **B + h**
 1.3: **A + A’**
 2.1: **B**
 2.2: **B + h**
 2.3: **A’**
 2.4: **B + h**
 3.1: **A’**
 3.2: **A + h**
 3.3: **B + h**
 4.1: **A’**
 4.2: **A + B + h**
 4.3: **A’ + A**
 4.4: **A’**
 5.1: **A + B + h**
 5.2: **A’**
 5.3: **A + A’ + B + h**
 5.4: **A + A’ + B + h**
 5.5: **A + A’ + h**

Henry IV, Part 2

1.1: **A’**
 1.2: **B + A**
 1.3: **A’**
 2.1: **B + A**
 2.2: **B + h**
 2.3: **A’**
 2.4: **B + h**
 3.1: **A**
 3.2: **B**
 4.1: **A’**
 4.2: **A + A’**
 4.3: **A + A’ + B**
 4.4: **A**
 4.5: **A + h**
 5.1: **B**
 5.2: **A + h**
 5.3: **B**
 5.4: **B**
 5.5: **A + h + B**

The chart follows the division into scenes presented in the modern editions of Shakespeare’s plays, and differs notably from the play division known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. To Elizabethan audience, a scene was a matter of entries, exits or regrouping of characters (Sprague 1935: 39; Brooks 1961: 11). The modern concept, starting a new scene whenever the stage is empty, is used here as a handy shortcut. Still, notwithstanding the “editor’s licence”, the pattern of the scenes reveals much of the play’s structure—not only the “just” distribution of the two plots mentioned—the royal and the Falstaffian plots, but also the crucial points in the development of the action:

Let me document this on the following examples:

- 1.3: **A + A'**: In *Henry IV, Part 1*, 1.3 is the last scene where the King and the future rebels (**A** and **A'**) appear on the stage together as one party. This early scene launches the separation, when the King gets upset by Worcester's presence (and lets his anger show by the words 'I see danger and disobedience in thine eye', *1H4* 1.3.16). The King sends Worcester away, together with Hotspur and Northumberland; and the three of them start to prepare the plot.
- 3.2: **A + h**: The second scene of Act 3 stages the "return of the Prodigal son" (**A + h**): It is the first scene where Prince Hal meets his royal father; before, Hal only moved within Falstaff's subplot. Two of the three immediately following scenes bring on the stage the Prince and Falstaff together again, but Hal has already changed; that is, the change is overt now, as the nature of the Prince's misbehaviour had been ambiguous even before.
- 5.3: **A + A' + B + h**: The first meeting of the King's and the rebels' war parties as late as in 5.3 (**A + A'**) shows us how long it has taken before the actual battle starts.
- 4.3: **A + A' + B**: In *Henry V, Part 2* we can see that the climax of the drama is no longer the rebellion, which terminates long before the end of the play; (the rebels—**A'**—last appear in 4.3), but the events tied to the death of Henry IV, succession of Prince Hal to the throne and the new king's behaviour.

Smallwood argues in his essay on Shakespeare's history plays that the reign of King Henry IV was "a messy episode" in the English history. Taking into account the well-known fact that Shakespeare widely consulted chronicles, manuscripts, history plays and other sources before producing any of his history plays, it is an interesting starting point that there was not really much in those books (Smallwood 1987: 157). On the other hand, this might have helped Shakespeare feel free in examining the period in a broader view, as the time leading up to the "cataclysmic half-century" after the death of Henry V, and seek the causes of the future failure (Smallwood 1987: 144).

Shakespeare strives to present the anti-royal rebellion, which makes up the official plot of *Henry IV*, from the views of all the acting characters, the rebels as well as the King's party. The action thus gets doubled—we are present alternately on both conflicting sides, giving a similar, if not quite the same, attention to both. Shakespeare presents the alternate views perhaps most notably through the series of scenes in most of Act 3 and the whole Act 4 of *Part 1*, where he switches three times from the King's party to the rebels'. The cuts presenting the two parties show the growing tension before the ultimate fight—both war camps prepare themselves for the battle (which *finally* comes in 5.3) and comment on the enemy's proceedings and strength. Among the mutual comments is the fol-

lowing moment when Hotspur asks about his noble namesake, and Vernon depicts Harry's army to him:

Hotspur. Where is ...

The nimble-footed madcap, Prince of Wales, and his comrades
...?

Vernon. All furnish'd, all in arms, ... as full of spirit as the month of
May...

Hotspur. No more, no more: worse than the sun in March

This praise doth nourish agues. Let them come; ...

Come, let me taste my horse, ...

Against the bosom of the Prince of Wales

(*IH4* 4.1.94–121)

The fact that Shakespeare examines the rebellion from various points of view naturally assures us that he gives the audience enough space to consider the rebels' reasons for the war. In the first part of *Henry IV*, the antagonists' opinions are presented as early as 3.1 (10–13; this is where they make the upset King reflect on the disobedience in Worcester's eye), and elaborated in *IH4* 1.3 (145–187), *IH4* 4.3 (52–111) and *IH4* 5.1 (30–71); in the two latter scenes they are presented to the King and his companions. In the second part, the King admits some of their reasons when he is pondering over the roots of the uprising in 3.1, and the rebels come up with the history themselves once again in *2H4* 4.1.

Moreover, the rebels are presented to us not only as a group of political agents, all-but-undistinguished from each other. We get familiar with the private life of the rebellious Hotspur and his closest friends quite as much as with the troubles of the royal father and his son. And both parties have their deal of touching private scenes in the drama(s). For rebels, it is the scenes with Hotspur's loving wife Kate, including the wonderfully "idle" passage of 3.1.192–266, quoted by Brown as one of those scenes where 'time seems to stand still and words are spoken from the heart which otherwise could not have been spoken' (Brown 1996: 132). This scene is mirrored even after Hotspur's death in Kate's dialogue with his father Northumberland (*2H4* 2.3).

Brown comments on the fact that sometimes, it seems that Shakespeare "has written too much" in his plays, presenting the same action again, only through different eyes. Definitely, some of the scenes might be left out without blurring the plot or the message of the play. Yet, in the changes of focus, he perhaps aims 'to prevent an audience believing that all has become clear and that a single response is all that matters' (Brown 1996: 128–129).

Shakespeare plays with the various "rebellions" appearing in the story, bringing the issue up time and again. In an early point in the drama, Falstaff and his companions prepare for, and carry out, an assault on the wayfarer's in Gadshill (*IH4* 2.1, 2.2), and their "small-scale plotting" serves as the introduction and juxtaposition to the "plotting at a large scale"—the rebellious antagonistic views of Hotspur, his father and Worcester, resulting finally in the home war. The

funny little crime with its consequent confusion, and the dangerous uprising interweave throughout the whole second act and well into Act 3. Another "rebellion" is the Prince's un-royal behaviour—Harry is long lingering in the world of Falstaff, until, however, he faces his royal obligations and commits himself to the needs of his country in war (*IH4* 4.2). Third, the King Henry IV himself was a rebel once, usurping power from Richard II. On his death bed, he admits the fact himself, handing the crown over to his son with the comment that 'troublesome it sat upon my head' (*2H4* 4.5.185).

Prince Hal is far from being a responsible successor to the English throne. The King even believes, though he is mistaken in this, that Hal could join the rebels, changing his "rebellious" into real crime:

King Henry IV. Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,
Which art my near'st and dearest enemy?
Thou that art like enough, through vassal fear,
Base inclination, and the start of spleen,
To fight against me under Percy's pay,
To dog his heels, and curtsy at his frowns...

(*IH4* 3.2.122–127)

Harry's hesitation between the royal and the base worlds 'provokes the maximum dramatic expectation' (Humphreys 1996: 48), because we know that he must ultimately choose to follow only one of the authorities of his life. The possibility that he could even join the rebellious Hotspur party and stand against his father makes the whole question the more provocative. Shakespeare's critics see the characters around Prince Harry—the King, Falstaff and Percy—almost as a continuation of the good and bad angels standing for externalized motivation in the morality plays. Falstaff, the irresponsible and amoral alternative, is a figure almost wholly invented by Shakespeare. Even though he has a living model, a certain Oldcastle, companion to the young Henry V, Shakespeare uses him rather as a symbolic figure instead of tracing Oldcastle's personal history. Humphreys argues that Falstaff is referred to in the play 'in morality-idioms, such as "iniquity, ruffian, vanity in years, ... the abominable misleader, the old white-bearded Satan"' (Humphreys 1996: 43), and Wiggins quotes from *Henry IV* the comment about Falstaff as the 'misleader of youth' (Wiggins 2000: 94). Yet the dichotomy between the characters that serve as models for Henry is ambivalent: Falstaff is a cowardly rogue, yet he is full-blooded and energetic, in contrast to 'the cold Bolingbrokes' (Humphreys 1996: 49); Hotspur is blunt and heroic, but he's a firebrand; and the King stands for rule, but he has usurped the throne (Humphreys 1996: 47–49).

The dichotomies of the main characters lead us to a case of doubling that is perhaps crucial to the argument of the whole of *Henry IV, Part 1*. There are two young Harry's in the play—Prince Hal and Harry Hotspur, and it becomes more and more clear to the audience, that the bifurcation must end with only one of them left alive for the future England's survival. Hotspur 'acts as a foil for

Prince Hal' (Smallwood 1987: 156), at first embodying the bravery and concern for the country which the idle Harry so very much lacks, and later on paralleled by the Prince as a young man of similar war capabilities, and of a character similarly whimsical. Hotspur is criticised for his impatience, lack of understanding for others and defect of manners; Hal is, even after his edification, depicted as moody and 'flint' (*IH4* 1.3.236–9; *IH4* 3.1.176–188; *IH4* 4.4.30–40). Yet Hotspur was much too successful in the role of England's foremost Harry to remain there after the Prince decided to take it up; and they are both well aware of that status.

Prince. I am the Prince of Wales; and think not, Percy
To share with me in glory any more:
Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere;
Nor can one England brook a double reign,
Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.

Hotspur. Nor shall it, Harry; for the hour is come
To end the one of us...

(*IH4* 5.4.63–68)

Shakespeare presents in his story of King Henry IV two totally different sets of values and ways of life—the royal and the Falstaffian, and he shows parallels and juxtapositions between the main figures of the play. But the web of juxtapositions and parallels in *Henry IV* is much more subtle, consisting of numerous small matters. There are issues appearing in both the royal and the Falstaffian subplots, but mirrored in each of the two “worlds” with a different focus. Besides the “small-scale” and “large-scale” crimes, it is for instance the doubled concern with shallow justice / Justice Shallow in *2H4*. The last issue is worth a more detailed comment:

Justice Shallow is a minor figure, appearing only in a few scenes of *Henry V, Part 2*. Through his recollections of the old times, he gets in the play a personal history of his own, adding also to Falstaff's. However, his version of the past is blurred by the need of an aging man to present his glorious deeds from long ago. Falstaff puts Shallow's record straight in a soliloquy: 'I do see the bottom of Justice Shallow. Lord, Lord! how subject we old men are to this vice of lying' (*2H4* 3.2.328–330).

By no means accidental is Falstaff's comment 'I do see the bottom of Justice Shallow', echoed two scenes later. When Hastings presents to John of Lancaster, brother of Prince Hal, the view of the inexhaustible stock of future rebels, he is silenced by a laconic answer full of contempt: 'You are too shallow, Hastings, much too shallow, / To sound the bottom of the after-times' (*2H4* 4.2.50–51). (And compare also Lancaster's comment on the leaders of rebellion 'Most shallowly did you these arms commence'; *2H4* 4.2.119).

Perhaps it is not far-fetched to comment on the tie between the cases of Justice Shallow and Hastings coming from their shared inability to be realistic about things remote in time—the only difference is that one of them has fanta-

sies concerning the past, the other unreal visions of the future. Each is disastrous—in the opening scene of Act 3 of *Henry IV, Part 2*, the King himself learns about the necessity to read well in the past in his dialogue with Warwick about the roots of the rebellion:

Warwick. There is a history in all men's lives,
 Figuring the nature of the times decas'd;
 The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,
 With a near aim, of the main chance of things
 As yet not come to life...

(2*H4* 3.1.80–84)

Yet seeing the question of Justice Shallow (or shallow justice) only as a matter of the historical blindness of some characters might be too shallow indeed. It may serve as much more: as this author claims, supported by various evidence throughout the play, he does not necessarily side with Henry IV.

As the cases of doubling, or cross-references of the scenes, are numerous in the two plays, I would like to add to the matters pursued so far a kind of preview of other parallels and moments of projection. Even though none of the following incidents is crucial to the meaning of the play, I find them interesting as a set of evidence of Shakespeare's "argument" used in *Henry IV*. Each of the instances of doubling quoted below is preceded by a general title for the action and a note ranking it with projection (preparing for the upcoming events, explaining them or working on them) or parallel (using the same motif in two places in the story line).

Projection: Ushering Prince Hal

- Harry is introduced in the play first indirectly, in his father's speech, as the misbehaving Prince (*1H4* 1.1). In the next scene he comes on stage and is misbehaving.

Projection: Planning an action and executing it

- In *1H4*, when Falstaff and his companions are going to rob wayfarers at Gadshill, Prince Hal and Poins agree on robbing the robbers (*1H4* 2.1), and carry out their plan just the way they agreed on it (*1H4* 2.2).
- Worcester and the other rebels consult their plans on stage (*1H4* 1.3, 2.3) before they start the action.
- Hal promises in a soliloquy in *1H4* 1.2. that he will reform and become a loyal royal son, which he does in the end.
- In *1H4* 5.4, Falstaff first decides to swear that he killed Hotspur and a moment after he swears he killed Hotspur.
- In *2H4* 2.2 Hal and Poins plan to 'see Falstaff... in his true colours' (*2H4* 2.2.186–187) by disguising themselves into drawers and wait

upon him at the table in the pub. In *2H4* 2.4 two Drawers enter for just about 25 lines and say that the prince and Poin will come and put on their costumes to disguise themselves as drawers; and in *2H4* 2.4.253 the prince and Poin come disguised.

Projection: Action “rehearsed” and then carried out

- In *1H4* 2.4, Falstaff and Prince Hal make fun of the upcoming meeting of Hal with his royal father and play it; two scenes later, in *1H4* 2.6, the King and Prince meet.
- Douglass, one of the rebels, fights with Blunt in the battle in *1H4* 5.3 and kills him, believing for a while that he has been fighting with the King; soon afterwards, in *1H4* 5.4, Douglass really fights with the King.

Projection: Commenting ex-post on an event seen on stage

- When Falstaff swears he killed Hotspur (*1H4* 5.4), Harry responds to the lie by repeating the facts that we saw a moment ago (‘Why, Percy I killed myself, and saw thee dead’ *1H4* 5.4.147).
- Morton, the last of the three messengers that come to Northumberland at the beginning of *King Henry V, Part 2*, sums up to him what we saw in the last two scenes of *Part 1* (*2H4* 1.2.105–135).

Projection: Repeating the same words twice over:

- Prince Hal praises Hotspur (*1H4* 5.1.87–100); Vernon repeats his words to Hotspur and comments on them (*1H4* 5.2.50–68).
- Bardolph brings the message outlined to us before by the lying Rumour (*2H4* 1.1)
- In *1H4* 5.5, the King divides the army into parts going against Scots and the Welsh, and appoints the leaders, but does not say who will go against the French; in *2H4* 1.3 Hastings, one of the rebels, informs his party about this division and supplies the names of the leaders just as the King did, but doesn’t know who will fight the French.
- In *2H4* 5.2, Lord Chief Justice suspects the new king that he does not like him; a couple of lines later, the new king says: ‘You are, I think, assur’d I love you not’ (5.2.64).
- Hal’s “prophecy” that he will ‘throw off’ his ‘loose behaviour’ (*1H4* 1.2.230) is brought to our minds again with Warwick assuring the dying King that the prince will cast off his followers (4.4.68–78).

Projection: Misstatement of facts known to us:

- In *IH4* 5.1, the King promises peace if the rebels give up; but Worcester deliberately misrepresents the King's words (*IH4* 5.2) because he himself could not be forgiven.
- In the induction to *2H4*, a chorus—Rumour enters and informs us that the rebellion was defeated, but that she is going to spread an untruthful report about Hotspur's victory.
- Soon after Rumour, Lord Bardolph comes to Northumberland from the battlefield with the false message about Hotspur's victorious battle.

Projection: Commenting on future events

- At the end of the play, John of Lancaster serves as a kind of chorus for *Henry V*, talking about the upcoming affairs—the new king summons a parliament, and prepares a war with France.

Projection: Wrong assumption about future events

- The last scenes of *2H4* (5.4 and 5.5) show the difference between Falstaff's guesses about his contented future life as Henry V's confidant, and the behaviour of the new king towards him.
- Lord Chief Justice suspects the new king that he loves him not and will dismiss him (*2H4*); Henry V recalls their former antagonism, but leaves the Chief Justice in his office and praises him.

Parallel: Falstaff's behaviour and his undeserved support

- (1) In the battle with the rebels in *IH4*, Falstaff practically does not fight, and subsequently claims that he killed Hotspur; Harry sees through the lie but decides to support Falstaff if it helps him (4.5);
- (2) in the battle of *2H4* (4.3), Falstaff, once again, starts "fighting" when everything is over, and John of Lancaster behaves similarly to Harry in *Part 1*, saying that he will speak of Falstaff 'better than you deserve' (*2H4* 4.3.91).

This essay was a case study of the two parts of *Henry IV* from the point of view of doubling, frequently used in the two plays. The two ways of doubling within a drama, parallels and projection, seem to make up the basis of the structure of *Henry IV*. The plot and subplot work as conspicuous parallels, one of them presenting the political issues of the royal court and the anti-royal rebellion, the other focussing the audience's attention on the common world of Sir John Falstaff and his friends. Falstaff, companion to the young Prince Harry, misleading the Prince from the royal obligations, is a prominent figure of the play, and the

broad space which he and his mischief gains in the drama makes it obvious that in *Henry IV*, which is counted among Shakespeare's history plays, the devices of the history play and the comedy overlap. Another crucial parallel in *Henry IV* is the "bifurcation" of the young Harry—the play points to the resemblance between Prince Henry and Harry Percy (or Hotspur) who is one of the leaders of the rebel party. As the two namesakes are conscious of this dichotomy, they strive to get rid of the other; and the Prince kills Hotspur in the final battle between the royal army and the rebels.

The two parts of *Henry IV* include a host of minute cases of doubling. I have pursued some of them in detail, examining above all the issue of shallow justice and Justice Shallow which perhaps point to the same problem of unrealistic visions of history; and I have added an overview of other evidence of parallels or projection. The technique of doubling, which Shakespeare extensively uses in *Henry IV*, presents the same facts from various points of view. One of the outcomes of this procedure is reminding the spectators that it is impossible to have a single and unconditional interpretation of history.

Note

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