TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

General Editor: Michael Scott

The series is designed to introduce sixth-form and undergraduate students to the themes, continuing vitality and performance of major dramatic works. The attention given to production aspects is an element of special importance, responding to the invigoration given to literary study by the work of leading contemporary critics.

The prime aim is to present each play as a vital experience in the mind of the reader – achieved by analysis of the text in relation to its themes and theatricality. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the relevance of the work to the modern reader and the world of today. At the same time, traditional views are presented and appraised, forming the basis from which a creative response to the text can develop.

In each volume, Part One: *Text* discusses certain key themes or problems, the reader being encouraged to gain a stronger perception both of the inherent character of the work and also of variations in interpreting it. Part Two: *Performance* examines the ways in which these themes or problems have been handled in modern productions, and the approaches and techniques employed to enhance the play's accessibility to modern audiences.

A Synopsis of the play is given and an outline of its major sources, and a concluding Reading List offers guidance to the student's independent study of the work.

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Parts 1 and 2

Text and Performance

T. F. WHARTON

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TO MY SON
TOM

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

For many years a mutual suspicion existed between the theatre director and the literary critic of drama. Although in the first half of the century there were important exceptions, such was the rule. A radical change of attitude, however, has taken place over the last thirty years. Critics and directors now increasingly recognise the significance of each other's work and acknowledge their growing awareness of interdependence. Both interpret the same text, but do so according to their different situations and functions. Without the director, the designer and the actor, a play's existence is only partial. They revitalise the text with action, enabling the drama to live fully at each performance. The academic critic investigates the script to elucidate its textual problems, understand its conventions and discover how it operates. He may also propose his view of the work, expounding what he considers to be its significance.

Dramatic texts belong therefore to theatre and to literature. The aim of the 'Text and Performance' series is to achieve a fuller recognition of how both enhance our enjoyment of the play. Each volume follows the same basic pattern. Part One provides a critical introduction to the play under discussion, using the techniques and criteria of the literary critic in examining the manner in which the work operates through language, imagery and action. Part Two takes the enquiry further into the play's theatricality by focusing on selected productions of recent times so as to illustrate points of contrast and comparison in the interpretation of different directors and actors, and to demonstrate how the drama has worked on the modern stage. In this way the series seeks to provide a lively and informative introduction to major plays in their text and performance.

MICHAEL SCOTT

PLOT SYNOPSIS AND SOURCES

Part 1: Henry iv (Bolingbroke), having deposed the bad but rightful king, Richard ii and caused his murder, seeks to atone by a crusade to the Holy Land. Domestic problems, however, intervene. A quarrel develops between the king and the Percy family, the northern lords who were formerly his allies. Henry's own sin of rebellion begins to recoil on him when the Percies, in league with Glendower of Wales and Douglas of Scotland, raise arms against him.

Meanwhile, Henry's son, Henry Prince of Wales, nicknamed Hal, adds to his father's distress by deserting the court for the taverns of Eastcheap, living among thieves and drunkards, and frequenting in particular the Boar's Head inn, dominated by the massive presence of Sir John Falstaff. Hal takes part in a robbery at Gadshill; but only to rob the robbers and later confront them – especially Falstaff – with their lies and cowardice. The money is repaid. In an interview with the king Hal promises reform.

The rebels, under the valiant, rash Harry Percy (Hotspur), finally meet the king in battle at Shrewsbury, but are defeated, due to betrayals and desertions. Hal saves his father from Douglas and defeats Hotspur in single combat. Falstaff – also in the battle but feigning death to escape injury – subsequently rises from his death-pose, gives Hotspur's corpse a new wound and claims, with Hal's consent, the victory as his own.

Part 2: Rebellion continues, led by the Archbishop of York, but again the rebels are weakened by defections. Falstaff is given a new commission and, saying farewell to Eastcheap, goes off to recruit soldiers in Gloucestershire, taking up quarters in the home of an old friend of his youth, Justice Shallow. These scenes provide the best comedy of either Part.

The rebels meet the king's forces, under Prince John, at Gaultree Forest, but, tricked by him into an amnesty, their leaders are hanged. Rebellion is finally suppressed, but the king immediately falls fatally sick. Before dying he is reconciled to his son. On becoming King Henry v, Hal announces his reform and banishes Falstaff.

SOURCES

Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland . . . faithfully gathered & set forth* (1578; 2nd edition, 'newlie augmented', 1586).

Samuel Daniel, *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars between the two houses of Lancaster and York* (1595).

John Stow, *The Chronicles of England* (1580); and *The Annals of England* (1592).