THE CRITICS DEBATE

General Editor: Michael Scott

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General Editor Michael Scott

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Henry IV Parts I & II Ronald Knowles

HENRY IV
Parts I & II

Ronald Knowles

M
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General Editor's Preface

OVER THE last few years the practice of literary criticism has become hotly debated. Methods developed earlier in the century and before have been attacked and the word 'crisis' has been drawn upon to describe the present condition of English Studies. That such a debate is taking place is a sign of the subject discipline's health. Some would hold that the situation necessitates a radical alternative approach which naturally implies a 'crisis situation'. Others would respond that to employ such terms is to precipitate or construct a false position. The debate continues but it is not the first. 'New Criticism' acquired its title because it attempted something fresh, calling into question certain practices of the past. Yet the practices it attacked were not entirely lost or negated by the new critics. One factor becomes clear: English Studies is a pluralistic discipline.

What are students coming to advanced work in English for the first time to make of all this debate and controversy? They are in danger of being overwhelmed by the cross-currents of critical approaches as they take up their study of literature. The purpose of this series is to help delineate various critical approaches to specific literary texts. Its authors are from a variety of critical schools and have approached their task in a flexible manner. Their aim is to help the reader come to terms with the variety of criticism and to introduce him or her to further reading on the subject and to a fuller evaluation of a particular text by illustrating the way it has been approached in a number of contexts. In the first part of the book a critical survey is given of some of the major ways the text has been appraised. This is done sometimes in a thematic manner, sometimes according to various 'schools' or 'approaches'. In the second part the authors provide their own appraisals of the text from their stated critical standpoint, allowing the reader the knowledge of their own particular approaches from which their views may in turn be

evaluated. The series therein hopes to introduce and to elucidate criticism of authors and texts being studied and to encourage participation as the critics debate.

Michael Scott

Acknowledgements

A book of this nature is primarily indebted to all the materials, and more, assembled in the bibliography and references section. However, a special acknowledgement must be made to Brian Vickers for his editorship of all the Shakespeare volumes in the Critical Heritage series. The inter-library loan staff of the University of Reading library are thanked for their patience and efficiency. Michael Scott, the general editor of the series, is thanked for his advice and Lilian Argrave for her typing skills. Throughout the preparation and writing of the volume my colleague Andrew Gurr generously contributed his bibliographical knowledge of the subject and kindly gave me some references from research, while Raymond Powell helped keep me abreast of contemporary criticism.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to a former colleague whose friendship, learning, inspiration and laughter, are sorely missed.

In Memoriam
Ian Fletcher
1920–1988

Preface

THIS BOOK is neither an annotated bibliography nor a history of the criticism of *Henry IV Parts I & II*. It is hoped that the major landmarks in discussion of the plays have received some attention, though only a tip of the periodical iceberg has been touched upon. While some criticism has become redundant, not all worthwhile studies could be included within the scope of this work. In researching the material a criterion for most selections emerged of itself. Works most commonly referred to by successive critics, scholars and teachers became the focus of the study. The exception is Hermann Ulrici who, as far as I am aware, has been resurrected from undeserved nineteenth-century oblivion and given credit here for his critical prescience.

There are several ways in which this book may be used: read through from cover to cover, or dipped into according to its historical divisions. A reader only interested in more modern commentary can turn directly to that section. Alternatively, anyone wishing to follow up whatever is said about a particular critic on *Henry IV Parts I & II* can work from the index. The 'Bibliographies, Guides and Surveys' section provides references for those who wish to explore discussion of the interrelationship of all of Shakespeare's English history plays. Full details of authors and works referred to in the text are found in the 'References' section.

The texts referred to throughout this study are those of A. R. Humphreys in the Arden Shakespeare (*Part I*, 1960; *Part II*, 1966).