

Interpretation

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FALSTAFF IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

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Sir John Falstaff is almost absent from *Henry V*. We do not see him; we only hear about him and then only when he is dying. From his comparative absence we might conclude that Falstaff and his death have nothing to do with Henry V and his celebrated victory at Agincourt. From the similar absence of Henry from Falstaff's death bed we might similarly conclude that Falstaff has been forgotten by Shakespeare's most famous English prince. Such conclusions would be satisfying if it were not for the fact that both these absences are conspicuous ones. Knowing of our fondness for Falstaff, the Epilogue of *2 Henry IV* promised us a continuation of "the story" with "Sir John in it" and only jested that he might die "of a sweat."¹ *Henry V* gives us less of Falstaff than we expected and the little it gives is disappointing; we were fond of the living Falstaff; we get Falstaff dying. His absence from life is as conspicuous as his absence from the play; there is just enough of him in both to call attention to his absence. The same is true of Henry's absence from Falstaff's death bed, for comments by those who are present draw attention to Henry's absence (2.1.84 and 117-22; 2.3.40). It is true that not all surfaces have depths. Those, however, which are marked by conspicuous absences hint that they do; by so doing they invite the reader to look deeper. Without assuring results, they give enough evidence to justify an inquiry.

Yet even the surface of the death of Falstaff is hard to understand. For one thing it is entrusted to report rather than immediate presentation. This is mildly astonishing. The scene of Falstaff dying would undoubtedly have been a great scene, moving large portions of the audience and remaining long in their minds. The great scene Shakespeare could have written² must have been sacrificed for some good reason, but it is not easy to see what it is. Shakespeare has also endangered the scene he does present by entrusting it to a

very unreliable reporter, scatterbrained Hostess Quickly. The gift of speech to such a woman is risky, at least for an author who cherishes intelligibility. The elisions, ellipses, shifts of direction, sighs, and countless errors of her prose make one think of a small boat in a big storm. Still, giving the death of Falstaff to Hostess Quickly is less risky than it first seems. Her more palpable mistakes will make the reader or listener aware of the difference between hearsay and eyewitness; it will alert him to the difficulty of learning what really happened to Falstaff. To encourage such inquiry Shakespeare has Falstaff's page boy present at his death and has him correct the Hostess (2.3.29). Being a woman and a sensual one as well, Hostess Quickly denies or diminishes that part of Falstaff's last speeches which dealt with women. According to the Boy, Falstaff warned against women as well as sack, calling women devils incarnate. Herself distracted, Mistress Quickly would distract others by taking "incarnation" as carnation, a color (2.3.30-31). But the Boy will not be diverted into a discussion about Falstaff's favorite or unfavorable colors.

'A said once the devil would have him about women.

(2.3.32)

Witness Quickly begins to give ground:

'A did in some sort, indeed, handle women;

(2.3.33)

but tries to slip away with

but then he was rheumatic, and talked of the Whore of Babylon.

(2.3.33-35)

Previous to this exchange, the Hostess has been unable to report all those portions of Falstaff's end which made reference to Biblical religion (e.g., "Arthur's bosom," of which more in a moment). Now, when it suits her, she is able to come out with the whore of Babylon. It would seem that her previous mistakes do not reveal an ignorance of the Bible, rather the opposite. Precisely because she has just seen a wretched sinner dying in terror and because she knows her Bible with the fear it calls for is she so given to mistakes.

It is not surprising that it is the Boy, a steadier witness, who reports something else she omits:

Do you not remember 'a saw a flea stick upon Bardolph's nose, and 'a said it was a black soul burning in hell?
(2.3.36-37)

Recalling the witty old Falstaff, we are tempted to think that Falstaff had retained his wit in the face of the afterlife, that he was being sportive with both the terrors of hell and Bardolph's complexion. We would like to think so. There seemed to be a perpetual gaiety about Falstaff, casting out fear whenever he appeared. The memory of this gaiety makes Bardolph, the butt of many of his jokes, want to be with him whether he is in heaven or hell (2.3.7-8); for Bardolph the jests of Falstaff cast out even the fear of hell. Yet Bardolph has reason to know otherwise. Falstaff looked at Bardolph but he did not see Bardolph, he saw souls burning in hell. Was Falstaff deluded? We are only permitted to say so if we can prove that there is no such thing as hell and that it is not possible for a dying man to see into the estate he is about to enter. We can only say that the fear of hell cast out all of Falstaff's gaiety. That Falstaff did not make a witty end is apparent from the Hostess' report. This truth emerges despite the intentions of the Hostess; her report is introduced to contradict the possibility, mentioned in Bardolph's wish (2.3.7-8), that Falstaff is right now in hell. It is a frightening thought and so she begins:

Nay sure, he's not in hell! He's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. 'A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child. 'A parted ev'n just between twelve and one, ev'n at the turning o' th' tide. For after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his finger's end, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and 'a babbled of green fields. 'How now, Sir John?' quote I. "What, man? be o' good cheer.' So 'a cried out 'God, God, God!' three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him 'a should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. So 'a bade me lay more clothes on his feet. I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone. Then I felt to his knees, and so upward and upward, and all was as cold as any stone.
(2.3.9-24)

Here truth must emerge in spite of its reporter. The first of her many errors is the phrase, "Arthur's bosom"; she intends to say

“Abraham’s bosom,” for it is there that dying members of the tribe are supposedly gathered. Her metamorphosis of a Hebrew patriarch into an English prince belongs to her slippery tongue, not Falstaff’s. The kind of error this is cues us for a much larger one which follows. The Hostess reports that Falstaff’s nose was as sharp as a pen (apparently a sign of rapidly approaching death). Then the unemended text of the Folio (which most editors regard as superior to the 1600 quarto and its progeny³) reads:

for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and *'a table of green fields.* (2.3.15-16, my italics)

The phrase I have italicized has given rise to the most famous emendation in all of Shakespeare, one which has seemed both necessary and satisfying. Unsatisfied with the text as it is, Lewis Theobald suggested that it must have read “and a babbled of green fields.”⁴ It seems to me that this emendation is unnecessary.⁵ The unemended text “a table of green fields” is obscure but it is obscure because the defects of the Hostess were bound to make it obscure. The ears of the Hostess heard Falstaff trying to recite the Twenty-third Psalm.⁶ We must hear the dying Falstaff, in the shadow of death, considering his life in the light or the darkness awaiting him, trying to drink the comfort of the familiar psalm of King David:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
, my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.⁷

Perhaps the feverish Falstaff was able to recite only snatches, perhaps he broke off in despair, perhaps the Hostess was so afraid of the

scene before her that she refused to recognize the psalm. In any case, the Hostess has converted the "green pastures" of the psalm to "green fields" and, dimly hearing the line about "thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," she has put the table before the "green pastures." The result, "a table of green fields," is a kind of kenning of the whole psalm, a kenning not from a poet but from a pathetically frightened woman. That there is something frightening in "a table of green fields" for the Hostess is indicated by her very next words: " 'How now, Sir John?' quoth I. 'What, man? be o' good cheer.' " It is Falstaff who has said something about a table and green fields and the Hostess saw nothing cheerful in those words. Her encouragement was a reply to Falstaff's recitation of the Twenty-third Psalm. The actress who takes the part of the frightened Hostess faces something very difficult in these lines. She must draw a long breath after remarking that his nose was as sharp as a pen. The audience must realize that Falstaff was coming to his end. Then the actress must utter "a table of green fields" so that the audience realizes she is impersonating Falstaff, as if Falstaff with his pen-sharp nose was exclaiming or mumbling snatches of the psalm and the actress must confirm the audience in this understanding by returning to the Hostess's own voice, asking, "How now, Sir John?" with fluster and a tremble in her tone. It is a difficult passage and it is understandable if the actress is tempted to resort to Theobald's emendation. What happened next is hard to know with precision. Either Falstaff replied to the Hostess's wish that he be of good cheer with the words, "God, God, God," or, entirely oblivious of her wish, he said, "God, God, God." No other part of the account of Falstaff's death suggests that he was much interested in speaking with those around him, so one is inclined to think that he was oblivious of the Hostess; he knew he had nothing to be cheerful about. The same reasons incline one to believe that his words, "God, God, God," are a plea rather than a curse. Either way, the terror comes through. If anything, the terror is magnified by the efforts of the Hostess to be cheerful. If Falstaff finished the Twenty-third Psalm, he did not taste the comfort it vouchsafes. In his death there is nothing of still waters, of fearing no evil, of the cup running over, of green pastures, or of a table prepared in the presence of one's enemies. Falstaff knew himself to be in the valley of the shadow of death and it filled him with dread.⁸ By filling

him with dread it fills Mistress Quickly, too. It is as difficult for plump Jack, one sensualist, one lover of sack and women, to face the terrors of eternal punishment as it is for another sensualist, Mistress Quickly, to report them. Shakespeare shows us not only the winds from heaven but the poplars shivering on earth. More exactly, we only know of those terrifying winds from observing the shivering poplars. Shakespeare's indirect mode of presentation seems to imitate death itself, for it is death which most makes us feel the absence of a person as conspicuous. Yet Shakespeare only imitates death to make us feel the terror of damnation.

Despite her flaws, the Hostess is capable of great accuracy, or rather a great accuracy can shine through her. She makes a gesture which goes right to the center of Falstaff. She says she put her hand into Falstaff's bed and found his feet as cold as any stone. Then she felt to his knees "and so upward and upward, and all was as cold as any stone." The heat she sought had fled. Her report ends on the word "stone." It ends with her hand somewhere above Falstaff's knee seeking heat, the son of life. In making this gesture and iterating the word "stone" the Hostess trips over Shakespeare's bawdy.⁹ "Stone" is a word for testicle.¹⁰ We see her feeling Falstaff amorously, trying to rouse him. Since we are not supposed to laugh in the presence of those gripped by fear or misery, we suppress this irreverent fancy. If we share the fear gripping Falstaff, some of our own fear will escape in a nervous laugh.

It is by making us feel the terrors of damnation that the death of Falstaff prepares us to understand how Falstaff is in "the story" of Henry V.

The death of Falstaff is one of three scenes in *Henry V* to show us men preparing to die. The first of these (2.3) immediately precedes Falstaff's death; in it we see several traitors prepare for death penitently, easily, and quickly. Henry is conspicuous in this scene; it is he who unmasks them, sentences them, hears their prayers, and assists them to death. The last of the three scenes to show us men preparing for death (4.1) comes long after Falstaff's death; in it we see the men of Henry's English army, on the eve of Agincourt, preparing for death. Here too Henry is conspicuous, even when hidden; with his majesty cloaked, he is able to assist his soldiers in their preparation for death. Shortly after, he makes his own preparation unassisted. Henry is conspicuously present in two of

these scenes, and conspicuously absent from the third, the death of Falstaff. The latter shows us the problem of death, pure and simple, the former scenes show us the problem of death as understood and shaped by the prince or political man. Preparation for death is the core of Henry's political religion. The battle of Agincourt must be fought by men much like Falstaff, men whose bravery is never fearless, men who have a weakness for sack, for late sleep, for women, who, unable to correct these "weaknesses," live in mortal terror of a God who punishes these weaknesses with eternal damnation. The wish that fitfully recurs to Englishmen the night before Agincourt, the wish to enjoy the night of a private man, is none other than the wish to live the life of Falstaff. The tavern is a long way from Agincourt. If their wishes (4.3.16-67; 4.1 *passim*; cf. 2.3.10) point to Falstaff, so do their terrors. The same terrors which scatter Falstaff's gaiety and wit are the ones Williams speaks of:

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all, 'We died at such a place,' some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afraid there are few die well that die in a battle; for how can they charitably dispose of anything when blood is their argument? Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king that led them to it; who to disobey were against all proportion of subjection. (4.1.127-38)

In making these terrors an instrument of political religion and an engine of military valor, Henry shows that he has learned from the death of Falstaff. Even though he was not present at that death, received no report of it, and never speaks of it, he has learned from it. How can this be? First, one must ask whether it is really true that Henry never speaks of Falstaff's death. He seems to speak of it when he teaches Williams and even puts it in the very center of his teaching:

Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed—wash every mote out of his conscience; and dying so, death is to him advantage; (4.1.168-170)

In other words, every soldier should imitate the only vivid example of a sick man in his ward in the play. Every soldier should imitate Falstaff. It can only be that Henry knows of Falstaff's death because

Henry always knew of his death. Indeed, this is so. Long ago Henry remarked to Falstaff, "Thou owest God a death" (*1 Henry IV*, 5.1.126). Again, his final words to Falstaff began, "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers" (*2 Henry IV*, 5.5.48). Henry did not need to be present at the death of Falstaff, nor did he need to get a report of it, in order to know it.¹¹ The army of the new English prince has the soul of Falstaff, and so the Prince can never forget the way Falstaffs die if he wishes to command a victorious army. Falstaff is part of his education that he can afford to forget only if he is willing to forget his crown and his life.

Another feature of this scene calls for comment. The account of the death of Falstaff seems designed to recall other deaths. For example, the peculiar gesture of the Hostess, moving her hand up Falstaff's body, calls to mind the death of Socrates as reported in Plato's *Phaedo*.¹² After Socrates took the hemlock everyone present broke into passionate weeping, everyone except Socrates, who said:

Why, that was my main reason for sending away the women, to prevent this sort of disturbance, because I am told that one should make one's end in a tranquil frame of mind. Calm yourselves and try to be brave.¹³ (117e)

The reporter, Phaedo, continues his narrative:

This made us feel ashamed, and we controlled our tears. Socrates walked about, and presently, saying that his legs were heavy, lay down on his back—that was what the man recommended. The man—he was the same one who had administered the poison—kept his hand upon Socrates, and after a little while examined his feet and legs, then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. Socrates said no. Then he did the same to his legs, and moving gradually upward in this way, let us see that he was getting cold and numb. Presently he felt him again and said that when it reached the heart, Socrates would be gone.

The coldness was spreading about as far as his waist when Socrates uncovered his face, for he had covered it up, and said—they were his last words—Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius. See to it, and don't forget.

No, it shall be done, said Crito. Are you sure that there is nothing else?

Socrates made no reply to this question, but after a little while he stirred, and when the man uncovered him, his eyes were fixed. When Crito saw this, he closed the mouth and eyes.

Such, Echecrates, was the end of our comrade, who was, we may fairly say, of all those whom we knew in our time, the bravest and also the wisest and most upright man.¹⁴ (117e-118a)

If the gesture of moving one's hand up a dying man's body were a

common feature of famous death scenes, say if it appeared in the reports of the deaths of Achilles, Archimedes, Caesar, Christ, Njal, Thomas Aquinas, or Werther, then we could dismiss this resemblance as an accident, but since no other death scene known to us save these two, of Falstaff and of Socrates, contains this gesture, it is hard to believe that Shakespeare did not intend this resemblance and, therefore, intend some of his audience to recognize it.¹⁵

That Shakespeare wishes us to investigate this comparison is suggested by the many hints he has dropped long before the death of Falstaff. While impersonating his father, Prince Hal himself called Falstaff "That villainous abominable misleader of youth" (*1 Henry IV*, 2.4.439) . . . the very charge often made against Socrates,¹⁶ and one of the two formal charges brought against him by Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon.¹⁷ Like Socrates, Falstaff is accused of making the worse appear the better reason.¹⁸ Falstaff asks the Socratic question, what is a thing? With his question, what is honor?, Falstaff calls into question the life of the gentleman.¹⁹ All the deeds and speeches and laughter of Falstaff seem to ask, What is courage?, the very question which arises when Socrates meets with the distinguished generals Laches and Nicias in the *Laches*. Like Socrates, Falstaff serves in his country's armies and, like Socrates, he serves on foot rather than on horse.²⁰ Falstaff says he is witty and the cause of wit in other men (*2 Henry IV*, 1.2.6); the friends of Socrates think that he is wise and the cause of wisdom in themselves. Falstaff drinks much and so can Socrates.²¹ Neither Falstaff nor Socrates is beautiful, yet both exercise an extraordinary attraction upon other men.²² These things suggest that Shakespeare wishes us to compare Falstaff and Socrates.

If, as it seems, Shakespeare intends us to investigate the resemblance between Falstaff and Socrates, still, he has not made it easy. What Shakespeare thought of Socrates would seem to be unavailable to us. Outside his plays he says nothing of Socrates and in them he never portrays him. He only alludes or gestures towards Socrates. So we must study the relation of Falstaff and Socrates without distinguishing Shakespeare's Socrates and the real Socrates. The real Socrates! That it is not easy to understand Socrates would seem to be evident from the various labors of minds greater than ours: Xenophon, Aristophanes, Plato, Diogenes, Laertius, Cicero, Montaigne, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Strauss.

Nevertheless, a beginning seems possible. Since Shakespeare makes his most explicit and decisive allusion to Socrates in the course of the report of Falstaff's death,^{2 3} it would seem that he means us to begin with the last minutes. We have before us those minutes and the last minutes of Socrates. Beginning here means beginning near death. Already we may have discovered something important. Socrates speaks of the philosophic life as one of constant preparation for death. According to this Socratic remark, the life of Falstaff cannot be philosophic. But according to a favorite author of Shakespeare (Montaigne), philosophy is not preparation for death; it is unphilosophic to pay death such constant attention. Hence, it would seem that to decide this point we must think the question through. The first result of our comparison appears: Shakespeare means each of us to think about death, about the afterlife, about the fear of both, and about what view it is best for us to take toward these things.^{2 4}

Both deaths are reported deaths and in both the reporter is decidedly inferior to the person who dies. All Socratic dialogues take place between Socrates and his inferiors; in other words, there is no Socratic dialogue between Socrates and Plato. Accordingly, we find that Plato is not present at the death of Socrates. It can only be that he does not need to be present, that he would learn nothing new from being present, and that he already knows about that death. As the most intelligent pupil of Socrates, Plato, does not witness his death, so the most intelligent pupil or companion of Falstaff is absent from his death. Indeed, as we have seen, Henry did not need to be present at the death of Falstaff in order to learn what can be learned from that death.

According to the jailor, Socrates dies when the poison reaches his *heart*; by contrast, Falstaff dies when coldness reaches his *organs of generation*. What does this mean? What difference between the two is indicated by the difference between heart and genitals? One may begin to answer these questions by recalling the most obvious difference between the two deaths: the terror of Falstaff and the equanimity of Socrates. Faced with death Falstaff cries out; Socrates discourses as he has always done. Falstaff's terror rests upon a certain kind of opinion or knowledge, available only through revelation. But according to Socrates, we really do not know what follows life;^{2 5} those who fear the afterlife suppose too much; here too our

best wisdom is a kind of ignorance. Thus we are reminded of the difference between philosophy and religion.

This difference between the heart and the genitals corresponds to the different place of women and womanish things in the two reports. The death of Falstaff is reported by a woman and, despite her obfuscation, we learn that Falstaff warned those at his deathbed about women. The death of Socrates is reported by a man and only men are present at that death, for Socrates had taken the precaution to exclude all women from his cell, including his wife. Nevertheless, most of the men cried anyway. Weeping is more of a womanish than a mannish thing. The difference between men and women is not so great as the difference between philosophers and non-philosophers. Socrates did not weep; he did not cry out; he did not wail or gnash his teeth.²⁶ According to Socrates, too great attachment to life is a womanish thing. Though alive and married, Socrates is not very attached to either life or wife. Though Falstaff was a bachelor, we cannot say the same of him. Once he pursued women, now he warns against them in womanish fear. Ancient metaphysics understands truth or the ideas as male rather than female: unchanging, self-sufficient, immortal; and the ancient philosopher understands himself as an image of this truth. It is a modern metaphysician who suspects that truth might be a woman,²⁷ and it is the founder of modern political philosophy who tells us that the god presiding over human things is Fortuna and a woman.²⁸ The order visible in *Henry V* is neither ancient nor modern; it is a mixture of an ancient metaphysics taught as a revealed religion and a modern mode of politics; this mixture is only possible because, while there is certainty that there is an unchanging, self-sufficient, and immortal god, he is also unknowable. The name of his unknowableness is Fortuna.

A very great ancient prince to whom Henry is frequently compared²⁹ was not only educated by a philosopher but stood in a direct studious line to Socrates. Alexander was the pupil of the pupil of the pupil of Socrates. While a very great ancient prince looked to Socrates, a modern prince will look to the likes of Falstaff. Modern politics begins low, with things as they are deemed to be, with Falstaff; ancient politics never lost sight of the high, with consideration of the noble and just things, with Socrates. Ancient cities seem to have existed for the sake of virtue, as theatres in which excellence could shine; modern countries seem to exist for the sake of pleasure

and liberty, for what Hobbes called self-preservation and what Locke called comfortable self-preservation. But Falstaff is not yet a bourgeois for he still fears the afterlife as much as he fears violent death. Between ancient and modern regimes and morals, there stands Christianity. Falstaff dies as a Christian, in terror of the afterlife. The most powerful passion in him is not thirst for the sweetness of life or enjoyment of the mere sentiment of existence,³⁰ but terror of supernatural punishment. Though this terror is not powerful enough to make Falstaff or his kind moderate, it can make him immoderate in (the passion of) fear. While Christianity attacked the ancient love of honor as a "splendid vice," Falstaff attacks it as a "word." The Christian attack on honor is ascetic and lean; that of Falstaff is luxurious and fat. Though the life of Falstaff is very far from that of St. Francis, it is not as far as possible. Falstaff cannot throw off Christian terrors; the result is big appetites and big fears; to hide from one's fears one drinks, wenches, and jests, but sack and women fill one with dread, so one drinks and wenches and jests. The pleasures of this modern man are never thoughtless, carefree, serene.³¹ Falstaff is no Barnadine.

The modern prince must start with Falstaff and by judiciously balancing fears against fears, appetites against appetites, bring peace. In modern regimes the virtues will hold an instrumental, though indispensable, place. Yet there is one place where the life of the modern prince touches the sphere of Socrates and the philosophic way of life; it is friendship. We do Falstaff wrong if we do not see along with the low things in him the things which are very high indeed. The love which audiences and characters feel for him is a tribute to his wit, for it liberates us from all the profitable servitudes of the world. For friendship one needs leisure, some release from the realm of necessity, and each jest of Falstaff provides this condition. During his life (though not his last days) Falstaff's wit separated men briefly and ever so slightly from a most powerful force in their lives, opinion. As such, Falstaff is not inferior to Socrates, but he is not so complete. Falstaff sees through things and he disenchant, but he does not seem able to replace the enchantments he destroys with something better, either with a new and more beneficial enchantment³² or with a glimpse of truly enchanting things. While the modern prince desires a disenchanting friend like Falstaff, he also desires a sober friend like Williams. What was united in Socrates seems dispersed into Falstaff and Williams. The juxtaposition of Falstaff and Socrates in *Henry V* points to something which is relatively unchanged by the difference between ancient and modern public life, ancient

and modern religion, ancient and modern thought; what is relatively unchanged is friendship. At least this part of private life seems unaffected by the big changes we have mentioned and this itself has in turn some affect upon public matters. Modern princes are moderated and improved by their wish to have the likes of Falstaff and Williams as friends.

The dying Falstaff cries out; the living Falstaff was wont to laugh. He used to laugh much and cause much laughter in other men. He reminds one more of the laughing Democritus than the weeping Heraclitus. The greatest laugh Falstaff provided began with the cowardice or love of life he exhibited at Gad's Hill, but it culminated with his witty acquittal from the charge of cowardice (*1 Henry IV*, 2.4.253). If we turn to Socrates we find that he never wept or cried out and that he laughed only a few times. The *Phaedo* is filled with the long arguments with which Socrates tried to soothe and charm his death-fearing interlocutors (*Phaedo*, 77e–78a); how little these men are able to take these arguments seriously, how little they are soothed, is suggested by the two remarks they make which prompt Socrates to laugh gently. The second of these occurs at the end of the discussion (*Phaedo*, 115c–e; cf. 84d). Though Crito has heard all that Socrates has said, still he asks: “How shall we bury *you*?” To which Socrates replies, “Any way you like, that is, if you can catch me and I don't slip through your fingers.” The narrative continues:

He laughed gently as he spoke, and turning to us went on: ‘I can't persuade Crito that I am this Socrates here who is talking to you now and marshalling all the arguments; he thinks that I am the one whom he will see presently lying dead; and he asks how he is to bury me! As for my long and elaborate explanation that when I have drunk the poison I shall remain with you no longer, but depart to a state of heavenly happiness, this attempt to console both you and myself seems to be wasted on him.’³³

Socrates laughs at Crito; his laughter is at the expense of those who cling to life. According to Socrates, it is not philosophic to weep; philosophers may laugh but not weep. According to Socrates, then, the laughter of Falstaff approaches philosophy, but his crying out “God” three or four times retreats from it. Thomas More, who knew something about Socratic philosophy and was wont to jest, was also a Christian saint. Awaiting execution in the Tower, he wrote a *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* and in it he writes:

To prove that this life is no laughing time, but rather a time of weeping, we find that our Saviour himself wept twice or thrice; but never find we that he laughed so much as once. I will not swear that he never did; but in the leastwise

he left us no example of it. But on the other side, he left us example of weeping.³⁴

Exactly the opposite is true of Socrates. Socrates never weeps and laughs twice or thrice. The living Falstaff bears some resemblance to Socrates; dying, he resembles Christ.

Both Falstaff and Socrates are dissemblers. Falstaff pretends to be more than he is, especially to be more brave than he is, while Socrates pretends to be less. Falstaff is a braggart; there is no name for its opposite and so we can only say that Socrates is ironic. To understand the irony of Socrates we must free ourselves from the modern understanding which confuses irony with insult. The irony of Socrates is not sarcasm. Socrates hides his meaning and his excellence; should his interlocutors perceive that excellence and that meaning they would no longer be protected.³⁵ The ironic manner of Socrates is a superficial sign of a deep reflection upon both writing and human nature.³⁶ For the majority of listeners, the non-philosophers, the speeches of Socrates are meant to be taken at face value, but for a very few listeners the irony of those speeches is intended to be perceived. The dissembling of Socrates then is meant to divide his audience.

It would seem then that his dissembling is very different from that of the boaster's who surely will not wish his boasts to be seen for the hollow things they are. If this is so, then we must hesitate to call Falstaff a genuine boaster or an ordinary boaster, for it would seem that he wishes to have his pretenses and boasts uncovered. A man who wants a reputation and who boasts to get it does not wish anyone to see the discrepancy between his deeds and his words; should that discrepancy be discovered he will hide his face, lower his head, put his tail between his departing legs, or lash out sullenly. When Falstaff is unmasked after Gad's Hill, he never grows ashamed or sullen. He has nothing in him of the red-faced animal; to him honor is a word; he is shameless. Hence, he cannot be a braggart for the braggart loves honor. How is it that he seems to be a braggart? He is an entertainer and to entertain men he takes the part of the bragger. Thus it is that his bragging and pretending are always meant in the end to give men the pleasure of discovery. If after Gad's Hill Falstaff began by saying that he was set upon by fourteen men in buckram, we might think him a genuine boaster and liar; that he in fact changes the number of assailants with each new sentence tells us that he is perfectly aware of the transparency of his tale; it is hard to doubt that a man of his wit did not know what pleasure he was giving and did not purpose that pleasure. Someone who wished his lie about men in buckram to be believed would have chosen one number and stuck to it. Study his other boasts and deceptions and you will see that he always cooperates with those who wish to unmask and

expose him. Here is his real deception. He would not wish these men to know that he wishes to be unmasked. Deeper than his wish to be thought brave is his wish to entertain.

The entertainer is both a master and a slave. The entertainer has only to drop a word to make a spontaneous convulsion grip his listeners. The mastery present in making people laugh is more easily apparent in the phenomenon of tickling. Children and those who care for them enjoy tickling. Among them one hears the expression, "tickle you to death." Children struggle to be the one doing the tickling. Awkward uncles fall back upon their one trick; a few tickles will break the ice, a few more will put someone "in stitches." Anyone who has been held down and tickled for a long while knows what it is to be helpless, what it is to be ready to say "uncle." The man who can make others laugh, at a greater distance, with words rather than bony fingers, remains, despite the change of means, an uncle or master. There is something spontaneous in laughter, like sneezing or other bodily reflexes. To be able to make that happen in another person is a kind of mastery. But if the entertainer like Falstaff is a master, he is also a slave. The occupation of making others laugh is absorbing. Everyone knows a crude example of this; everyone has met a man who cannot stop cracking jokes, who finally makes jokes about how bad his jokes are, how he is not getting a rise tonight, how he will soon be taken off the air. For the man who is really witty, who succeeds with his jests, it is even more hard to break the habit than for a dull-witted fellow. Yet each is slavish; the one in a crude, the other in a sad manner. Both need an audience in order to continue their way of life. The case of the man with real wit is the sadder of the two because his great gifts are wasted; he drowns the solitude necessary for mental endeavor, which his wit ought to be able to endure, in perpetual jests. In this way he is likely to blunt his gifts; if he wishes to be always making men laugh he must keep within the bounds of what *they* think laughable.³⁷ In this way he also becomes the servant or slave of their opinions. Himself a slave, he enslaves others and all the more because of his great gifts.³⁸

The element of mastery in making men laugh brings the entertainer close to the ruler; it brings Falstaff close to Henry. Seeing his effect upon others, the entertainer will come to enjoy it; soon he will seek to increase it, bringing more and more men under his humorous sovereignty, attaching more and more retainers with the silken strings of his jests. The place where he drinks will become *his* tavern, himself an attraction, drawing others there. Still, as much as any king, he will lack liberty. He will not easily surrender or abdicate the center of attention he now occupies (was there ever a jester who wished to share the same stage with another?). To cling to his warm tavern throne he may not care how much he now causes men

to laugh at him as he once caused them to laugh at his wit. He will more and more play to the ruder majority of his audience.³⁹ When a man entertains an audience it is hard to tell the ruler from the ruled. When an Elizabeth asks for "more Falstaff" is she exercising rule or Falstaff? And what of Shakespeare?

If Falstaff is in most ways the antithesis of Socrates and classical political philosophy, he is not however the antithesis of all of antiquity. In their quarrel with the ancients, the moderns found allies among the ancients themselves. Modern physics found an ally in Epicurean physics; the founder of modern political philosophy, Machiavelli, found an ally in that half of Xenophon devote to Cyrus while ignoring the half devoted to Socrates. The covert disciples of Machiavelli found an ally in Tacitus. But in the pages of Plautus and Terence, modern men discovered themselves; true, they also discovered themselves in the letters of Cicero and were thrilled with the tales of Plutarch. But the taste for Cicero and the admiration for Plutarch belong to the first blush of modernity. Who now reads Plutarch the way Montaigne read him or the way Rousseau still did, with the thrill of virtue burning in his heart? Modernity prefers Plautus to Plutarch. From the vantage point of the French Revolution and the proclamation of the equal rights of man, Hegel discerned the important achievements of reason to owe more to slaves than to masters.⁴⁰ Hegel discerned what the taste of modernity had long ago chosen. In the slaves and braggart warriors of Plautus and Terence modernity saw itself; probably the most favored tag of the early humanists of Europe is out of Terence: *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto*.⁴¹ Montaigne had this maxim carved on one of the rafters of his study in the tower of his chateau and one hears it repeated today wherever there are humanists.⁴² We understand the genealogy of modernity better when we come to know that these words proceed from the mouth of a gentleman who objects to another gentleman who has undertaken menial labor. According to the speaker, laboring is for slaves.

Since Falstaff was, from the beginning, the favorite character in Shakespeare,⁴³ it is safe to say that audiences have always preferred Falstaff to Caesar. It is a good illustration of modern taste. It also accords with a choice of Plautus over Plutarch, for as Plutarch stands behind Shakespeare's Caesar, the multitude of slaves and braggart warriors in Plautus stand behind Falstaff. The character types Plautus left dispersed, the tricky slave and the braggart warrior, Shakespeare succeeded in combining and thereby won the taste of modernity. The combination could have resulted in a tricky warrior, an Odysseus, but instead we have a bragging slave. A bragging slave, unlike a bragging warrior, purposes his own discovery; in the discovery of his bragging he hopes to explode honor and laugh it to tatters. The life of honor is the life of the master. As a slave, Falstaff is

not like the tricky slave in Plautus; he does not beat his masters to the spoils. Instead he conquers the class of masters, gentlemen, knights, nobles in principle. His bragging and his trickery are merely instrumental to his slavishness. (Lest this seem an insulting inaccuracy, we must remember that the life of a house slave was not unlike that of a modern bourgeois; both have to work for a living and prefer to leave honor to others.) But if he is fundamentally a slave he is unlike any slave in Plautus because he is a philosophic slave. Montaigne and others professed to discover philosophy in the mouths of Plautine slaves; with Falstaff one does not need to profess.

Shakespeare has Falstaff say something true about himself when he has him remark that he is not only witty in himself but the cause of wit in other men (*2 Henry IV*, 1.2.6). This moment of self-knowledge is rare for Falstaff. Falstaff always knows that he is the cause of wit in other men and he forgets that he is witty in himself. He is deaf to the call of wit in his own ear. It is a dreadful thing to fear and the wit of Falstaff cannot protect him from the afterlife. He was too much the cause of wit and laughter in other men and not enough witty in himself. He spent lavishly of his lavish gifts. For what? To entertain men, to entertain the prince. If Falstaff is a part of Shakespeare, as he surely is, then he is also a warning. It is not truly witty to be *always* the cause of wit in other men. It is very hard to be true to oneself *or* true to other men. To be true to both oneself and other men is harder still.

One of the few things in ordinary life which points to truth is laughter; there, right out in the open, are all the fears, dreads, questions, and tensions⁴⁴ which point to and call for a quest for truth. However, the very nearness of laughter to the quest for truth is its utility for common life. Truth is silenced as well as glimpsed in laughter. Via a laugh a path to truth suddenly opens, but only for a second; soon it is closed by the very same laugh. The long laughs of the perpetually laughing are tombstones of thought. Even more than Falstaff, Shakespeare has been the cause of wit in other men. He has noticed that when men laugh they do not also think. He has laughed about this and he has thought about it. He has thought about those who like to make other men laugh and suspects that, though they could not make others laugh without great wit, they too like to laugh at their own jokes and they too do not think when they laugh. It would seem that according to Shakespeare it is not at all easy to laugh and think at the same time.

If the death of Falstaff is designed to recall the death of Socrates, it is also designed to recall the death of King David. Again, the gesture of the Hostess points the way. The test of whether Falstaff is quick or dead is whether his organs of generation put forth heat. If they are as cold as any stone, Falstaff is truly dead. The twenty-third Psalm, which Falstaff tried

to recite, bears the superscription, "A Psalm of David." Orthodox opinion attributes all or the majority of the Psalms to David. Nor is this foolish. Just before David speaks his last words he is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 *Samuel*, 23.1). It is natural, then, when he hears Falstaff trying to recite one of David's psalms to think of David and to wonder if he made a death like Falstaff's. Of the old and ailing David in his bed we read:

Now king David was old and stricken in years;
and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.
Wherefore his servants said unto him,
Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin:
and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him,
and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.
So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel,
and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.
And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him:
but the king knew her not. (*1 Kings*, 1.1–1.4)

The test of whether David is nearer death than life is whether his organs of generation put forth heat. There is no easier test for this than whether the King "gat heat" with the maiden Abishag. Though she ministered to him, no doubt passing her hand upward above the knee, David gat no heat. What are we to make of this resemblance? Is there a connection between King David and his Israel and King Henry and his England? Under David the nation of Israel prospered and under his son, Solomon, the nation waxed so rich that the temple was established. For the Jews of that ancient time, Judaism was a political religion in a political state. The God of Abraham established his Chosen on a particular land and granted to them the monarchy they requested and the monarchs they deserved. The first and most astonishing victory of David was his victory over Goliath and the Philistines; the victory of Henry V over the French is no less surprising and remarkable. As a prince should,⁴⁵ David constantly practiced the art of war.

The resemblance between the deaths of Falstaff and David brings to light one great difference. Falstaff dies a Christian death, in terror of damnation, while David dies quietly without a cry or an oath. He does not warn against sack and he does not regard the lovely Shunammite damsel as a devil incarnate. While Falstaff fears terrible punishments for his venereal sins, David is not ashamed of the broadness with which he cast his seed. His adulterous union with Bathsheba is blessed with a child. One understands how the Hebrew prince's view of life and death differs from both the Christian Falstaff's and the philosopher Socrates' if one recalls how David bore the death of this child, the fruit of his union with Bathsheba:

And Nathan departed unto his house.

And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

David therefore besought God for the child;

and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth:

but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died.

And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead:

for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice:

how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead:

therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house: and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive;

but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept:

for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again?

I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

(*2 Samuel*, 12.15–12.23)

David is neither a philosopher nor a Christian. Unlike Socrates he weeps for the sick child and he comforts the mother; unlike the Christian he does not brood upon his sin. Of David's own death, we hear only this:

So David slept with his fathers,

and was buried in the city of David. (*1 Kngs*, 2.10)

David sleeps with his fathers. To employ a phrase, coined by Christ, mauled by the Hostess Quickly, and plucked from Falstaff's favorite parable, David sleeps "in the bosom of Abraham" (*Luke*, 16.19–16.31; cf. *2 Henry IV*, 4.4.61). David's death is not very different from the death of Abraham:

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived,
an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and
full of years;
and was gathered to his people. (*Genesis*, 25.7–8)

The calmness of these deaths and the gladness of the psalmist in the twenty-third Psalm must seem remarkable and unattainable to a Christian. The Hebrew scriptures know of a *shoel* but not of the hell which terrifies the Christian. This signal difference between the Hebrews and the Christians is well illustrated by how a Christian people translate the Hebrew scriptures into their vernacular tongue. The example of the twenty-third Psalm, since it is recited by Falstaff, is to hand. The original Hebrew psalm has nothing to do with the fear of the afterlife. The phrase "valley of the shadow of death" is very beautiful to Christian ears but it does not translate the Hebrew; a more correct translation for the Hebrew would be "deep gloom"; the Hebrew words refer to deep ravines which cut the sheep pastures of the East and on whose sides lurk the enemies of the flock. Similarly, the phrase translated "for ever" in the final line of the Psalm could more truly be rendered "for length of days."⁴⁶ Unless the modern prince can efface this signal difference, by extinguishing the fear of hell from his own heart as well as his subjects' modern principalities will be unable to resemble the ancient Hebrew principality. David could begin with the "fear of the Lord"; Henry is constrained to begin with the fear of hell.⁴⁷

Henry's own death is neither reported nor presented in *Henry V*. We learn of it only *en passant* in the Epilogue which focuses upon the bad fortune which overwhelmed the realm under the infant son of Henry. However, judging from Henry's preparation on the eve of Agincourt, it was a death more like Falstaff's than David's or Abraham's or Socrates' We conclude then that in the twin pillars of the West, in Jerusalem and in Athens, we find examples of good deaths. Yet it would be a Machiavellian blasphemy to suggest that since the advent of Christ good deaths have been hard to find.⁴⁸

¹ All references to Shakespeare are to the one volume Penguin Shakespeare edited by Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969). Arabic numbers refer to Act, Scene, and line in this edition.

An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the University of Vermont (1975); the Hastings Center for Biomedical Ethics (1975); and at the Northeastern Political Science Association meeting (1978); this version is adapted from a manuscript entitled "Shakespeare's English Prince."

Certain points made in the present essay were the basis of my response to Professor J. Leeds Barroll's "Shakespeare and the Black Death" at the Shakespeare in a Comparative Perspective Conference at Texas Tech (1979).

² I am grateful to Professor Robert G. Hunter for this point.

³ See the Arden editor's "Introduction," section 10.

⁴ *Shakespeare Restored: or, a Specimen of the Many Errors* (1726; rpt. New York: Augustus Kelley, 1970), pp. 137-38.

⁵ While the emendation of Theobald seems unnecessary, there is something right about it, for someone is babbling, be it Falstaff or the Hostess or both. However, Theobald's emendation has the demerit of erasing "a table" and making the reference to the twenty-third Psalm more obscure than the unemended text justifies. A convenient review of the various solutions proposed to emend or construe this line is found in Ephim G. Fogel, "'A Table of Green Fields' A Defense of the Folio Reading," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, IX, 1958, pp. 485-492. Professor Fogel defends the Folio by glossing the line as the very picture of greenness.

⁶ I am grateful to Professor Robert G. Hunter for pointing out to me that Falstaff is trying to recite this psalm. The Penguin Editor, Alfred Harbage, makes the same point in his marginal note. He puts the hostess's mistake down to "defective religious education." I would put it down to just the opposite; fear of the Lord is "the beginning of wisdom" (*Proverbs*, 9.10) and the reason why she makes mistakes.

⁷ I have used the King James Version (1611). A check of the versions of this Psalm available to Shakespeare and familiar to his first audience does not alter the interpretation offered here. These versions are conveniently gathered in the revised edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (pp. 852-54).

⁸ To grant that Falstaff does die a desperate death would be fatal to the view of Falstaff's character recently advanced by Roy Battenhouse ("Falstaff as Parodist and Perhaps Holy Fool" *PMLA*, 90, No. 1 (January, 1975), pp. 32-52.). To Battenhouse it is a good (i.e., contented) Christian death (p. 46) for it follows a good Christian life. For the life of Falstaff, Battenhouse offers this apology: his intentions were always charitable. It is part of charity to hide one's charitable intentions. Out of charity Falstaff chose the role of Fool and in that role often quoted scripture. His charitable purpose? To mock kings like Henry IV and to instruct princes like Hal. What crimes and cruelties, what vices and flaws you may find in him you must put down to mere show. When he spoke to his recruits as "cannon fodder" it was only to make a comment on the times. When the Prince found that wine bill, it was not evidence of immoderation; Falstaff put it there on purpose. Falstaff was a reborn Christian and we can even suggest when he was reborn (p. 49). This apology is disturbing for it asks us to accept as an excuse for a crime or a vice the plea "I did it to mock others." The interpretation of which this apology is the central part is unconvincing. From the evident truth that much of what Falstaff does and says does mock and instruct, it does not follow that he purposes all the instruction, nor that the instruction is always or ever Christian; nor does it follow that he leads an exemplary Christian life. I believe that Falstaff would be amused by Battenhouse's ingenious apology but not while he was dying. Then he needed an apology, but then he feared God, and because he did, he dared not defend his life with transparent evasions, however witty. His cry of "God, God, God," should remind us of the death of Christ (as reported by Matthew) and by so doing remind us that Christ did not die a contented death. I am grateful to tutor Laurence Berns of St. John's College for emphasizing the deliberate resemblance between Falstaff's cry and Christ's.

⁹ I am grateful to a lecture by Professor Robert G. Hunter for this point.

¹⁰ Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), s.v.

¹¹ If we wish to guess the kind and extent of the Prince's grief at Falstaff's death we have only to look back to another battlefield. At Shrewsbury Henry slew Hotspur and found Falstaff "dead" nearby:

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 to-day,
 Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
 Embowelled will I see thee by-and-by;
 Till then in blood by noble Percy lie.

(*I Henry IV*, 5.4.101–09)

Henry cannot be present at the death of Falstaff or express grief for him for another reason: ceremony. It is not only that doing so would compromise his new reputation; commanding and befriending are incompatible. When Henry replaces Falstaff with Fluellen as a sign of the change from Hal to Henry, he never befriends Fluellen the way he did Falstaff.

¹² Sometime after I first discovered this resemblance I discovered that others had done so (Prof. David Lowenthal of Boston College and tutor Lawrence Berns, St. Johns College). Then from Prof. McFarland's book, mentioned below, I learned of still others. It seems that the first to discover this resemblance publicly was John Robert Moore ("Shakespeare's *Henry V*," *Explicator* 1 [June, 1943], item 61). See also *The Explicator*, Vol. II, 3, item 19 (Dec. 1943); Katherine Koller's "Falstaff and the Art of Dying" *Modern Language Notes* LX (1945), pp. 383–86; Roger Lloyd's "Socrates and Falstaff" *Time and Tide*, Vol. 39 (1958), pp. 219–20.

¹³ Quoted in the translation of Hugh Tredennick from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 97–98.

¹⁵ A recent book by Thomas McFarland, *Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972) contains an appendix which takes note of the resemblance of Falstaff's death to Socrates'. According to Professor McFarland, Falstaff is a pastoral character and contributes a pastoral critique of the political world inhabited and ruled by Henry V. McFarland construes the death of Falstaff as pastoral in flavor (with flowers and green fields), regards Socrates as pastoral too (p. 182), says that "the death of Falstaff serves no intrinsic function in *Henry V*" (p. 183), and believes that both Socrates and Falstaff "die as a result of censure by their social order" (p. 182). Except for the resemblance between the deaths of Socrates and Falstaff, none of this account will bear scrutiny. Socrates dies not from the censure of his society, he has endured that for many years, but from the vote of the legally assembled jury of the demos of Athens. Nor does Falstaff die of censure; he dies of a sweat, of an unusual illness; if there is censure which contributes to his death, then that censure must come from God. To maintain that the death of Falstaff is somehow "pastoral" one must ignore the dread and darkness closing in on Falstaff; more specifically, one must ignore the fact that Falstaff is trying to say the twenty-third Psalm. To maintain that Socrates is somehow a figure from pastoral one

must ignore the express words of Socrates in *Phaedrus* 230d where Socrates says that trees and open country have nothing to teach him, whereas men in cities do. Here, the weakness of McFarland's assertion is suggested by the fact that its only supports are two quotations from recent books of literary criticism, one devoted to Tasso and Shakespeare, the other to Marvell (p. 182). In addition, one wonders what is meant by an "intrinsic function" as opposed to a function simply. Be that as it may, not even McFarland himself believes that the death of Falstaff has no place or function in *Henry V*, since he elsewhere argues that it serves to criticize the political world of Henry V.

¹⁶ Aristophanes, *The Clouds*; Socrates refers to these early charges in the beginning of his *Apology* (according to Plato) at 18a-e.

¹⁷ In Socrates' *Apology* according to Plato we only know the charges through Socrates' words and his refutation; one should compare his statement of the charges (e.g., *Apology*, 24b) with the account given in Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Socrates* (section 40). It is significant that while, for example, Falstaff is accused of being a "white bearded Satan" he is not, like Socrates, accused of impiety, of disbelieving the gods of the land and introducing new gods.

¹⁸ E.g., cf. *2 Henry IV*, 2.1.104 ff. with *Apology*, 18b.

¹⁹ E.g., cf. *1 Henry IV*, 5.1.133 and surrounding with *Republic* especially 619b in the myth of Er where it is reported that the soul of the gentleman chooses the worst and most tyrannical life despite his good habituation in his previous life.

²⁰ Cf. *1 Henry IV*, 3.3.178 with *Symposium*, 221; Montaigne contrasts the strained virtue of Cato with the natural virtue of Socrates: "*Car, en Caton, on void bien à clair que c'est une alleure tendue bien loing au dessus des communes: aux braves exploits de sa vie, et en sa mort, on le sent toujours monte sur ses grands chevaux. Cettuy-cy (Socrates) ralle à terre, et d'un pas mol et ordinaire traicte les plus utiles discours; et se conduict et à la mort et aux plus espineuses traverses qui se puissent presenter au trein de la vie humaine.*" (*Essais*, III, 12, end of second paragraph.)

²¹ *Symposium*, 220a.

²² *Symposium*, 215b and ff.

²³ From Shakespeare's single explicit reference to Socrates we might only gather that he understands Socrates not as the founder of classical political philosophy or as the example of the philosophic life but as the henpecked husband par excellence (*Taming of the Shrew*, 1.2.69).

The third connection between Shakespeare and Socrates is Hamlet's "To be or not to be . . ." soliloquy; as D.G. James (*The Dream of Learning* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951], p. 56-62) has noticed, Hamlet's dilemma and much of his imagery derive from the *Apology* via Montaigne's "Of Physiognomy." About that dilemma we might say this: Socrates does not imagine a dream filled sleep as one of the two possible states which follow death. Hamlet does. Hamlet has heard ghostly revelations; in the Ghost and the dread he inspires Shakespeare seems to have portrayed Christianity and the problems it makes for princes, men, and growing philosophers. Where does the Ghost go on the divided line? Indeed, it is a mote to trouble the mind's eye. Meeting it makes Hamlet contemn "your philosophy."

²⁴ My thoughts on these matters are to be found in a dialogue "Looking At the Body," *Hastings Center Reports*, V (April, 1975), pp. 21-28. (a dialogue)

²⁵ *Apology*, 29a.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, No. 1, "Das Problem des Sokrates":

"Selbst Sokrates sagte, als er starb: 'leben—das heisst lange krank sein: ich bin dem Heilande Asklepios einen Hahn schuldig.' Selbst Sokrates hatte es satt." Cf. *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, No. 340 and No. 36.

²⁷ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, "Vorrede," first sentence.

²⁸ Machiavelli, *Prince*, Chapter XXV, final paragraph.

²⁹ It is Fluellen who makes most of the comparisons and Ronald S. Berman has taken Fluellen's hints as Shakespeare's in his article, "Shakespeare's Alexander: Henry V" *College English*, 23, No. 7 (1961-62), pp. 532-539.

³⁰ So well described by condemned Claudio, "this sensible warm motion" (*Measure for Measure*, 3.1.120).

³¹ Whenever the wit of Falstaff scores through Biblical allusion, it exposes Biblical fear.

³² Consider the laws; Falstaff is a mocker of the laws; like the God of Battles he weakens the force of law in modern political regimes; however much Socrates liberates individuals from opinion (*doxa*) he does not seem to liberate them from the laws (*nomoi*); in the *Crito* he seems to teach unconditional obedience to laws, even to laws unjustly executed.

³³ Precisely the same distinction is known to the gravedigger in *Hamlet* (5.1.120-129).

³⁴ Edited by Monica Stevens (London: Sheed and Ward, 1951), p. 134. I am grateful to Leo Strauss for pointing out both this passage and its pertinence to Socrates.

³⁵ Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1965), pp. 3-31 and Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 50-62.

³⁶ *Phaedrus*, 274d-277a.

³⁷ If one wishes to know a man who, though wishing to make men laugh, did not intend to keep within the bounds of what men think laughable, one has only to turn to Nietzsche. More exactly, the wit of Nietzsche aims to metamorphose present man, all too human man, into a superman with laughter. One might also consider Socrates who only laughed at the "wrong places" and laughed alone.

³⁸ On the way in which the entertainer is the valet of corrupt publics and a fifth wheel to good ones, see Rousseau's *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* in the translation of Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), especially section IV.

³⁹ Though the entertainer is a far different thing from the lecturer, still one should consider the lecturer and his jokes. The joke at the beginning of the lecture sets not only the audience at ease but the lecturer. At the beginning it takes away a bit of the solitude he has prepared in. In the course of the lecture it may allow him to locate and judge his audience before he meets them in dialogue. This reminds us of a resemblance between Falstaff and Socrates which we had neglected until now: neither takes money for the wit he provides.

⁴⁰ *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Baillie translation (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 229-240. Cf. Diderot, *Jacques le Fataliste*.

⁴¹ Terence, *Heauton Timorumenos*, 77.

⁴² From the point of view of humanism, Dostoyevsky does a devilish thing when he has the Devil who visits Ivan Karamazov declare, "*Satan sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*" Ivan had wanted to know how the Devil can have rheumatism and in the sentence just preceding the one we have quoted the Devil explained, "Why not,

if I sometimes assume a human form. When I do, I suffer the consequences.' It would seem that Dostoyevsky knew the immediate context of the line his Devil alters from Terence. No doubt his Devil knew the blasphemous resemblance between his declaration and the passion of Christ. I quote the David Magarshack translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* (Penguin Books) Vol. 2, p. 751. Five pages later the Devil quotes Descartes' *Je pense donc je suis* with approval.

⁴³ G. E. Bentley, *Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), pp. 119–29.

⁴⁴ Let the reader attend a banquet or smoker and, refraining from the stimulants offered and imbibed, study the jests, toasts, and speeches together with the laughter they evince and see if, at the end of the evening, he has not discovered what lies not far below these jests and toasts, and the several senses in which philosophy is needed.

⁴⁵ Machiavelli praises David in the *Prince* (XIII); it was a republican regime in Florence, in which Machiavelli held office, which commissioned Michelangelo's David to stand in the Piazza della Signoria; Machiavelli seems to have this statue in mind in *Discourses*, 1.11, end of the fourth paragraph, for the block of marble furnished by the city to Michelangelo was marred; cf. what Machiavelli makes of David, employing the single Biblical quotation in the work, in *Discourses*, 1.26, at the beginning. (Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*) What David does by ordering Uriah the Hittite into the worst part of the battle should be compared and also contrasted with what Williams alleges the King may be doing in ordering his subjects to fight at Agincourt and what Henry actually orders them to do to the prisoners. Mistress Quickly's mistake of Arthur's bosom for Abraham's accords well with the spirit of Henry's political religion; Henry is much more like Arthur than Abraham. Arthur united the countries of the North in a war against Rome; like Henry, he came from Wales (4.1.51) and like Henry he failed to perpetuate his kingdom.

⁴⁶ See *The Psalms: Hebrew text and English translation with commentary* by A. Cohen (London: Soncino Press, 1945), s.v. Here the Geneva translation, the one best known to Shakespeare and his audience, is more faithful; it has "a long season."

⁴⁷ Here is the place to mention the relation of Falstaff to Oldcastle. Oldcastle, we know, died a martyr. Up until *Henry V* the wit of Falstaff mocks the morality of those Christians who might die martyrs. If honor is a word not worth dying for, is not "Christ" also a word? No wonder the living descendants of Oldcastle objected to Falstaff's earlier name. But in *Henry V* it turns out that the man who mocks the religion of the martyr does not disbelieve in the God Oldcastle died for. Like any Christian martyr he dies with "God, God, God" on his trembling lips.

⁴⁸ Consider *Hamlet* 3.1.56–88, and *The Tempest* 1.1.49.