

Henry iv-falstaff's verbal expansiveness

Literature



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Henry IV Part I – Falstaff’s verbal expansiveness Falstaff’s extensive use of verbal expression and his wordy conversation with the Prince and Poinis is evident right from Scene IV where Falstaff enters the stage. Falstaff is seen to be a very forthright and expressive person. He swears at the Prince and Pons warning them that he would defeat the king and chase him out of his kingdom. His verbal expansiveness is evident right from the beginning and slowly develops with time in due course of progress of the scene. Falstaff has a very convincing way of speaking. He has the power of persuasion and reflects an extraordinary power over words. As Falstaff’s animated reconstruction of the story goes on, he exhibits an extraordinary virtuosity over word-play gradually deviating from what he begun saying. Falstaff begins by saying that there were a large number of men upon them, “ about fifty of them” (Shakespeare 37). Falstaff says that there were around “ two or three and fifty” upon poor old Jack. He contradicts his own words but makes the Prince believe in what he is saying. Falstaff begins by saying that there were a large number of men set up to attack them. He says that he “ peppered” (Shakespeare 37) two of them in buckram suits but immediately after says that there were four of them. On being questioned by the Prince that he had himself said that there were two men in buckram suits, he convinces the Prince that there were four of them. His convincing account of the robbery is reinforced by his request to test the credibility of the information by the Prince, and that he be spat upon and called a horse. The very next moment he diverts from what he has said. Falstaff says that there were four men in buckram suits who were at him. The prince astonished at the contradictory information interrupts by saying that there were two men in Buckram suits as narrated by Falstaff. In response Falstaff confidently and

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convincingly says that he had indeed said four men in buckram suits (which imply that the Prince misheard him). Poinciville agrees with Falstaff that he indeed had referred to four men in Buckram suits initially. At this point of time we gradually experience Falstaff's power of speech, his dramatic narration of account and his ability to make people buy his incredible facts. Falstaff proceeds to say that these four men in buckram suits thrust themselves upon him and attacked him. He then gallantly took all seven of them in his targets. The prince is again surprised by the change in Falstaff's account. The prince questions Falstaff how were there seven men when he himself said a short while back that there were four of them. To this, Falstaff replies by saying that in Buckram suits there were four. Poinciville corroborates Falstaff's reply saying that there were four men in Buckram suits. Again Falstaff tells the prince that what he says is true otherwise he would be a villain. As the Prince whispers to Poinciville aside, Falstaff tries to get back the attention of the prince by saying, "Dost thou hear me, Hal?" (Shakespeare 37). On resuming his account, he again deviates from the earlier information by saying that the nine men their "points being broken" (Shakespeare 38) began to attack him. Falstaff said that he withstood the charge of these men and battled seven of the eleven men. Now the Prince, astonished, begins to doubt the credibility of Falstaff's narration. Falstaff's verbal expansiveness comes to light in the way he weaves the story and manages to secure the attention of the Prince as well as the reader in his ever changing, ever dramatic twists in the narration. Falstaff continues with his narrative that he gallantly fought the eleven. He goes on to say that, "three misgotten Knaves in Kendal green" came from behind and started attacking him. In his over-expressive style and persuasive description, Falstaff describes the

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surroundings as pitch dark; as dark as one could not even see his own hand. (Shakespeare 38) This makes the prince doubt the information more strongly. He interrogates Falstaff further and calls his narration a blatant lie. Falstaff refuses to give a reason under pressure and oppression. In the second half of the scene Falstaff requests the Prince to join him in a play, an extempore. References: 1. Marmion, Patrick. "Falstaff, the only jewel in the crown". Daily mail. Mail Online. 4 Aug, 2011. Web. 21 Mar 2012. 2. Muir, Kenneth. "Shakespeare Survey". An Annual Study of Shakespearian study and Production. 1 Mar. 1977. Web. 21 Mar 2012.