Mistress Quickly In The Merry Wives Of Windsor: A Performance Monograph

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MISTRESS QUICKLY IN THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR:
A PERFORMANCE MONOGRAPH

By

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B.A. University of Colorado, 1981

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Theatre
in the College of Arts and Humanities
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ABSTRACT

The subject of my Thesis and accompanying Monograph Document in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree / Performance Track is my work in the role of Mistress Quickly from William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In my research, I will be focusing on a number of issues, many of which will bear direct relevance to and undoubtedly, more fully inform, my interpretation in performance.

A key element of the performance-related side of my research will be an exploration of the cultural, historical, political, economic, and religious attributes of Shakespeare’s times and how these factors drive Mistress Quickly’s interactions with others, her perspectives of the society in which she lives, and her personal behavior. The directorial concept, as initially explained to the cast, will be keeping us within the English Renaissance and Shakespeare’s time. Any variation within this initial concept will also be elaborated upon.

Finally, I would like to explore the overall place of women at the time Shakespeare wrote, as well as during the specific time frame in which our production is set. Furthermore, I will look at Mistress Quickly as a character and how she is either reflected in or at odds with that societal placement.
For Norman, who taught me to follow my heart.
For Marilyn, whose ferocious loyalty and loving faith gave me the power to believe I could.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From my very first class as a post-baccalaureate, uphill through the demands of juggling full-time coursework, internship, and family, it has always been Julia: guiding, encouraging, and opening fascinating worlds of possibilities. Without her, this would still be some abstract concept…all thanks begin and end with her.

To Kate, for her passion and guidance, her vision and her trust.

To Be, whose insights and suggestions provided me with invaluable assistance as I fleshed out my character.

To Doc, who always challenged me to dig deeper.

To Mark, who initially pointed the way.

To the best Falstaff in JJ Ruscella, and the rest of our glorious ensemble: I wouldn’t want to live in Windsor with anyone else!

And most especially to Alyssa and Nicholas. Without your love and support, none of this could have happened…and to Whitney, for helping to keep it all together.
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INTRODUCTION

In this document, I will address a two-fold purpose.

This monograph is focused upon my work creating the character of Mistress Quickly in the University of Central Florida’s 2002 production of William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; I will therefore chronicle and examine my internal and external process as an actor as well as my integration of these elements into the overall process of the production itself.

Additionally, I will include my outside research on the era and the many social, political, and economic changes that impacted the people of England from the late 1500s to the later 1600s, which also informed the foundation for the character choices I ultimately made. I initially supposed that I would only need to define the character within a limited time frame, from the play’s presumed first production, around 1597, through the end of Elizabeth’s reign and Shakespeare’s life. I instead found myself needing to expand my initial inquiry to take in some of the nuances that a further 60 – 70 years would necessarily bring to a society and the characters living within it.

In preparation for the role, and looking at the societal upheavals in England at the time, many avenues of further inquiry seemed to open up and begged examination, most specifically, the changing role and perception of women in society -- on stage and off. There were the antitheses and parallels between the earlier Greek Classical period (another era when women were not permitted to portray their own gender onstage) and the Shakespearean and neo-
Classical periods both in terms of societal behaviors and mores as well as “public etiquette”. These were also fascinating and informative points of reference for me. Exploring, both pre- and post-production, the power, place, and representation of women in 1600’s English society became a fulfilling supplement to my acting work.

Figure 1 “Well, she laments, sir, for it, that it would yearn your heart to see it…I must carry her word quickly: she’ll make you amends, I warrant you.” (The Merry Wives of Windsor 3.5)
DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT

Looking back at both my journal of the production and earliest abstract, it is clear to me that our director, Kate Ingram, envisioned a production steeped in the energy and flavor of Shakespeare’s England and the style of the Elizabethan theatres. Indeed, there was great care taken in the overall production details to reflect the foundation of this vision. At the same time, I found there to be some fascinating variances. These differences were sometimes logistic, sometimes conscious choices. My fascination with them stems from the seeming effect they had upon the overall flavor of the production. While a sense of Shakespeare’s era was still maintained, there were also choices made which provided justifiable and intriguing connections to earlier times as well as later seventeenth century sensibilities. Our ultimate mission, of course, was to bring this world to life for a twenty-first century audience while giving them a taste of another time. I believe that we were able to accomplish this, and that the blending of the various time periods and overall design elements helped us to achieve that goal.

From the first rehearsal, Kate expressed the desire that this production be a high-energy romp, and our music was selected to reflect this. I felt, in fact, that the music was an important part of our overall energy and essence, as it was one of the very first elements that we addressed. On a personal note, music is an essential part of my own life, with varying rhythms and melodies, both man-made as well as natural, comprising a mental soundtrack through which I function and keep myself sane. It made all the sense in the world to me that the start of this
theatrical journey should be framed with a specific sound defining and driving our world on the stage. In my journal notes from the initial design presentation on October 7, 2002 I wrote: “We talked about the sound design for the show as well. There will be a lot of music to carry the play along, a lot of traditional instruments and music. However, Kate wants to avoid anything with a tinge of melancholy; we need to be the “Up with Windsor People!” The music will help us approach the sensibility of the time.” (72) The soundtrack for the production that Kate and our sound designer, Lauren Gamber, eventually put together was an upbeat collection of traditional melodies and tunes whose publication dates ranged primarily from 1651 to 1728. A substantial percentage of our sound design came from the CD, *Lads and Lasses: Music of the English Countryside*, a collection of dance tunes originally compiled by John and Henry Playford between 1651 and 1728. Many of the tunes were published complete with instructions for the specific steps required for a particular dance.\(^1\) It is highly probable that the original sources of many of the tunes date back even earlier. In addition, we also used traditional Irish music from *The Mad Buckgoat: Ancient Music of Ireland*, recorded by The Baltimore Consort. The liner notes for this CD explain that the musicians utilized original instruments and relied on music formally published anywhere from 1650 through the very early 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^2\) It is my belief that our use of music covering a wider spectrum than a strict Elizabethan time frame added to the sense of inevitability and timelessness within the parameters of the relations between men and women: in my mind, the central issue at stake in the play.
Our set, while logistically framed by a proscenium arch (and enclosed entirely indoors), was otherwise an adaptation of an Elizabethan staging space. According to our set designer, Richard Harmon, the focus was on creating a flavor of the theatre of Shakespeare's time, while at the same time integrating the needs and sensibilities of a 21st century audience. Accordingly, adaptations were made from both a logistic as well as aesthetic point of view.

We find, looking back into history, that there were several “variations on a theme” in regards to the Elizabethan stage and scenery. Just as we have different types of stages in today’s theatres, (i.e. thrust, proscenium, black box, environmental) the theatres of the sixteenth century varied depending on the specific company, the parameters of their physical space and whether it was a private or public theatre. For us, in 2002, producing on a modern proscenium stage meant that the proximity of the audience to the players was substantially different from what it would have been in the late sixteenth and into the early seventeenth century. The use of a thrust-type stage like the Elizabethan theatres of The Fortune and The Rose, for example, was not an option for us. We did not have a space for our audience to crowd around the stage, as the Elizabethans did with their area for what they termed the ‘groundlings’. Nor was our space equipped with two to three levels of ‘box’ or balcony seating stretching all the way from one side of the set around the back of the house to the other side. Our audience was seated (very decorously!) in long rows horizontal to the stage that began several feet in front of the apron and moved progressively farther away from the action.
The elevation of the façade of our set was done with a Tudor flavor. However, the width of our playing space and its clear demarcation from our audience diminished any sense of similarity with pageant wagons, the more permanent platforms of the various medieval liturgical dramas, or the caravan stages of traveling troupes, from which the Elizabethan stage took some of its origins. At the same time, the flavor of the period was certainly apparent in the use of an upper and lower playing space on both sides of the stage. These could be used for discovery purposes by both doors and windows. In a departure from the period, the side structures were both accessed on the outside by visible stairs and landings that provided additional performance areas for the actors. These side “discovery spaces” were connected by a bridge/balcony, or inner stage, which, as with many of the Elizabethan stages, was also a playable space of its own. Below the bridge was a central discovery space alternately covered by a curtain, or which could be opened to provide a slip-stage that would be rolled forward to represent the Garter Inn, and, in the final scene, opened and decorated by “the fairies” to become the woods and Herne’s Oak. All in all, it was a great design that provided a variety of playing areas, a specificity of locales that helped the audience follow the action, and a flavor of the general time period.

Upon further research on my own, I was also delighted to discover that many of the elements that I had considered part of a more “modern evolution” of theatrical staging had had many of its origins in the early English Restoration. There was the introduction of the use of a proscenium arch with a stage area that spread out both in front and behind the arch. Also, for the first time, doors were
used from both sides of the proscenium directly onto the stage for the actors to make their entrances and exits. Increasingly, the performance began to be focused more downstage, in front of the proscenium. Behind the proscenium arch, scenery that easily could be moved and changed was introduced into general use and was seen as a real innovation. The establishment of a room behind the stage for props, scenery, and for actors to wait for their cues became more and more the standard. All of these elements seemed to me to be as much a part of our more modern “comfort zone” of theatrical production; I loved the parallel in their connection to our soon-to-be created world of the 1660s. Perhaps one of the clearest similarities making the 1660/2002 comparison an even more logical leap than simply one focused on the play’s time of composition lies in our mode of transition scene to scene. In her book chronicling the first female actresses in England, Elizabeth Howe writes:

> Whereas in the Renaissance, the action of a play was basically continuous, without breaks for different settings and backdrops, the Restoration theatre commenced the practice of transitions in the action in which changes of scene were created…All changes of scene took place in full view of spectators.

This is exactly the mode of scene transition we used, even going so far as to have little vignettes and moments between characters as we moved across stage, sometimes carrying small props or assisting with the slip stage or simply facilitating getting to our next entrance. It kept a sense of constant energy and village bustle in front of our audience. And while this action in between scenes was not so unusual for our modern audience, it was a perfectly suited “innovation” for our “newly christened” Restoration house!
The costuming for this production shared many attributes with the fashions of Shakespeare’s time. As with the other design elements, however, there were also some very distinct choices made that I feel justify placing the actual timeline of our performance within the later decades of the seventeenth century. We established, early on in the rehearsal process, that as itinerant actors we would have most probably pieced together whatever costume pieces we had collected over time and carried them along in our trunks. These disparate pieces would have very likely to have been traced back to a variety of eras.

We were aided by the fact that for the lower classes, basic elements of the daily wardrobe had actually changed relatively little. Our rustics, then, wore costume pieces as recognizable to an early Restoration audience as it would have been in Elizabethan times and earlier. The lines of my own costume were very typical for a person of the serving classes. My head kerchief was of a style typically worn in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries only by the lower classes. Additionally, the actors who played the characters that were more “old-fashioned and set in their ways” (for example, Nick Sprysinski as Dr. Caius and Mark Brotherton as Slender) were also dressed in what would be considered a style from an earlier period. Some of these variations, and the ones that I mention in the following paragraphs, can be noted in the production and costume photographs, renderings and drawings included in Appendix B at the end of this thesis.

The rich colors and quality of the clothing worn by the two husbands, Page and Ford, denoted their status, while at the same time, were conservative in cut.
This relative conservatism in their dress reflected some of the variations in men’s dress that realistically spanned the seventeenth century.

There was also clear historical variation in the dress of the women. In particular, Mistresses Ford, Page and Anne wore costuming that pulled elements from a relatively wide spectrum of time. These “Desperate Housewives of Windsor” retain social positions as members of the town’s “bourgeois society.” This requires them to wear what would be considered the most up-to-date fashions in order to clearly establish their status with the audience. At the same time, being an itinerant company would keep us from having access to “true finery,” hence it would make sense that even our most up-to-date attempts might fall short of the mark! However, overall, when examining the silhouettes of their costuming, and comparing them with drawings and paintings of the era, I found the ladies to be much closer aligned with fashions of the mid seventeenth century than that of Elizabethan times. Mistress Page, being the seemingly more conservative of the two wives, wears a dress with hints of Puritan influence. Her daughter, Anne, is dressed more youthfully, however, and with a somewhat more open neckline. Mistress Ford’s dress, on the other hand, is definitely more coquettish, with an abundance of décolletage. Interestingly, while the silhouette of their dresses reflects the influence of the mid-to-late seventeenth century, all three women wear head coverings that can be traced as far back as the middle to late sixteenth century!

In her own research, our costume designer, Kristina Tollefson told us that she had made use of the book *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and his
Contemporaries** by M. Channing Linthicum. During my initial discussions about my own costuming with her and in her presentation to the cast, we spoke of the practice of “color symbolism,” noted even in pre-Christian times and further specified and codified over the ensuing centuries. The development of elaborate heraldry and the creation of coats of arms can be considered a major source for color symbolism. In fact, while Chaucer was the earliest known English writer to reference the symbolism of various colors freely (and attributing more appropriate “Christian imagery” to the earlier pagan connections), the system became increasingly defined by about 1528 when the Alphonso V, King of Aragon’s herald, Sicile, wrote a book detailing color symbolism. This book became highly popular and was used as a reference and starting point for further analysis and interpretation over the next century. Another volume was penned around the same time by an Italian writer, Fulvio Pellegrino Morato, author of one of the oldest known books of rhyme, and was similar in its focus on the meanings behind various colors. Their writings, elaborated and expanded upon by numerous writers of the times, were used to great effect not only by playwrights and others, but also in day-to-day fashion considerations. Although they were not direct contributors to the various works on the symbolism of color being published at the time, the English were certainly aware of these writings.

Shakespeare, of course, utilized color constantly throughout his writings and was considered in his day to be a “master colorist.” However, it wasn’t “…until the seventeenth century (that) an English author attempt( ted) to compile the meanings attached to most of the shades, tones, and tints of colors known to
Tudor and Stuart England.” It was 1661 before Thomas Blount investigated earlier foreign works written between 1580 and 1640 in order to describe the specifics of the symbolism of color.

Kristina used color in our show not only to delineate between families, but also to define social classes and to give a hint as to a character’s personality. In regards to my own costuming, because my character acted as a go-between for so many of the parties in town (in effect, having my finger in everyone’s pie), Kristina used a combination of colors that pulled from the color palate of each of the other characters, the primary hue being what I would call a “pumpkiny-yellow.” According to Linthicum, the color yellow itself, in Tudor times, was connected to marriage, love, and jealousy, as well as to fools (though not court fools). From even earlier times it was also associated with deception, passions, earthiness, and cupidity. The concept of parti-color denoting an unstable mind and discord (and Quickly certainly likes to stir things up) was elaborated upon by Giovanni Rinaldi in 1594, following up on the earlier work of Morato. By Shakespeare’s time, “drama followed the generally recognized attribution of certain colors to persons of certain status . . . fools wore several colors, of which yellow was usually prominent.” I found all of this information tremendously helpful in my own explorations. It provided fodder for my imagination as I began to piece together ideas about the personality and other character traits that could make up my interpretation of Mistress Quickly. It was exciting; it also made me wonder about the power and the energies that these reflections of the light
spectrum might contain and release. All of these qualities are undeniably internal drivers of the various intentions and motivations of my character.

According to my journal notes, from the very first day of rehearsal, October 7th, Kate introduced us to her idea of how she wanted us to physically open the show. She described how she wanted us to enter from all sides of the house, including the lobby areas, as a troupe of itinerant actors who have been forced from London due to the closing of the theatres because of plague, and so we are touring our shows in the provinces. This issue, of course, is a key variable in determining many of the external attributes -- the historical, political, and social context -- influencing my character analysis. It presented what at first appeared to be a clear dichotomy between the stated time frame the director had initially laid out for the production, the moment-to-moment reality we were expected to draw upon, and the background details we would need to research and come to terms with in the creation of our character. I felt that the specifics of my character and her place in society, in the play in general, and in our production specifically hinged at least in part upon this issue. The more I read, however, the more delighted I became at the actual convergence that existed in the details of my mission.

While in discussion with my director, we agreed that my thesis was to be focused upon Mistress Quickly as a character, specifically in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as opposed to “Joan, the itinerant actress” (as we came to call her/me). My first thought was that, certainly, in the development of character, the parameters of the world you are creating are of paramount importance. After all, I
don’t bring my 21st century persona onstage with me too…or do I? As my own personal work as an actor tends to lean towards my Meisner training, I try to keep open to use whatever energy I’m faced with in the moment, internally as well as externally; “Ride the wave,” as JJ might say. After much thought, for me, the crux of the matter became focused upon the simple fact of how we were directed to open the show. By entering the theatre from the back of the house, and greeting the theatrical patrons seated there as members of the same English generation as ourselves, we establish that women are now accepted members (to whatever particular degree) of a publicly performing troupe…and not just in London, but out in the provincial towns as well. This led me to the unavoidable conclusion that our show, rather than being presented at Shakespeare’s time, had to occur sometime after 1660 when women were first publicly accepted on stage in England.

Of course, at the same time that I realized this, I knew that I would need to be able to integrate whatever choices I made not only into the parameters that Kate would set out for us, but also as we developed the ensemble of our company. I found this to be a fascinating and enlightening challenge and the more I read, the more I realized that many of the fundamentals I had extracted from my initial research for my character (based upon an Elizabethan time frame) were applicable to varying degrees even in the mid-to-late seventeenth century.

Certainly, the role of women had been increasingly expanding, as they began to move more and more into the formerly male-dominated public arenas. I found Shakespeare’s handling of women in general, and his racy, prescient
scenario in *Merry Wives* (even if considered comparatively banal by many) quite compatible with the attitudes toward women and marriage in the later seventeenth century. Moreover, Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* seemed to me to be foreshadowing the future evolution of the stage; the play is a bourgeois, domestic comedy, the sit-com of its day, with subject matter more appropriate to the tastes of what would decades later become a Restoration audience. When originally written, it was a bit at odds with the “tastes” of the time, with the women clearly getting the upper hand in its plot. Yet, our own production easily shared an Elizabethan sensibility while still encompassing a time frame more in keeping with the reality of having biologically and anatomically correct women in roles previously reserved for young boys. The women in our show were clearly not boys, not even our women in breeches roles. (Fredereka Irvine as Robin and Kyle Ann Lacertosa as Will.) It is also logical that the cross-dressing of Falstaff as a woman to escape detection is much more titillating to an audience for whom men in women’s clothing is an exception rather than the rule. I feel this is as true in 2002, when we produced the show, as it would have been once women were established as public figures in the mid 1600s.

In order to further energize this concept and make it come alive realistically for myself, I wanted to draw on, at least in part, my extensive experience doing street theatre. Kate told us at one of the earliest rehearsals, that we would be using direct audience address. (My character, in particular, uses it frequently, sharing various secrets and musings of my own with the
people seated before me.) And, whether we were setting the play in Elizabethan
times, the Restoration period, or today in the 2000s, in order to speak to the
audience with a sense of sincere intimacy, I felt that in my own mind, I had to
consider them my contemporaries. I immediately began to construct in my head
the scenario in which I would be living, “On this particular night, we are in this
particular town and they’ve indicated they wanted to see something of
Shakespeare’s. As an itinerant company, we make do with whatever theatrical
setting the provincial town has at its disposal. The quasi-Elizabethan façade of
our set provided the perfect backdrop for our choice of play (something domestic
to appeal to their Restoration sensibilities), our trunks carry a variety of costume
pieces to span from the histories to the present, so let’s take these good people
down to Windsor to frolic with us!”
PLAY AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS

When I begin the analysis of a play, one of the primary tasks at hand as I develop my own understanding is to determine the essence of the piece, the central subject or idea inherent in the play. This core idea has been referred to by theatrical theorists by various terms, the most familiar, perhaps, as the play’s “seed” or “spine.” In examining the many potential “seeds” or “spines” possible for the romp that is Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, nothing seemed to catch the capriciousness, the teasing delight, the sheer *brio* of the show to me like “desire” in all its possible permutations. Whether framed simply as a word, as a feeling, or as a concept, the play was about each and every one of us relentlessly pursuing our most primal objectives. Whether that desire was of the libidinous sort, or the pure and chaste, covetous of money or of power, prideful or pious, it was an undeniable force in the lives of the people. Indeed, the many attributes and definitions of desire were apparent in every single character throughout the show, driving each of us irrevocably forward towards the show’s raucous cuckolding and hinted-at ribald bacchanalia at the end.

As I approached the analysis of both the text itself and the character of Mistress Quickly, it became clear that there were a number of areas in which the information being covered would necessarily be replicated. In order to avoid repetition, I made the decision to combine those areas which converged and where my analyses would be better served by referencing the subjects in tandem.
One of the most obvious areas for this convergence was on the subject of given circumstances. It was also the section that gave me the most immediate pause, as it meant making some specific choices on a macro level. I was pleased to discover as I went along that the personal character choices were not necessarily impacted by these larger issues, but were, rather, enhanced. The more I was able to compare, contrast and blend my discoveries, learnings and personal epiphanies with the information I gathered both during rehearsal and in my research, the clearer my path became and the more delightful the symmetry. Rather than confusing issues, the information clarified and strengthened my choices.

Among the key points to establish in analyzing a script and/or character are the time variables involved.

The specific time of composition for the play is of some debate. The First Quarto of “…an excellent and pleasant conceited comedy of Sir John Falstaff and the Merry Wives of Windsor” was recorded for copyright in “…the Stationer’s Register…for 18 January 1602. However, the 1602 Quarto does not contain the verse passages of the Fairy Queen/Mistress Quickly originally written as “a royal entertainment to be performed at the feast held in Westminster Palace on St. George’s Day, 23 April 1597” and celebrating “the Most Noble Order of the Garter.” These passages, omitted in the 1602 Quarto, can be found in the First Folio of 1623. Also missing from the 1602 Quarto is the Latin lesson, diminishing, in that version, the essential importance of linguistics and class distinctions. The debate about the specific date of composition for this play centers on two points:
the very different versions presented by the Quarto and Folio, as well as where *Merry Wives* falls, both chronologically and literarily, in Shakespeare’s canon. 

(This debate is often careening into pure speculation: Would Shakespeare have bothered to write a light-hearted romp in the middle of his histories? Or would he have written of Falstaff alive after he’d already killed him off?) There has been a general concurrence that if the first showing of the Fairy Sequence/Garter Play in 1597 was only (perhaps) a somewhat further altered elaboration of the scene we know of as the scene at Herne’s Oak today, then the first production of *Merry Wives* as recorded for the Quarto was probably “…not before late 1599 or 1600.”⁵ There are extensive differences in the number of character’s lines between the two texts and other references as well. In our production, the director referenced both the Quarto and Folio, combining them to create our own unique interpretation and continued doing judicious cutting of her own along the way during rehearsals. The Garter Play at the end with the Fairy sequence was kept, although with substantial alterations. I will base all of my analysis on our working script, included within this thesis for reference.

The time of action, or when the play is considered to be taking place, was also a fluid question at the start for me. At first, I was thinking of myself as a woman of the late 1500s - early 1600s, as per my initial understanding of our approach. But to simply imagine myself as an Elizabethan actor entering an Elizabethan theatre in the provinces didn’t work. As a woman, it was, of course, an historical impossibility. In fact, from the first rehearsal, when Kate set up our opening gambit, it was clear that I needed to step back a bit and reevaluate. We
were coming into the theatre as a group of itinerant actors to present the evening’s entertainment. By incorporating that bit of opening stage business into our production, the director had clearly set for us a window of opportunity for interpretation. I can’t explain it, other than to say it was a 180° different mindset than simply slipping on the role as character of a fixed time in a production set-up to take place at a fixed time. Our walking in “from off the street,” as it were, to do the show, changed all of that for me. It was, in fact, a key revelation for me, particularly with all of the direct address that “Mistress Quickly/Joan the Itinerant Actor” does with the audience (both pre-show and within the context of the Shakespeare text). I needed to identify with the audience in a very personal way. This is basic Street Theatre 101. Of course, we had an audience of the 21st century, and we had to somehow coax them to some make-believe middle ground…their own suspension of belief. One of the more fascinating qualities I find in Shakespeare is the timelessness of the material and how it seems to seamlessly bridge many eras: what was capable of shocking then, still can now, and I saw it in action during production. Some of the choices we made in terms of physical and verbal sexual innuendo brought audible gasps from our modern, conceivably “R-rated accustomed” audience. Certainly, the relationship issues and games in the gender wars presented in *Merry Wives* has been the stuff of storytellers through the ages and could easily be dropped into the most lurid of nighttime soap.

I found that by anchoring myself within a period of about a decade or so, while not impacting any of my outward manifestations of character, helped me
get a handle on the world in which I functioned and a sense of where I fit in that world. Two dates which essentially bracket extended periods of time during which either plague, influenza, fire, or some variation thereof closed off portions of the cities and sent itinerant actors, merchants, etc. into the provinces to make their livelihood were 1664-5 through 1676.\(^6\) I was comfortable placing myself within that general period of time, finding reflections of the era in the various societal, economic, occupational, and familial interactions in which Mistress Quickly is involved. I was also able to determine that far from being ignored, Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* was “...among the first plays performed at the reopening of the theatres at the time of the Restoration, as testified by Samuel Pepys, who saw it at the Vere Street Theatre on 5 December 1660.”\(^8\) There are additional references to numerous performances throughout the end of the century, with the only known break between 1706 and 1720, apparently due to a dearth of suitable Falstaffs.\(^9\) There were also connections to be made through the variations in costume silhouette created by Kristina that allowed for a greater span of historical perspective. Additionally, the playful, but clearly sexual chemistry developed in the relationships between Falstaff and my Mistress Quickly as well as, of course, his heated pursuit of Mistresses Page and Ford (the latter, ending in 3.3 with Falstaff’s head up Ford’s skirts – which in an era of crotch-less bloomers would have been an unmistakable statement) was true to the flavor and crossed similar risqué boundaries for our audiences as it might have for rural English audiences of the 1660-70s. Indeed, even in 4.1, when Falstaff disguises himself as an old woman in order to escape from his
rendezvous with Mistress Ford, the subterfuge is much more meaningful when there are actually women in the gender-appropriate roles…being in drag suddenly has a point.

In terms of the specific time of year or season, there is no real specificity within the script except for Falstaff’s reference to the fact that the Thames, into which he was pitched, left his “…belly’s as cold as if I’d swallow’d snowballs…” (not a surprise, as far north as England is, thinks this Florida-born writer) and two other references. The first occurs in 4.1 as Master Page’s son is being escorted to school by his mother, only to be stopped and quizzed by Sir Hugh. This seems to imply to me that the scene is occurring sometime within a standard school year. Another reference is found in 4.4, as Mistress Page recounts the story of Herne the Hunter, “…Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest, / Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight, / Walk round about an oak…” (wsp57) Along with the several references to going a-birding and other hunting terms earlier in the script, I felt that a late fall/early winter placement of season was as likely a time frame as any.

The duration of the play’s action seems relatively compact, although further research also showed some academic debate in this area. The first reference to a time of day is about two-thirds of the way through 1.1 when Master Page proclaims, “It is dinner time” (wsp5). From there, the scenes alternate between concurrent realities and various minimal jumps in time. By my own calculations, it appeared that a minimum of two and a half days had to have passed. In his Introduction to the Arden publication of the script, Melchiori details
the various differences between the Quarto and Folio versions – often quite substantial ones – and makes a case for anywhere from a 48 – 72 hour time period.\textsuperscript{11}

The geographic location of the play is clearly the town of Windsor. I didn’t feel the need to consider the specific performance locale of the itinerant company, (as it were) as we were there to entice them into our world. An English audience of the 1660s or 70s might even have gotten a kick out of the focus on the still courtly town of Windsor, as it was during this time that Charles II had commissioned to be built there by “…the architect, Hugh May…the State Apartments…[with] delicately painted ceilings by…Verrio and…carved cornices and frames by…Gibbons…[and] whose taste…for the style known as Baroque had been formed in Paris and Versailles.”\textsuperscript{12} If anything, the synchronicity of it was quite perfect in that respect. For an English audience of the 1660s and early 1670s, the parallels would have had their own special delights. By poking fun and holding a mirror up to the Windsor of a supposedly earlier time, we were also staging a commentary on the manners and manipulations between the various middle level English classes in their struggles for status, with the same negotiations and nuances (but the mores of the age far looser -- whether 1675 or 2002) permitting a more licentious reading of the text.

As is often the case with Shakespeare, each scene takes us to a specific location. These consisted of various public and private houses in and around the town of Windsor, the streets of the town, two fields on the outskirts of the town,
and the forest outside of Windsor. Our large, multi-leveled set provided ample room to delineate each locale.

At the top of the show, after playing a bit with the audience on the way from the lobby through the vom to the stage, the entire cast usually managed to pretty much cover the entire set, with a combination of pre-set bits improvised with different characters, warming up physically and vocally. It’s the best exercise for me to help get an immediate sense of ‘ownership’ – as an actress over the space, and as Mistress Quickly – procurer extraordinaire!

As I examined the specific scenes in which I take part, it became clear to me that Mistress Quickly is an extremely strong-willed character, although not, perhaps, someone who would be considered the brightest bulb on the tree. In 3.3 after Falstaff is sent in the laundry basket to be dumped in the Thames, Mistress Ford asks Mistress Page if they should “…send that foolish Mistress Quickly…” (wsp40) to entice Falstaff into another ill-fated rendezvous. It is clear at the outset that Mistress Ford has, at the very least, a somewhat dismissive opinion of Mistress Quickly. However despite what others may perceive, my lower status and earthier (even ridiculous) ways hide the street smarts and a devious cunning that enable me to have a greater degree of freedom within the daily functioning of the town than these higher-brow, domesticated, middle-class women. As it is, I am always actively moving the plot forward in one way or another, always trying to manipulate the situation to my advantage, and generally succeeding admirably.
We do, in fact, hear about Mistress Quickly before we ever see her in 1.2. We get an idea of Quickly as a “Jill of all trades,” as a woman of her status in society needed to be in order to survive. Sir Hugh speaks about MQ to Simple, “…and there dwells one Mistress Quickly, which is in the manner of his nurse, or his housekeeper, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, and his wringer” (wsp9).

The character of Mistress Quickly opens 1.4, abuzz with activity, in the location that has the greatest economic impact upon her: at the home of Doctor Caius, her current place of employment. It is all of the machinations that Quickly is clearly juggling that make this scene such a wonderful introduction to my character. You really get a sense for some of the personality traits and qualities that Quickly embodies, a sense for the potential power of this woman and her far-reaching grasp within the many-leveled beehive of the town’s gossip mill. As the scene opens, I enter, calling for another of Caius’ serving men (and my friend,) Jack Rugby, to assist me while I’m deep in the middle of negotiations for my services with another man’s servant. While working for Dr. Caius is my primary source of income, above all else, I am clearly an opportunist. Dr. Caius may be the best regular income source right now, but I always seem to have my eye out for something better. It is clear in my playing the different parties (including my current employer) against each other in their pursuit of Mistress Anne that I have no qualms in using any means of deception if I feel it is to my benefit. In my own character work, alone and in conversation with the actress playing Anne, I felt that my objective in respect to Anne needed to be to keep Anne charmed and trusting in Quickly’s nurturing goodness so that perhaps Mistress Anne might
consider engaging Quickly’s services in her own married household. I think that my character, Mistress Quickly’s, affection for Anne is true, rather than deceptive. But the bottom line is that MQ is still a cagey survivor in a difficult age, and knows how to do what she must to get by in the world.

My blocking in the scene had me bustling all over the space, from the upper chamber, downstairs, along the upstage wall and curtain, and ultimately across the center stage, down the apron and back again. Besides emphasizing the busybody energy and passion of my character, it also gave an impression of my own control over my environment. Even when Caius comes in and threatens me on point, I manage to deceive him, appease him, and then carry on with my own plans accordingly!

I am next seen, but only briefly, in 2.1. I enter the scene, the street outside the Page’s home, on my way to visit with Mistress Anne (with whom I hold a special place in her heart, an older, trusted confidante). Mistresses Page and Ford call me inside (through the front door, no less!) into an inner parlor to discuss sending me on their business with Falstaff. Thus, (albeit, in my own offstage world) I am able to dispatch multiple sets of duties at once. I endear myself to Anne with missives from Master Fenton, and keep her abreast of her mother’s plans for her with my employer the Doctor. I also share with Anne her father’s plans for her with Slender. And all of them are simultaneously paying me to plead their cases with her! Additionally, I pick up some extra lucre from the ladies in their plans to snare Falstaff, which, with some luck, could possibly
humble him enough to bring him closer to my own side! All in all, considering my character’s intentions, not a bad morning’s work for MQ!

The next scene, 2.2 is my first meeting with Falstaff at a room in the Garter Inn. I have come very specifically to give him the messages from the ladies. I am careful of spies, and by limiting my movement within the scene, I create a sense of intimacy and sharing private thoughts with Falstaff. I tell him that the ladies, and in particular, that Mistress Ford “…gives you to notify, that her husband will be absence from his house between ten and eleven…and then you may come and see the picture, she says, that you wot of…” (wsp23). With a nod and a wink, (and much physical hanky panky – our Falstaff and Mistress Quickly were definitely each others’ equals, two bawdy, passionate, earthy creatures) it was made clear what sort of delights Falstaff could dream of from the hands of his Fantasy Ladies…he was an easy mark for my Mistress Quickly…putty in my hands, really!! What complicates it for me is that I am quite smitten by the big bear of a guy, and so must wrestle my own demons and inner obstacles to my overall objectives and goals! (Damn men.) To complete my mission, I acquire one of Falstaff’s pages as a messenger between him and the ladies, actually securing another ally for their side and a spy against Falstaff!

In 3.4 (which in our production occurred after the intermission) I am entering into a courtyard outside the Page’s home along with Masters Shallow and Slender, as their emissary to Mistress Anne when we come upon Anne and Master Fenton. Over the course of the scene, I silently assure Anne that everything will work out, and I try to encourage Master Fenton to hold his peace,
but when his impetuousness overcomes him and he confronts Anne’s father, I then persuade him to press his suit with Anne’s more forgiving and gentle mother. He meets with some degree of success, at least no clear rebuff...and of course, I am not shy about taking full credit: “This is my doing now. “Nay,” said I, “will you cast away your child on a fool and a physician? Look on Master Fenton.” – this is my doing” (wsp45). Once again, my character makes fairly full use of the stage area. As directed, my movements included some wider, circular movements about Fenton, teasing and playing with him. It served, for me, as a physical embodiment of “stirring everything up,” re-emphasizing a sense of my involvement in everyone’s affairs.

My second big seduction/deception scene with Falstaff occurs at the top of 3.5. Like the previous scene at the Garter Inn, it is much more physically confined and close in terms of blocking, making it more intimate and lending it a sense of conspiracy. My job here is tougher. Falstaff is not a happy camper after his dumping in the Thames, and therefore my ability to seduce him into trying another assignation is not as easily accomplished. He’s wary of trusting me this time, but ultimately, his desire overcomes his suspicions. This sets the stage for Falstaff’s second humiliation, and I am able to return to the ladies once again successful in my mission.

The first scene in Act 4 has me walking in the street with Mistress Page and her son, William as she takes him to school. I am rushing her as best I can so that we may get to the Ford’s before Falstaff arrives. We meet up with Sir Hugh who begins quizzing William and whose questions and responses I
misunderstand as obscenities. The scene, as mentioned earlier, is absent from the 1602 Quarto. While it bears no importance to the forward movement of the plot itself, it does make linguistic connections, parallelisms, and contrasts between characters and their various intents and observations that continue to run throughout the entire play. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is noted for, among other things, Shakespeare’s large-scale examination of the manipulation and peculiarities of language and dialect.\(^{13}\) While a factor all the way through the play, it is probably of chief importance in this particular scene. In addition to Sir Hugh’s Welsh dialect (in the text) and my Cockney (a directorial decision) we also had my character’s misunderstanding of well known Latin constructions and sexual misinterpretations that set up my earthier, more base nature versus the Man of God or the higher social status Pages.

My last two scenes with Falstaff are almost cinematic in construction. As with my other scenes with him, they occur at Falstaff’s rooms at the Garter Inn. In 4.5, I come to him to beg one last private audience, “Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you shall hear how things go; and I warrant, to your content” (wsp61). He acquiesces and leads me upstairs. Then, with an intervening scene between Fenton and the Host played out on stage below I remain in his upper chamber presumingly convincing Falstaff to meet the ladies one more time, this time with him to be disguised as Herne the Hunter, meeting them at Herne’s Oak in Windsor Forest at midnight. At the top of 5.1, I am leaving his chamber, his participation in that evening’s events secured.
The entire cast is in the final sequence of 5.5 – the Fairy Circle at Herne’s Oak. It is here where Falstaff’s final humiliation is made complete. Here, Falstaff has a recognition, yes…but one might question his ability to foment a reversal in his own behavior. It is also here at the Oak that the young lovers are revealed, having been married in secret against Anne’s parent’s wishes. The scene ends on a high note, however, with lessons learned, much laughter, dancing, and a general call to community celebration into the night. As the town “Fixer,” I have had my hand in all of it, profited nicely, and may yet have found a way to worm myself into Falstaff’s affections…failing that, I’ve assured myself a place in Anne and Fenton’s household and flirted my way into the hearts of a few other knaves along the way…not a bad job for a woman of my station!!

Now that I’ve looked at each specific location and elaborated briefly on the external action involved in my scenes, I’d like to briefly return to some of the more external elements of given circumstances: societal structures, politics, the legal atmosphere of the time, economics, intellect and culture, and spirituality, as well as their effect upon the world of the play. For, while the subject matter of Merry Wives is certainly domestic in the most basic sitcom sense (as we would understand it today), there are still interesting correlations to be made. Again, my fascination lies in how seemingly flexible Shakespeare’s material can be even when juxtaposed into an era other than the time in which it is written. Granted, the changes between the early and later 1600s in England are not so radical as between that time and, say, America today…and yet, for all the differences that did, and do, exist – the amazing thing to me are the similarities in the emotional
connections. As I explored the other subject headings comprising given circumstances, I discovered a panoply of areas impacting our world today to one degree or another that bore little difference from what we were reading on the page. People really don’t change. In our day-to-day relationships, we have the same hopes and fears, dreams and plans, needs and desires -- issues between spouses and parents and children, employees and employers, siblings and friends. It’s only the structures around us that seem to have altered, and sometimes, even those not so appreciably.

The area that seemed to bear the greatest impact on the world of our play and that, in some way, touched on nearly every other factor, either directly or indirectly, was that of society. “Society” is, of course, a massive subject in general, and covers many different aspects. Furthermore, the changes that English society went through from the end of the 1500s up to about 1675 while extensive in many ways were also surprisingly subtle in others. Of all the subtopics covered in a study of society, the ones bearing the greatest impact on our world in Windsor, in my opinion, was that of ‘family’ and ‘relationships’. This was, after all, a domestic comedy. So much of my focus will be on those aspects. However, I have also always found it important to understand the political system that enfolds that society. Nothing occurs in a vacuum, and the institutions that surround us also form us. It also must be noted that short of acts of God or War, change in human society has nearly always occurred over time and in varying stages. As such, the movement from one generation’s habits, behaviors, and attentions tend to leach between somewhat porous borders. It has really only
been a result of the digital information age that massive social change is seemingly achievable overnight. Before the latter twentieth century, this was an unbelievable proposition. Instead, it took many generations, sometimes hundreds of years, or millennium, for change to be implemented in any area on a grand much less global scale.

What I found interesting was the apparent effect, after a relatively stable forty-five year rule by Queen Elizabeth I (even with all the intrigue that went on in her court) that the next fifty-seven years of political variety seemed to have upon familial structures. Before examining the parameters of family in the 1600s, then, I want to look at the world in which that family functioned.

James I succeeded Elizabeth I and held the throne for twenty-two years. While the early years of his reign saw immense growth in the exploration of the sciences and philosophy, there was also a general distaste for his perceived persona as “the wisest fool in Christendom.”14 There was also a great deal of discontent from both sides of the religious aisle -- Catholics and radical Protestants alike found something to dislike in his imperial ways. The 1605 plot by Guy Fawkes and his Catholic sympathizers to blow up the King and Parliament failed, and the King, believing firmly in “divine right” and his role as “God’s lieutenant on earth,” continued to tread what he believed to be a “middle way.” However, while the 1611 publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible was considered a “masterpiece of English prose;” his refusal in 1604 to cave into the bishop’s requests for specific reforms in the Church had left a bitter taste in the Clergy’s mouths.15 The King dissolved Parliament for a decade over financial
issues and was resented almost universally. By 1620, the Puritans had left for
the New World and a new order. James I brought back Parliament near the end
of his rule, but died leaving the morass to his son, Charles I.

Charles I ruled for two years longer than his father…twenty-four
years…but that number is deceiving. If anything, his dominion was even more
troubled. His foreign attachments and Catholic-leaning tendencies among a
growing Puritan populace, his apparent disdain of Parliament (dissolving them,
ultimately, for eleven years) and the complicated allegiances developing in the
increasingly populated and complex world of mid 1600s England eventually led
to Civil War. In 1640, Charles was forced by northern invaders to recall
Parliament (known as the Long Parliament) and the resulting arrests of the King’s
chief advisors set up a violent conflict that by 1642 had the Royalists against the
Parliamentarians or ‘Roundheads.’¹⁶ This was the same year that the theatres
were officially closed down. The last seven years of Charles reign was pocked by
this continuous, rather strange Civil War. I found it strange, because while it
certainly had an impact upon the fabric of the society that surrounded it,
nevertheless, it’s thought that as few as “three men in every hundred took an
active part in the conflict; and some did not even know there was a conflict at
all.”¹⁷ Most Englishmen were too busy just getting food on the table for their own
families and preferred keeping their head down and out of the business of those
‘above them.’ The War finally came down to a battle between competing
cavalries and the King lost his crown and his head in January 1649.
The wars and recriminations continued on for another two years, and by 1653, the War’s chief power broker, Oliver Cromwell, chose a new Assembly himself and was declared by them in 1653 as the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. Cromwell’s rule was harsh, and he used the military to keep control for seven years: it was a time of confusing mixtures of tolerance on one hand and seemingly gratuitous desecration on the other. Ultimately, his most valuable contribution may have been the maintenance of the intellectual freedom begun in the Renaissance that had somehow survived the tumult of the preceding reign. Limited in scope though it had been, it was to be the breeding ground for new ideas of individualism and equality to come. Upon Cromwell’s death and the succession of his son, the republic, as it was, began to unravel and the exiled son of Charles I was sent for from France and asked to return to the English throne to be crowned as Charles II.¹⁸ The difference this time was to be the concept of a shared power between Throne, Lords, and Commoners. There was no more absolute monarchy, but a political system based upon consultation between the various parties regarding not just finances, but religion, foreign and domestic relations and trade.¹⁹ A new and exciting experiment was perceived to be about to begin.

“ ‘The shouting and joy expressed by all’ at King Charles II’s restoration to the throne was, so Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary, ‘past imagination’.” It was a time of great celebration and anticipation, with parties in the streets, “fireworks and bonfires” and a general sense that life would take a new turn.²⁰ The incoming monarch was as eager to be welcomed by his new subjects, as
they were to welcome him. Everyone was in a forgiving, hopeful, optimistic mood as the 1660s began with a rush of culture: the theatres were reopened with a flourish – and with an exciting new imported charm from France: actual women playing the female roles! It was enough to make one swoon imagining the possibilities (and Restoration theatrical practitioners did not wait long to take full advantage of those titillating possibilities -- more on this below!) Additionally, massive architectural and other urban projects were begun in London and surrounding areas, and eventually a Royal Charter was established for the study of the natural sciences. And while there may have been some grumblings in some religious quarters, in general, the Church was left to its own devices, and the King, while far from devout, went through the appropriate motions, albeit often surrounded by several illegitimate offspring.\textsuperscript{21}

Even with the horrors of the Plague years in the mid-1660s followed almost immediately by The Great Fire of London, the period known as the English Restoration was a time of excess and a growing sense of possibility. As it happened, the double whammy of the mid-1660s may have actually helped pave the way for the end of plague in northern Europe, as London was rid of thatch roofs and the rats and vermin that lived in them to be replaced by tile while lumber constructed buildings were replaced by stone and brick. This substantially impacted overall health issues and the ability for the society, culture, and population to continue to grow and strengthen.\textsuperscript{22} And it indeed grew: export and import trade were beginning to turn England into a true world power in every sense of the word, and its population increased by over a million and a half
people in the years between 1600 and 1700. Agriculture was still the primary
source of employment, but even that was changing, as the cities began to
expand, cottage industry began springing up, and opportunity seemed unlimited.

Yes, clearly, to borrow from the American Dylan, the times, they were a-
changing. The intellectual freedoms that had begun to take root in the
Renaissance were beginning to blossom. Attitudes toward women in general
began to go through a metamorphosis, as women became more literate (albeit
primarily in the upper classes and/or among those connected with the church)
and more vocal about their feelings and their lives. In fact, the upper classes had
used women in their royal masques performed at court and in private houses
since around 1626 for extremely rarified, limited audiences. It was made note of
by William Prynne in his Puritan tract \textit{Histriomastix} (1633) in which he attacked
female actors as “notorious whores.” This set off an entire series of debates on
the subject in various other treatises.\textsuperscript{23} It became a moot point, as all theatre
ceased by the time Civil War broke out in the 1640s. In the 1640s and 1650s,
women began to take a more forceful role in speaking out by preaching and
publishing, and by traveling the countryside and abroad to spread the Good
Word.\textsuperscript{24} However, this was despite their still legally hapless position: an average
Englishwoman during the 1600s was considered the property of her father or
brother until and unless she found a husband to lay claim to her and even then
had no legal recourse whatsoever as an English wife, with even “her belongings”
considered to be his.\textsuperscript{25}
With the breath of fresh (if French) air that Charles II brought in from the Continent, there was a shift in the attitude toward and perspectives of women and their place in society that went beyond even the earlier steps in the century. The concept was increasingly acknowledged that women indeed possessed the same rights as men to assert their individuality. The definition of how relationships between the sexes were to be conducted was undergoing a major change. Elizabeth Howe, writing on the earliest English actresses, hits upon two elements in the lives of women in the 1660s that I found to be key in my examination both of the life of “Joan, the itinerant actor,” performing this “classic before its time” bourgeois sex comedy for a “modern Restoration audience” as well as in exploring the parameters of the life of Mistress Quickly and all of the women of Windsor. Howe writes:

Rather than being considered merely inferior to man, woman began to be defined as the opposite yet indispensable sex, excluded from the male spheres of public and professional life but vital in the field of domestic management – her own, private sphere of home and children. Although the working actress was an exception to the typical domestic female, she was subject to the same ideological constraints and her gender difference was emphasized (and enjoyed) by constant reference to her sexuality, both on stage and off.26

It was, in fact, a social reform of religious origin that finally prompted the official and legal establishment of women as actresses in 1662; the Puritans found the continued practice of men dressing in women’s clothes to be obscene and pushed for the reform. The resulting explosion in rampant sexual exploitation of the women used as actresses and the increasing licentiousness of Restoration drama over the rest of the century proved to be a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. It
was presumed by society at large “…that a woman who displayed herself on the public stage was probably a whore.” Indeed, as the Restoration progressed, advantage was increasingly taken of having “real live women” on stage in order to fully expose their legs and breasts, portray highly physical relationships, and stage rapes. It was a difficult situation for an otherwise unprotected girl or woman to avoid the sort of sexual advances made when men were allowed free rein to go backstage as they pleased to watch them as they dressed. Even when rules were posted forbidding this, the men were rarely if ever stopped from doing so. Only women who were able to marry within the company had any protection from unwanted advances. In fact, as Howe writes, “…whether or not she exploited off stage, the actress’ sexuality – her potential availability to men – became the central feature of her professional identity as a player.” Not so very different from Team Aniston vs. Team Jolie, is it?

As misogynistic and depressing a view as this is, for the women involved, it was a way to take control of their own lives and make a living on their own, find their own way in the world. For while changing domestic conditions led to a general decline in occupational opportunities for women after 1660, the one exception to this was in the theatre, where the doors were literally thrown open to them. In this way, for perhaps the first time, many a young woman had a real choice. Not merely as a domestic, like Mistress Quickly or a proper English wife like the Mistresses Ford and Page, but also as actresses, young women of mid-17th century England were able to make professional lives for themselves. Doors were opening, albeit slowly. There were even, by the end of the century, women
in the more “masculine” arenas of production and management, such as the legendary Elizabeth Barry, whose talents on the stage and

“…combination of toughness and success…[behind the scenes]…made her the target for some of the most vicious, vituperative satire of the whole period…the attacks read convincingly as misogynist resentment of a woman who achieved popularity, power and above all material success in a public career.”³¹

There are so many elements to Merry Wives (as it is with most of Shakespeare’s works) that reflect his foresight and ability to write in such a way that speaks to future ages. In its time, MWW was actually a departure from the typical Elizabethan/Renaissance literature in several ways. Rather than focusing upon lofty topics or upper class/royal personages, it was a purely middle to lower class domestic comedy in both subject matter and treatment, cynical and focused on a farcical, lower comedy of adultery, inconstancy and conflict.³² How perfectly it actually fit the mold for the favored Restoration storyline! And besides the opportunity for Falstaff to dress in drag (always a hit!), we played two of our roles (Master William Page and Robin the Page) as ‘breeches roles.’ This was in keeping with the style of the Restoration period, when, in a switch from Elizabethan times, young actresses often played the roles of young boys, the better to show off their legs, hips and bottoms! Another interesting Elizabethan departure that Shakespeare played with is the upending of the ever-cherished notion of a World Order. Mistresses Ford and Page are clearly in control of their households and husbands and always seem to hold the upper hand. This shows a degree of usurpation of the primacy of the male role in the Elizabethan world.
Moreover, with Mistress Quickly, a woman of lower status, fooling them all and helping Mistress Anne to her true love, Master Fenton, the World Order is upset even further. That some degree of order is restored at the end, all ending with the “proper” mate, is certainly in keeping with the “Elizabethan way.” However, the focus upon conflict between the sexes as well as the strong female voice showing “an awareness for the drawbacks and possible pitfalls of matrimony” was certainly prescient of the dramatic literature that would develop much later in the century.

And what of the society in which *Merry Wives* is operating, which shapes it, and that it, in turn, comments upon? How have the political, economic, and religious upheavals of the preceding century affected the very subject of the play itself, the family unit, and the structures that support it?

In Lawrence Stone’s detailed study of English family structures, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 – 1800*, he starts by categorizing the changes and variations in broad, clear strokes; he then delves into the daily minutiae. For at least a thousand years previously and up through the course of the 1500s, the connection with one’s ancestors or kin/the village/lord and/or state took precedence over any sort of nuclear family ties. Stone calls this type of family system an “Open Lineage Family” and about it writes:

This was a society where neither individual autonomy nor privacy were respected as desirable ideals…lacking firm boundaries, it was open to support, advice, investigation and interference from outside…inside the home the members were subordinated to the will of its head, and were not closely bonded to each other by warm affective ties…It was also very short-lived, being frequently
dissolved by...death...neither very durable, nor emotionally or sexually very demanding.  

By the time Shakespeare was writing *Merry Wives*, the above system was very slowly being supplanted by what Stone calls a “Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family.” From about 1580 – 1640 and still somewhat until at least 1700, this type of family structure replaced “loyalties to lineage, kin, patron, and local community” with “…more universalistic loyalties to the nation state and its head, and to a particular sect or Church.” The effect of this made the nuclear family a closer-knit group, more dependent upon each other. It also helped strengthen the pre-existing power of the patriarchy, giving the husband and father absolute authority over his household.

I believe that the Ford and Page family groups were certainly originally written with this familial structure as a model. The husband, in each case, is the absolute ruler outside of the domestic world run by his wife. Interestingly, the preponderance of “community involvement” in all of Master Ford’s frenzied chases recalls remnants of the previous form’s structure when he is on the trail of his wife’s presumed paramour. What we today would most probably consider the private affairs between a husband and wife (unless it’s on a reality show, Jerry Springer, or they’re celebrities) are of accepting and abiding interest and scrutiny to a host of community busybodies. If anything, the blurring of lines between two evolving systems adds an authenticity, as change is rarely if ever cataclysmic in nature. Worthy of note are the variations within each family: how each wife was able (or not) to handle her husband. Also, there were already apparent signs of
chafing by each wife against what would soon be seen as an older form of relationship that Shakespeare had clearly created between these women, (all of us – the Wives, Mistress Anne and myself, MQ) and our husbands/intended/lovers, as well as our perceptions of our own societal roles and our responsibilities to ourselves as individuals.

As the upheavals of 1640 began forcing “…a series of changes in the state, the society and the Church [which] undermined this patriarchal emphasis…[and continued] the decline of external pressures on the increasingly nuclear family,” Stone calls the “Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family”, that I believe is not only somewhat more reflective of the marriage ties expressed between the older Pages, but is also clearly the form that Mistress Anne and Master Fenton fit into themselves. “Husbands and wives personally selected each other rather than obeying parental wishes…their prime motives…now long-term personal affection rather than economic or status advantage...the home itself became increasingly private.” This familial structure was a creation born of the philosophy of the value of individual freedom of choice, and presumed strong emotional ties between family members. First taking root in the mid-1600s, this type of family group continued to evolve through the end of the next century. Shakespeare has provided for us a clear transitory familial structure model before its time.

I found it fascinating to note elements from each of the three forms cropping up in the various familial (and social) groupings, further proving the tenacity of even outdated ideas to hang on and the audacity of new ideas to push
their way onto the scene, ready or not. The various levels of cultural stratification within the town also had their own particular impact upon the families as well as their different relationships. English society always was (and still is to this day) extremely class conscious. The picture Shakespeare presents for us in Windsor is remarkable for its lack of true nobility and wide view of middle, lower, and foreign classes, county and parish gentry, laborers, merchants in addition to professional classes, servants and ne'er-do-wells.

In terms of my relationship with the Pages, and in particular, Mistress Anne, there were a number of vague hints in the script from which I was able to glean a sense of past relationship that colors the “present-time” relationship of the play. This was imperative, as I perceived my relationship with Anne to be the primary driver of my activities in the show, the heart of my individual primary objective. I want to secure for Anne the best possible match in order to create the best possibility for my own advancement. To clarify: this is an objective that operated within the show’s romantic sub-plot as opposed to the comic main plot, in which I also played a key role as messenger. (My main objective within THAT plot was a much more lascivious desire, and connected to my relationship with Falstaff!) The actress playing Anne, Annie Forgione, and I spent time talking about some of the material I had come across regarding the standard practice, primarily among upper classes of the time (but also practiced by some of the middle and mercantile), to send their newborns out to wet nurses for the first two years of their lives. Briefly, we postulated (and based on our respective ages, it actually worked out very well) that when her mother birthed her, I had just lost my
newborn baby and husband in a wave of influenza that had gone through the area (a very common occurrence at the time, as mortality rates were abhorrent.) Anne’s mother used me as a wet nurse for her and, then for her brother, and I made sure to make myself useful to Mistress Page in other ways over the years, staying in close contact with both children. In this way, Annie and I built a solid back-story for ourselves and were able to sustain a tight onstage relationship, even when our time onstage was limited. Furthermore, we kept almost constant eye contact when we knew we needed to communicate information silently.

Stone also makes note of the interesting fact that only very few, very wealthy families could afford the live-in wet nurse/nanny figure of Verona’s Juliet; my character being Anne’s wet nurse/confidante without a live-in relationship is not in itself unusual. I did like to think, however, that perhaps Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet is a story that a Restoration Mistress Quickly would know and hold dear in her heart as a hope for herself should “her Anne” marry well and bring her on -- too old anymore to wet nurse, but maybe as a nanny for her wee ones! It was a great subtext for me to play with as we continued our explorations. Through our off stage discussions and onstage work, we were able to forge a strong emotional bond as well as a sense, and even a need, for each other’s presence onstage. We would frequently “check in” with each other to ensure our plans were in order. These were among some of the most playful and fun times onstage during the production process for me. In addition to building a back-story for ourselves based on some of this fascinating, if disturbing, data (the high incidence of psychological wounds due to “deprivation syndrome” and parental
abandonment issues is astounding), we also discovered that while parental domination over a child’s marriage was beginning to diminish toward the end of the 1600s, there were still some attempts at control as late as 1700, and the use of go-betweens, messengers and/or matchmakers was not uncommon.

The clues for me textually include the clearly more open, almost informal relationship I have with the Pages, in particular, Mistress Page, from the very top of the show. Both the Master and the Mistress are apparently very comfortable with my coming and going at will to their home to see their daughter (and presumably their son as well). As brought up earlier, this is clear from my entrance mid-way in 2.1 as I’m called aside by Mistress Page, with her acknowledgement that I must be there to visit with her daughter and it implies that I do this with some regularity. “We had an hour’s talk of that wart…” I tease Master Fenton in 1.4, “…I shall never laugh but in that maid’s company!”

Windsor is, for all of its courtly pretense, still a relatively small town, and everyone, even as the century moved into the later years, tended to know everyone else’s business. The parties that wish to court Mistress Anne observe the degree of familiarity that I enjoy with her and her family and realize that I am a valuable conduit to their heart’s desire. From my first scene, we see that I am juggling three different suitors for Anne: my own employer, Dr. Caius, a new suitor in Master Slender, and the young, handsome Master Fenton. As long as I am receiving some sort of benefit, monetary or otherwise, from all parties involved, I will continue juggling their competing desires and objectives. Only one
of the parties has the key that fits my plans; I simply haven’t figured out which one it is yet! (Luckily for MQ, Shakespeare conveniently writes a “happily ever after” for Anne with the handsome, wealthy Master Fenton that in my own, imagined, continued through line for my character actually works quite nicely.)

I would say that most of my relationships in general are economically inspired. Indeed, I am an extremely mercenary woman, always looking for the angle that will set me up in the best possible way. The world of the 1600s was a difficult one by any measure, and despite the "merry" sobriquet, it was only the very few who did not have a daily struggle to get by. I take payment for the messages I carry and the introductions I procure. Even when I gossip with Anne, I am ultimately thinking about how I want to live my life, what sort of position I want to find myself in as I reach my older years. I am careful to be suitably obsequies to my betters (at least to their faces), and am generally motherly and nurturing to my equals.

My relationship with my fellow servant at the Doctor’s, Jack Rugby (played by Rob Coll), is clearly one of friendship, even as I point out our differences in religious fervor (a huge subject all through the 1600s, as it happens). In 1.4, after I ask Rugby to go look and see if the Doctor is coming; I tell him we’ll have a drink together later, saying: “…Go; and we’ll have a posset for’t soon at night…” and then tell Master Shallow’s servant, Simple, “…an honest, willing kind fellow, as ever servant shall come in house withal…his worst fault is, that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way: but nobody but has his fault…” (wsp12). Which isn’t to say that I’m an innocent angel. I am also manipulative
and deceitful at times…I’m a more than willing participant in the cuckolding of Falstaff and know that I’m double-crossing at least two of the current suitors and at least one if not both of Anne’s parents. However, my relenting to assist in the cause of true love at the end of the play (or is it that I find out that Fenton turns out to be loaded with money?) shows me to have a romantic heart.

The last primary relationship for me in the play is with Falstaff. My longest scenes are with him, and they are of central importance insofar as they propel him into the climactic confrontations of the main plot. My primary objective in these scenes is to seduce him into believing my stories and accepting the ladies’ invitations in order to lure him into the traps being set. I use many different tactics to draw him out. In the first scene, 2.2, Falstaff is much more pliable, more easily duped, as it is not yet clear to him that he’s been found out in any way. I am able at various moments to tease, to flirt, to display my own not insubstantial treasures (with which he takes great pleasure in playing ‘patty-cake’), to confide in him, to praise him, to entice him…until I’m sure he’ll do what we want. That I’m over-loquacious is merely an endearing personality trait (questionably so for some) that exhibits itself naturally! My sentence structure in general is (as throughout the play) consisting of longer, more complex sentences -- with great use of descriptive terms mixed with malapropisms and mispronunciations. The scene with Sir Hugh, William and Mistress Page and myself, 4.1 (wsp48-50) is a classic example of this. My tendency to ramble on makes my character appear quite flighty. In each following scene with Falstaff, I use similar tactics, but need to alter them somewhat as he’s far more suspicious, far grumpier. In 3.5, as in
my first scene with him, my sentences are fairly lengthy in general. I come to the point, though, much sooner in this scene, and am meeker in my approach, gentler, more nurturing than seductive, almost like teasing a pouting child out of a snit. I can and do still tease, slipping my hand ultimately up under his blanket. I also make an unsubtle reference about Mistress Ford that, “…she does so take on with her men; they mistook their erection” (wsp46). My final set of scenes with Falstaff, 4.5 and 5.2, take on a very different air. He is finished with both me and the messages I bring from the ladies. Somehow I must discharge my duty, so my tactics must change. I approach him very directly, trying to appeal to some degree of sympathy in him. “…speciously one of them; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue…” (wsp61). When that does not seem to work as well as I’d like, I change tactics again, in one short speech, four compound sentences long, jumping from pleading to encouraging to teasing to commending to gently chiding -- all the while encouraging my way up into his private bedchamber for a tête à tête:

MQ: Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you shall hear how things go; and, I warrant, to your content. Here is a letter will say somewhat. Good hearts, what ado here is to bring you together! Sure, one of you does not serve heaven well, that you are so cross’d.
Falstaff: Come into my chamber. [Exeunt.] (wsp61)

The other relationships I have in the show are secondary within the script and/or were created within the context of our production. My relationship with Caius, as his employee, is deferential to his face, but my comment after he leaves with Rugby in my first scene (“…you shall have – an fool’s head of your
and my willingness to foil his desired match with Mistress Anne make loyalty to my employer appear to be a value that I do not hold especially dear. My relationship with Shallow and Slender, as their messenger to Anne, is a relatively new one, so there would be no real loyalty expected in this case. They are just another opportunity for me to make some extra money hawking Anne’s potential affections. I develop a slight relationship with Falstaff’s page, enough to use the child to our advantage rather than his (undoubtedly using the nurturing part of my personality). Quickly is absolutely the epitome of an Earth Mother of the roughest sort, and while it often comes from the heart, she just as frequently uses that quality to her advantage. As a bit of extraneous “in production” stage business, the actor playing Bardolph and I worked out a fun, teasing “moment before”. Backstage, just previous to his scene bringing me in to Falstaff, we improvised with his tapster flirting with and falling for Mistress Quickly, so that when he brings me out to Falstaff in 3.5 (wsp45), his infatuation with me was clear to the audience, even in the few seconds we had onstage together. We would often get an appreciative response from those that picked up on it. We also were able to reincorporate that relationship into the final fairy sequence, which helped me internalize a sense of conclusion to my own character’s through line (I figured that as long as MQ left the celebration that evening with Anne’s future secure and herself in the arms of one man or other, it would be deemed a success!!). Finally, there is one other “relationship” that my character has that I believe really cements the busybody, gossipy, finger-in-every-pie persona of MQ, and that is the one created in my direct address with the audience At the end of 1.4 and
again at the end of 3.4, I share my thoughts with members of the audience, moving along the front arc of the stage’s apron, in a more intimate, one-on-one aside. It’s also used to great effect by Master Ford, and is another way of enticing the audience into our world, into a more personal connection with us.

I have mentioned in several places above Shakespeare’s focus on the variety and inconsistencies of language in this particular work. Besides the combination of prose and verse (the bulk of the play being written in prose, the Garter Play/Fairy Circle at the end is in verse) there is also the word play of the Latin lesson scene. Special qualities within the dialogue would consist of characters with clearly different dialects and backgrounds: the French Doctor, the Welsh Schoolmaster, both Rugby and I use a Cockney dialect. This, of course, necessitated specificity and selectivity as far as sound substitution on all of our parts so that we were still able to make ourselves understood. I covered the work on this in my journal.

When looking at the overall idea inherent in Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the title provides direct information as to what we will find. The story is a comic look at the domestic world of Windsor. Being a Shakespearean comedy, we can just about guarantee there will be a wedding/celebration at the end, and my initial thought, one that I tended to stick with through the end, was that title was no accident. Perhaps it was his seventeenth century way of saying, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

Interestingly, however, when we I stepped back for a moment and examined some of the discussions of ideas within the script, I found a much
deeper, more serious vein running through. This is after all, a script that addresses the subject of jealousy and adultery, deception and manipulation, between husband and wife, parent and child, between friends. Mistress Quickly is not the sort of character to ruminate for too long on issues such as this, but the monologues of Master Ford as well as his plans with Falstaff and the discussions between the ladies cover many of the vexing relationship issues facing couples of apparently any period. While everything seems to wrap itself up nicely by the end, the questions the play raises are very powerful and I don’t think are meant to be taken lightly. They certainly resonate as fully today as they would have then. This is part of what makes Shakespeare so brilliant: his balance of comedy with awareness of the dark underneath.

I loved the parallelism I saw between Falstaff and my character. As actors, our energies were well matched, and as characters, we were clearly each other’s earthy counterpart -- a Yin/Yang tornado of bawdy passion and desire, manipulation and deceit, street smart but culturally and intellectually raw, not really malicious so much as self-absorbed and caught up in the physical over the ethereal. I also felt that how we displayed these character traits was reflected in our gender differences. Falstaff was far more likely to commit unsavory acts thinking he could get away with it for no reason other than he could bully his way through any problem, or send his ruffians around to settle things. I was flightier and definitely had a gentler way about me. I seemed to get caught up in my own machinations and plans so that before I realized what had happened, I’d promised to help everyone to the same end. Helping the ladies with Falstaff was
simply a way I could see to make points with Mistress Page, earn some extra money, and possibly insinuate myself into the knight’s life in some way.

I saw my character very much as a catalyst. While I do not participate in two of the three major climaxes (the first two being the scenes where Falstaff is caught at the Ford’s, 3.3 and 4.2, the third being the fairy circle in 5.5), I am instrumental in propelling Falstaff to his rendezvous. Additionally, I help facilitate the final subterfuge as Anne, Fenton, and I fool both of her parents, the Doctor, and Master Slender -- with the two young lovers slipping off to be married while the two jilted suitors are left with disguised substitutes.

It is tempting to say that Mistress Quickly and Falstaff, for that matter, are drawn larger than life, or distorted in some way to affect an idea or concept. However, I’ve known far too many people who were every bit as explosive in personality and who seem to engender chaos wherever they go to think that these are merely literary characters exaggerated for effect. If anything, all of these characters are eerily similar to types that still exist in our sitcoms, dramas and indeed, our daily life today. By the same token, I would have to say that Mistress Quickly is certainly drawn in broad strokes, appropriate to the comic genre into which she is written. My character’s excitability, effusive energy, verbal inanity, constant gaffes, and physical carriage (besides the movement patterns that the director and I had worked on, I also had developed a bit of a rolling walk as a physical character trait) set me up as a comic character in every way.

At this point, I will briefly cover the other elements that I had internalized in the initial creation of my character analysis. I have already referenced a number
of the topics within the context of the political, historical and social background materials as well as some others that I included in the chapter following this one containing my actor’s journal. I will try not to be redundant. The other elements I will address are in answer to various questions provided on ‘character analysis worksheets’ from classes and through my own mental wanderings. As happens with my personal approach to all the acting roles I’ve taken on, these aspects of the character many times come to me more as snapshots and impressions, often at the oddest moments, and only rarely in any sort of logical context. The best way to approach the remaining material, I feel, will be as a sort of autobiographical narrative.

I am looking at Mistress Quickly as a woman of about forty. She has been working in service to others in one capacity or another since she was a very young girl. As with many in the lower classes (and often the middle and upper classes as well,) of those children that survived infancy (and the odds were not in their favor), the girls were considered expendable mouths to feed. If there were enough sons to assist in whatever agriculture or business was at hand, the best the family could hope for was either to make something off a daughter’s meager wages elsewhere or, at the very least, to get her out from under their roof and care.

In the story I constructed for my character, I came from a very poor family that worked a small plot of land outside a village north of London. I vaguely remember an older sister and three brothers, one younger. My father was very distant and cold; my mother was the opposite, very warm, loving, and gregarious.
(I clearly got my nurturing and Earth Mother qualities from her.) When I was seven or eight, there was a terrible sickness that came through the village and the surrounding area. Mother, Sister and all my brothers died. Father didn’t come into the house for a week after that, and, when he did, he put some things in a bag for me and told me that I was to go and live and work for a merchant family in town as their scullery maid. He sent me away, and I never saw him again.

I was a strong, brave child and a hard worker. I made friends easily, both with my fellow servants and often with the children of the people I worked for. Sometimes they would share their lessons with me, and I was able, over the years to learn my letters and to read a bit. I was always a bit wild, a show-off, I liked being in the middle of everything…and sometimes that could get me in trouble. Though it was rarely over anything serious, I would sometimes forget my station, and I had to, more than once, make my way into a new position in a new household. A couple of times, I made my way to new towns, thinking a change of scenery and companions might better suit me; and at twenty, I found my way to the town of Windsor.

Shortly after my arrival, I met and fell in love with a blacksmith of the town. His people had died years before, and he cared little as to my own background. I thought I had finally found my own home, and truly had, for a short while. Fatefully, within a week of our baby being born, both she and he had died of the influenza, leaving me emotionally bereft, but aching with breasts filled with untouched milk. It was at this time that I was asked to be wet nurse for Mistress Page’s baby Anne, and I found a strange, sad comfort in it. The miracle of being
able to later continue the role for Anne’s brother, William, when the time came, was never something I questioned. But by I knew then that I would find a way to spend the rest of my days in Windsor, if only to be close to the only bairns God saw fit to place at my breast.

I think I am a woman of deep faith in the concept of a God -- I certainly reference Him often in my speech. But I’m not dogmatic or even what would be considered reverent. And I also think that I’m just as susceptible to the more pagan, spirit and fairy-driven world we create by Herne’s Oak. Many of the people of that time, especially in the smaller towns and villages, still clung tightly to remnants of old druid, Celtic, and polytheistic beliefs. I think I want to do what is considered “correct” and be considered “proper” by the Church authorities (like Sir Hugh) and the people I have a degree of respect for, like the Pages and their children. I don’t think, however, that I spend a lot of time worrying about heaven and hell or what happens after death. I live for today. I consider myself a moral woman, and do the things I do because I feel there is a grand justification for it all. I only take from someone if they can afford to have it taken from them. And when I give, I give with all my heart. I believe myself to be a loving person, understanding, nurturing, a hard worker, and a great friend. The fact that I need to manipulate situations, and sometimes even my friends around me, only speaks to the extremely volatile and difficult times in which I live. As a woman alone, facing what was indisputably a world hostile to my gender and my seeming independence it very well may have been the key to my own survival.
August 27, 2002

And so it begins. As we focused upon scansion in Mark's class this afternoon, we began our work with a line from Macbeth (1.7)

“If it were done, when 'tis done, then twere well

It were done quickly.”

The truth of this came home to me within hours of class. I found myself confronted with a new and astounding reality; I've actually been cast in my very first, full-length Shakespearean role! I'll be playing Mistress Quickly in our fall production of The Merry Wives of Windsor I was caught completely by surprise. I have been blessed with the obvious challenge of working with Shakespeare in production while at the same time taking two classes which will help me focus on the mechanics of Shakespeare; Mark's Acting III class and Kate's Voice III both use Shakespeare as the foundation for our work.

I am, quite literally, over the moon with excitement about this turn of events! This will give me a reasonable "thesis role" to propose and then focus upon, rather than having to fall back on some dry, relatively impersonal research topic simply to create an academic paper. This will allow me to utilize far more of my creative attributes as I work towards developing and becoming a most challenging, full, lusty, (as I see her) and wonderful creature! With JJ cast as Falstaff, I know that not only will we have a blast, but also that I will have the opportunity to learn so much from both he and Kate!
One of the greatest challenges for me is right here in my hands. Journaling does not come easy to me. I have often tried to sustain personal journals, but have never found them to be something for which I either had the affinity or the talent, or, quite frankly, an enduring interest. However, it’s already become a necessary part of life here in grad school, with voice and movement journals chronicling my observations in classes. In acting class, Mark has us reading Antony Sher’s delightful *Year of the King*. I’ve already begun that assignment, and besides enjoying Sher’s observations and facility with ideas and language, it’s clear what Mark’s purpose is for us with the assignment. It’s very obvious that Sher has used his own journaling as a tool in his work for a long time, that it’s an ingrained habit, a regular aspect and extension of his creative life. His is a wonderful ability to articulate his thoughts, concepts, and ideas that come to him from any number of sources through the course of his day.

Additionally, he is a talented sketch artist, and he utilizes this skill as well in clarifying ideas from visual sources. As I read the book, it’s clear how he is able to use his journal to help him organize and prioritize his thoughts; the goal for me will be to strive to emulate his example as I begin this process for myself. In a similar vein, I will need to use this journal to help me fill out, define, and direct the many thoughts and ideas that will undoubtedly be coming to me in spurts at all times of the day and night.

I spoke to our Stage Manager, Sarah, today. There won’t be any scripts available for two more weeks. Kate is still working on cuts. I’ll go ahead and read the full text now, just as a “warm-up,” and focus the rest of my attention on...
Keeping my class work on scansion and other elements up to date so that I’ll be ready to devote time to our rehearsal process when it begins.

September 8/9, 2002 (1:40am)

Outside. Hot tub, wine and stars. (Alone, though.) Just as well. Many thoughts coming at me at light speed . . . these in particular stick in my mind:

Queen Elizabeth, it is rumored, asked William Shakespeare to write her a play about, “Falstaff in love.” I think this leaves open a lot of interesting possibilities for me to consider as I begin my own shaping of Quickly’s character and her interrelationships with others, especially Falstaff. Kate has emphasized to me that she wants me to keep my focus strictly on the MWW script and not muddy the water with any investigations or considerations of Mistress/Hostess Quickly from the rest of Shakespeare’s canon. I understand and respect this, by the same token, I think that there are some fun paths to at least explore and play with as developmental tools for myself by at least being mindful of the other incarnations of these characters throughout the canon.

My relationship with JJ/Falstaff is, I think, a case in point. JJ and I had so much fun during our callback together; we were so free and easy and immediately comfortable with each other . . . the chemistry was quite palpable. Undoubtedly, it was at least partially due to that energy that led Kate to decide to cast me. I want to be able to take advantage of that chemistry as we progress in rehearsal, and ultimately, in production. JJ has such intense passion and focus in his work, onstage and off, I’m excited to be able to tap into and work with his
energy. I would like to draw on his energy and our chemistry to explore possibilities in the developing relationship between Falstaff and Mistress Quickly.

Wherever *MWW* may or may not fit within a time frame of the histories, Shakespeare establishes Falstaff and Mistress/Hostess Quickly as having an ongoing, very feisty and hot-blooded series of encounters. After looking through their relationship in the other plays and as I read and reread *MWW* and the cutting that Kate has given us to work with, I can envision some interesting directions to explore. I think that perhaps despite Falstaff’s obvious flaws and weaknesses, Mistress Quickly is intrigued by the power of his personality and his passionate hungers that come closest to matching hers. He is also above her in status, but only just barely, his coarseness is a great leveler. I think that there is a clear sexual spark between them, one that Falstaff does not pursue due to his perception of himself as an equal to those of higher station and his interest in seducing the upper middle class wives of Ford and Page. However, Mistress Quickly not only recognizes the attraction, but sets out to try and take advantage of it in her own way. I think this could create an interesting twist for me to play with. While Falstaff loses in his attempts to attract the two married ladies, I can use my own cunning and earthy feminine charms to try and win him by first playing him for a fool and then ‘picking up’ the pieces of his ego after he’s been brought down! (Of course, this would take me past the ‘ending’ of the actual script, but I like finding my character’s overall through line and extending the end of it into the as yet undetermined future.)
September 10, 2002

It was so much fun, playing with language and variations in intent in class with both Mark and Kate today. Even just watching others do their work was a kick, very inspiring and kept my brain spinning with ideas and thoughts to play with once I had a chance to get up.

Kate gave me some terrific insight into her perception of Mistress Quickly in our meeting today. She shared ideas she had developed with Kristina in costume meetings, along with Kristina’s sketch of my costume. She talked about Mistress Quickly as the sort of “stage manager” of the whole shebang, on top of everything that goes on in Windsor, with her finger in every pie. Everyone’s confidante, the town go-between, the ultimate “Fixer.”

The costume itself is fabulous. It’s very colorful (it has a brighter, bolder version of the colors of the other characters) and yet earthy, with voluminous folds, and a sense of nooks and crannies and hidden places. It’s tightly corseted, with a fuller skirt than the leaner silhouette of the more stylish characters, and a very low décolletage. Also, some sort of head covering appropriate to the period, but as of yet, I’m not clear if it’s a mobcap, hood, or something different. All in all, I’m thrilled!!

I forgot to note this, but I received my Cockney tapes and book yesterday. (Kate has told me that she wants me to work up a modified Cockney for Mistress Quickly.) The materials are from the same series that I got for Paul to use when I needed him to work up a Yiddish dialect for our show last summer. It’s pretty good overall, and it uses the IPA. I’m excited to get started with it. Kate and I
have set a meeting for next week; I'll get started working on some of the substitutions so that I'll be well prepared when we meet.

I've been thinking about Mistress Quickly and Falstaff as embodying the two parts of a whole: yin and yang. Very primal elements of the masculine and feminine powers, the earthier sides of that equation, of course!! Her (my) energy needs to be very powerful, almost like a tornado at times. Not only “take charge,” but also – hmmm – what was that quote we read in Julia's class? I'll check it tonight, I don’t quite remember what it was from, but it referenced a feeling of “perpetual motion.” I want to be all eyes and ears and mouth and heart and a whirlwind of passionate commitment.

Besides my mental and emotional development that I'll need for this role, I'll need to also focus on conditioning my physical instrument. I'll need to recommit to some sort of cardio training to improve my strength. The movement work we’re doing is good, but with over an hour and a half sitting in a car everyday, I'll need to counteract that physical stagnation with increased physical activity when I’m free of automotive constraints! I’d love to commit to at least 45 minutes a night on my elliptical, but it seems I’m so rarely home (usually only 10pm or later in the pm and up and out by 6:30 am) and I’ve got to use that time for homework. I need to figure out how and where to fit it all in. (Screw sleep, that’s for death, right? My kids are another issue . . . at least I sometimes drive them to school, that’s almost 20 minutes of quality time a day!)
Last thought, and then it’s really time to sleep: an essential question for me to peruse and discover the answer to for myself: What are my (Mistress Quickly’s) secret desires? My hopes and dreams for myself?

September 18, 2002

OK. Either I’ve managed to pull some sort of muscle group in my legs or else it’s a dehydration or nutrition issue, but I’ve undergone almost constant cramping for the past four days. It’s limited my physical activity severely and it’s all I can do to hobble gingerly from place to place. On the other hand, it’s certainly placed me securely “in my head,” and I’ve had a lot of time to really think about and ponder this cipher that is Mistress Quickly. It’s also been great when I can get the chance to work with Kate; yesterday was quite fun. She wants me to further modify some of the substitutions so that I have the flavor of the dialect without becoming unintelligible or pulling a “Dick Van Dyke!”

The quote that I referenced the other day from Julia’s class was from Bharata, *Writings of an Indian God*, whose “. . . identity and dates and place of birth and death are lost in the mists of legend.” (*Theatre/Theory/Theatre*. Edited by Daniel Gerould. NY: Applause, 2000. p84.) In describing particular character types and the parameters of their behavior for the actor, Bharata writes, “If a maid servant, she should walk with uneven steps, eyes beaming with joy, gesturing and babbling under the influence of intoxication.”

There is so much in that quote that speaks to ancient “stock” perceptions that we as a culture have sustained right up to today. It was as true in ancient India as Shakespearean England as 21st century America; a stereotype, yes,
even a cruel one, but while probably false in its generalization, it can, nonetheless be utilized to inform various elements and moments.

**September 27, 2002**

I had the chance to sit down with Kate again today and we started some discussions specifically about text and character. We spent more time on the Cockney as well. Clearly, I need to do some more ‘picking and choosing’ to ensure clarity for our American audience. YAY! I really feel like we are off and running now! We’ve both agreed that the book/tape that I bought, while containing decent basic info – especially in terms of the IPA substitutions – the guy doing the tape is pretty “stagy” sounding and way overly perky. So I won’t be focusing on his taped work. He tends to over-enunciate the changes. It’s almost as if he’s pointing to himself and saying, “‘ey! Loo¿ at me doin’ co¿ney!!” Kate suggested that instead, I rented *Educating Rita* with Julie Walters as a good ‘female vocal guide’ to the sort of Cockney she’d like me to emulate.

I really loved some of the comments and imagery Kate has begun to entice me with – Mistress Quickly with her finger in everyone’s pie…Mistress Quickly as the “primal Mother/Earth-Goddess/Woman/Power-force!” How glorious!! It puts me foursquare in everyone’s business, everyone’s face. My tactics and intentions can all easily stem from this . . . the Yente of Windsor!!

Another great vocal/performance note from Kate during our meeting: “Round out the edges – physically, energy-wise and within the language itself.” (MQ is all encompassing, all embracing of her appetites and the world around her.) There should be a lot of “glide” in my work.
My first scene is with Rob Coll, who is playing Jack Rugby. We’re fellow servants for Master Doctor Caius (Nick Sprysenski.) Once again, I’m just thrilled! I love that I’ll get the chance to play with Nick face to face onstage, he’s so very talented and focused in his work; I know that we’ll have a blast playing off each other. And, of course, I’ll get to play with Rob for the second time . . . he’s my very “first-born son” in the department! By now, I’ve collected quite a group of girls and guys that have been my children and/or grandchildren in various shows. This show, more so than some of the others that I’ve done here, will give me the opportunity to play and work with friends with whom I’ve been in class or watched onstage, but not yet had any “onstage face-time.” I’m just getting more and more excited everyday as we move toward the beginning of official rehearsals!

September 30, 2002

I’m going to start marking some of the sound (vowel and consonant) changes in my script now, before my meeting with Kate, and make a goal for myself to finish marking before the first rehearsal on the 7th of October. I want to be able to memorize those changes as part and parcel of my overall lines. We will be using a cutting of the script that combines several sources, with primary emphasis on the Folio. Also, Kate will be redistributing some of the lines.

*REMINDER NOTE TO SELF: Kate doesn’t want me to sound like I’m from “the Planet Cockney!” In her words, stay in the same solar system!

(Later in the day) Here are some notes from my meeting with Kate today:

- Make this a subtle change: ei → ai (ay → ai; just a touch)
• Be sure to slide through or connect through the dropped “h.” Don’t use the glottal stop.

• When using a “v” for “hard th” (“and_the”) then don’t hit the final “d” in “and” – slide through it or else just use the “hard th.”

• Use the double “t” in “letter.” (i.e. “letter after letter”) DO NOT revert to glottal stops here.

• “schwa u” = “coach” or “gold” (rather than English “o”)

Spread the sounds together; likewise spread my meaning.

• “surely_in”: Quickly move to the “I.”

Insinuate myself with EVERYONE!

Look for the matches and balance in subject matter.

There is a beat change after “... you may know one another’s mind” (p24) to a real concern for Robin. (MQ may be earthy, bawdy, and rough around the edges, but the earth mother/protector side of me is also a powerful energy and motivator for all of my actions.

**October 2, 2002**

As per Kate, continue working on modifying and “mildifying” my Cockney dialect. It’s still a bit too heavy.

Scene shifts will be underscored with music, while various characters continue to be “living, moving, and working in the space,” so I may be onstage at other times than my lines as written.

Kristina is using color to define the various “camps.” I get an element of all of the colors in my costume, as town go-between!
In the Elizabethan scheme of things, color was used to define character traits. (This is from an article that Kristina talked about with me and I will need to get a copy of it so that I can attribute the information accordingly.) Motley or “pied” indicated: “... an unstable mind; variable, flamboyant personality. An eccentric!” HAH! That works for me!!

I want to look back over p16 and p45 in our script. I think that I (MQ) know more than I actually do... but that I am also very observant and take notice of what other people around me are doing.

**October 7, 2002**

Whew! First day of rehearsal!!

Note to self: Don’t question yourself or your instincts! We have 38 days to play and we are going to ROCK!!

Kate will be continuing the one-on-one meetings as she feels the need or if we have issues that we’d like to work on with her. Her initial instructions to us were that even at the first read-through to feel free to get up and move around. Shakespeare is not just about your brain – it moves in your pelvis, groin, heart, legs, arms... all over!

We opened with the design presentation. The set was described as our jungle gym/playground. The stage design itself is very Elizabethan. There’s a sense of the circular as well, and dual staircases. Each side mirrors the other. We’ll have three balcony staging areas (actually five, if you count the two landings) and many doors and windows that will be used to play from and as reveals. We need to remember that although the stage set rendering looks very
neat and clean, we are creating the world of a fusty Tudor town. There will be a
dramatic change in lighting from the town of Windsor to the “fairy world’ out in the
forest. We will be literally constructing a large central tree as part of the scene
change into the final fairy scene.

The actors will be entering from the back of the house at the top of the
show. The opening premise is that we are a troupe of itinerant actors who have
left London due to plague and are taking our shows out to the provinces. Falstaff
will carry on as our Producer/Impresario! We will, accordingly, enter into this
“new” space and go about setting the stage for the upcoming performance. We
need to bring on a sense of pre-show excitement and frolic into this world, to put
the town “to rights” in order to begin the show. (We enter as the itinerant actors,
rather than the characters we will be playing once we begin the show, with
varying relationships between each other that may be different once we are “in
production.”)

Besides my multi-colored costume as Mistress Quickly, I will also be one
of the instigators in the fairy scene, with tapers in a crown.

We talked about the sound design for the show as well. There will be a lot
of music to carry the play along, a lot of traditional instruments and music.
However, Kate wants to avoid anything with a tinge of melancholy. We need to
be the “Up with Windsor People!” The music will help us approach the sensibility
of the time.

More general (not atypical) pre-rehearsal admonitions: come into
rehearsal ready to work, in appropriate shoes, skirts, etc. (Kristina said that the
women should pick up a cheap pair of T’ai Ch’i slippers or ballet slippers for rehearsal purposes. The shoes for performance will be supplied by costuming later in the process.)

Earlier today I turned in my Thesis Proposal to Julia. It’s still in a very vague form and will need to be elaborated upon, however we’ve had minimal guidance up to this point and the actual parameters haven’t even been set yet. (Ah, the joys of being departmental guinea pigs!) I plan on adding to my proposal and abstract (next step) as I go. There will undoubtedly be adjustments as everything becomes clearer. I’ll also start my research and clarifying information for my character analysis, but I think I’ll keep that information under separate cover from this journal. Let this piece of my work stand on it’s own as a log of what I’m actually going through and thinking in the rehearsal/performance process. The character analysis will inform my work, of course, but there may be elements that I discover that go against directions that Kate wants to send us, and I think that I’ll need to be able to separate those elements out from each other.

FIRST READ THROUGH!!

Notes: I really need to continue working on cementing in stone the essential parts of my dialect, make my final choices in terms of what I drop and what I keep (and to what degree I emphasize the sounds.) I will need to also focus on generally softening the dialect; it’s still coming off as way too strong.
For my own comfort, I want to start building my relationship through lines between myself and each of the other characters; I need to figure out who each of them are to me, and their level of affection, importance, need.

Over this next week and through the weekend, I will sit down with the finalized script and my lexicon and make sure that I fully comprehend all of the language and phrases that I’m using.

At the end of the read through, Kate had a list of words for the whole cast with her preferred pronunciations. (These tended to be the ones that more than one person had problems with.) The list was relatively short: Hernes, Brainford, swinge (soft “g”), Thames (“tems”,) vicar (hard “c”,) and cozn’d (“cousined”). Other general, “all cast” vocal notes included for us to focus on the crispness of the language and making our consonants nice and clear. Hit our plosives!

We got to just play around improvisationally with the fairy scene. The comment we received was good overall action, but that ultimately we would be pulling back on some of the physicality. We will be “dressing “ the stage during this scene until the line, “I smell a man of middle earth,” then we’ll start focusing upon and pinching Falstaff. The ending of the show should carry a positive energy, a sense that all is forgiven.

Finally, I also received a really cool note/idea earlier this afternoon. I asked Be Boyd to be on my committee as well (I think she’ll bring some terrific insight into my work and I respect her opinion greatly.) What I loved is that her very first “off the cuff” suggestion was the absolute mirror of a thought I had myself last night. I had been working on my paper about Sher’s *Year of the King*
(for Mark's class) and I was commenting on how much I loved Sher's sketches, how they really filled his written work with a life and an energy that you could feel and see; the imagery made his ideas so concrete and vibrant. I found it amazing, inspiring even. I began writing about how envious I was at his ability to transform ideas, images, thoughts, energy, and interpretation into something visual that he could then use to inform the choices in his work. I then started thinking and writing about the various ways I could try to add some visual imagery to my own explorations and journaling. Since my own drawing skills are minimal at best, then perhaps through photos or some sort of collage. Be's very first suggestion to me was to create a “character collage” as a means of personal visual exploration of my character and her energies. I loved it! And I loved how we both immediately seemed to be on the same page! This has been a most exciting day, filled with epiphanies and delight!

October 8, 2002

Tonight’s rehearsal focus for me will be more decompressing from the Planet Cockney!

After talking it over with my friend and colleague, "firstborn (UCF) son" and fellow “fespian” (as pronounced, of course, on Planet Cockney!) I’ve decided (pending an OK from Kate) to cut my consonant change of (hard “th”) to (v), leaving the (hard “th”) as is, and just keep the change of (soft “th”) to (f).

Rehearsal was great fun tonight! In my first scene, I get the chance to play with four different people; it was a glorious and exciting change for me here! OK, maybe that’s a bit of an exaggeration; I certainly had the chance in other shows
here to play face to face with my colleagues. And in my scene in Look Homeward, Angel I had some terrific interaction with several other characters. But in general, the energy and “lightness” of Mistress Quickly is such a contrast with the other characters I’ve played here. It has been a very long time, longer than I even remember, when I’ve been able to embrace a character whose very being was infused with such a clear desire to “play,” in every sense of the word!

I will ask Kate in our meeting on Thursday her opinions about the direction that I’m taking the dialect. I think I’m starting to get it softened up sufficiently. Tonight I felt like I’d softened it considerably. It sounded much more intelligible to me and I didn’t feel like I was working as hard to make it so.

I wrote a lot of notes in my script tonight as per Kate’s suggestions about my energy, movement, and (obviously) specific blocking. I’ll reiterate the notes and elaborate on them here.

A lot of my movement in general, and especially in Dr. Caius’ home, is in “outward circles.” I need to avoid straight lines as much as possible. It will help give me a very sweeping, expansive feel, and as I was working on it, I thought it felt great. It should really help me in developing further the kind of expansive, all encompassing, and all involving energy of Mistress Quickly in my relationship with others. I really loved the way it made me feel!

Kate is going to talk to Kristina about lengthening my skirt. Right now, it’s rendered at about my mid-calf, but a fuller skirt will not only add a fullness and flow to my sweeping movements, but I can play with the movement more so that it will add a bustle, a “busy-ness” to my busy-body persona. It will also give me
the ability to occasionally pull up the sides a bit, adding to the sense of movement. I’ll also have hidden folds, apron pockets, for keeping my “ditties” (rags, keys, money collected for go-betweens, etc!)

I’m already feeling like I want to get rid of my darn script! I know that it’s far too early in the process, but I want the words in my brain so that I can start to really feel them, to live them. It’s nearly impossible for me to do that lugging the notebook around.

We’ve already come up with some very fun bits (shushing Simple, for example) and I can see that I’m going to love my all too brief moments onstage with Nick! All in all, this has been a hoot of a rehearsal!

When I’m off Friday and Saturday of this week, I want to start really defining my relationships with these different first scene characters, as well as start laying in some more details in my character analysis. I’ve found some interesting historical and cultural fundamentals that I’d like to be able to draw from as I go about this part of the process. Even just for my own edification, I find it terribly interesting. There’s also a specific textual element that I think I need to spend some time on: at what points am I just rambling or babbling on mindlessly (or am I ever even “just mindless” at all?) and what are the specific answers I eventually give these various gentlemen to their inquiries? The differences and nuances in these disparate sides of my various conversations are quite important, even though they are outside the realm of the actual script. Right now, I’m feeling far too vague about all of this and I need more specificity.
October 10, 2002

We blocked my first scene with Falstaff tonight. It reconfirmed one thing I’ve always been most frustrated about in this whole process; pencil and script in hand, unable to do much more than mark through it all. AAAUUUGGH!! It just feels so stifling; do I focus on movement or what the hell I’m trying to say? And forget about even hinting at what I’m trying to do at any given moment! It’s all I can do not to drop everything as I balance the extraneous items precariously in my hands! I can’t wait for this part of the process to be over so that the real work can begin.

I also took mental note earlier in the evening of something that I’ve probably known, perhaps more from instinct than actual opportunity – since this is my first formal, full-blown effort at Shakespeare; memorizing prose is far more difficult than memorizing verse!! I’ve got a few minor sections that seem to have stuck themselves easily into my brain, but there are entire sections that that I will really have to do battle with in order to get them committed to memory as soon as I want them to be (like, yesterday).

I wore my rehearsal skirt for the second time tonight, and this time added my own corset. It’s lighter than the one that I’ll be using in the show, but it really helps me feel the movement and physical carriage that I’ll need. I still need to find some sort of appropriate temporary slipper for rehearsal, but until then, barefoot seems to be the best approximation. (All my regular shoes have too modern a heel and they make me move strangely for the character.) I tried to use
my old Renaissance festival character boots, but after two pregnancies, they just
don’t feet my feet anymore!

**October 12, 2002**

It was good to have a couple of days off, but with rehearsal tomorrow, I’m
a bit worried about my upper and mid-back. It’s been sore since last Wednesday,
and I was very careful how I moved about, but it seems to have been further
aggravated. I can’t tell if it’s muscular or nerve-related. Sometimes it feels to be a
bit of both, but the times when it feels like a knife is stabbing into my spine, it’s
the worst, and I suspect at least a pinched nerve is part of the overall picture. In
trying to figure out what exactly I did to bring it on, I’ve narrowed it down to one of
three things. The most likely candidate is

1. **Stage combat class.** Although I was quite focused, and initially felt like
   I was doing everything properly, the “break falls” – especially the ones
to the front – felt a bit jarring. We were also doing some rolls and
layouts, but I really felt very protected and comfortable through all of
those.

2. **Another possibility is Voice class.** We were doing rib work, and I was
   really “muscling” my ribs out. I worked on it fairly extensively after class
   on both days that we were focusing on it in class and then on my own
   on our days off. I can’t help but wonder if I maybe overdid it in some
way and pulled something unsuspectingly.

3. **Finally,** I spent several days wearing my corset for several hours a
   night after quite some time of not wearing it, and as lightweight as mine
is, (and despite the fact that it’s a bit too large – I’ve lost weight since I last wore it – and that it closes easily and completely without straining or pulling,) the simple effort of the ramrod straight posture wearing it demands could be enough to make the muscles in my back seize up.

The more I think about it, it wouldn’t surprise me if it were a combination of all three elements. Once again, it points to the importance of keeping myself in prime physical condition for this production.

SM Sarah suggested that I ask my doctor about a muscle relaxer she uses that doesn’t cause drowsiness, “skelaxin.” I’ll need to get some information on it and see if it’s something that could be beneficial for me. I’ll try anything to stop this excruciating pain. In the meantime, thank god for Advil.

**October 13, 2002**

We may have some rehearsal schedule changes coming up. Nick got seriously hurt during *Godot* last night; there’s still no word on his condition other than torn ligaments and a knee injury. His director, Chris, handled it very cleanly with the audience. (The Irene Ryan adjudicator was there too.) Hopefully, Nick will be OK; we await word anxiously.

I watched Kate work on the top of Act 2.1 with Lara. It was a reiteration of the class work the graduates just finished with her this week. It was really helpful, not only in terms of the actual acting text work itself, but for the work that I hope to be able to do myself in the future as a director and teacher. The essence of it all is that there is a spontaneous sense of speech in Shakespeare wherein we
speak as we are thinking, rather than the more modern, contemporary style of thinking before speaking. The line must ride on the thought simultaneously.

We ran the Act 2 scenes this afternoon; evening rehearsals will be altered due to Nick's injury. Scene 2 is my primary scene in this act. It's my first scene with Falstaff and the passing of the messages from Mistresses Page and Ford. We cut a few lines and made some minor alterations of the original blocking (I notated the changes in my script, I don't think I really need to restate it here.) JJ and I both feel that some of the fun we'd been finding in each other previously has dropped out in our struggle sorting through memorizing lines and blocking. No doubt once we're both off book and can really let loose and play again we'll rediscover a good deal of it! It's just the frustrating part of the process we're working through now. I do need to remember, though, once we are back up to speed, to make sure and encourage (physically, verbally) Falstaff to behave more "wantonly" with me previous to my line, "Lord, lord, your worship is a wanton. . . ." so that it doesn't seem to be a non sequitor!

October 15, 2002

My brain has been all wrapped up and focused on my mom and her surgery and the hospital so that I am barely able to think of anything else. I will need to really push myself to get my thoughts clear for rehearsal tonight. If I can zen myself out and do that, it will undoubtedly help act as a sort of stress release, a therapy of sorts. I'll report back at the end of the evening as to my degree of success. (I will need to be able to do this regularly from here on out!)
Well, I think rehearsal actually went OK overall. I’m still more on script than I’d like to be, but I was able to focus reasonably well on what was going on in front of me – on what I want as a character at any given time – and while I was onstage, my energy level was way up, very sharp. This was our first stumble through of the first third of the script. Nick was back with us for the first time in days, albeit on crutches, but he’s a trouper and a joy to watch work. I’m so glad he’s back. Yay!!

Here are our notes following the Act 1 stumble through (personal and general to the entire cast.)

- Keep my laughter deeper rather than higher. Keep it centered in my groin rather than my head!
- We need to stay barefoot rather than wearing sneakers if we don’t have the appropriate footwear for rehearsals. As costuming secures our production footwear, we’ll be able to check it out for use in rehearsals.
- Remember to keep listening and reacting to each other throughout.
- Be sure to match our “ouch” to the “pinch” we receive from our fellow characters.
- Keep organic and real while exploring the largeness of our lives onstage.
- Specificity moment to moment is essential. An example for me: my line referencing the “short and long of it” – see his crotch before the line and let that informs the language!
- Keep a specific point of view; discover and define Mistress Quickly’s POV regarding everyone and everything around me.

- Learn the parameters of our relationships with other characters along with the lines.

October 16, 2002

We went over my first scene with Fenton several times this evening. Ryan and I are starting to develop a really nice sense of the relationship between us.

The primary new note I received that I need to keep in mind is to keep the pace of the French scene fairly quick. I don’t need to belabor it, after all: we are both in a hurry to conclude our business without getting “caught.” We don’t know if Master or Mistress Page might come out, and we don’t want them to see us conniving to get Fenton and Anne together. (Each of them thinks that I’m working in their behalf!) Additionally, I am the first one to “name” Master Fenton; I need to punch his name clearly and give it appropriate “value.”

Other notes: on page 16 of our script, my line referencing, “and of other wooers. . . .” needs to be more of a warning rather than just teasing him. Vocally: be sure to hit the word “sworn” very clearly. Draw out and savor the “n.” Right now it’s getting a bit swallowed and lost. I also need to work on the consistency of my dropped “h.”

More page16 notes: (this seems to be a big scene for me. Go over it extensively.) The intention behind my first mention of “the wart,” “. . . have not your worship a wart above your eye?” needs to be “to recollect.” There are so many potential suitors to my sweet Mistress Anne – and so much potentially to
be gained, that it takes me a moment to remember (but of course, that’s just part of my ruse!) After all, he needs to not only believe that I have Anne’s ear and confidence (which I do . . . ) but that he needs me to intercede successfully for him. (Of course, I know that he “had her at hello,” but I won’t profit nearly as well if he knows that for a fact already!!)

I need to discover what I am specifically referencing by the line, “… out upon’t! What have I forgot?” (Page16 again.) If I can’t discern it directly from the script (go back and check anything we may have cut from the full script) then I’ll need to build it myself.

(16 again.) Punch up the fact that Anne and I talked about his wart for “… an hour. . . .” (This is an example of Mistress Quickly’s tendency towards exaggeration in word and deed, behavior and energy.)

I am clearly very taken with Master Fenton myself; he’s such a lovely boy!!

I have a number of times where I very clearly use direct address to the audience. I can pull on my old SAK Theatre/street theatre training and pick each person that I share each specific thought with. Really speak to them, take them into my confidence, share the joke, and change my point of view with each comment.

I started playing around a bit with some different movement/character gait possibilities. I’ll continue my exploration in rehearsal as well as on my own. I (Paula) don’t see myself (MQ) as necessarily graceful, although I think that I (MQ) consider myself to be so! I find myself continuing to return to Bharata’s comments about the stock maid character type. Something about his words
October 17, 2002

We delved into a new act and scene tonight. In it, I have more onstage time than actual lines, but I always enjoy discovering and just allowing myself to “live” in my onstage environment; this scene is no exception. Even in the first run of it, some really fun moments started to develop.

In 3.4, I am entering the scene together with Shallow and Slender as their emissary; we interrupt Anne and Master Fenton. This scene becomes (for me) about successfully balancing the various machinations I’ve been juggling regarding the courting of Mistress Anne. I need to keep Fenton calm and out of sight while sending Anne off to greet the oncoming suitors. I also need to make it clear to Anne that she can trust me; I’m absolutely in her camp, working for her. Almost immediately, at the entrance of the Page’s, I need to be able to play all sides against the middle; both Master and Mistress Page need to be left with the impression that I am “working” for each one alone. Master Page needs to believe that I stand with him, (for Shallow and Slender) Mistress Page that I agree with her choice, Dr. Caius, (my impatient employer!) and the young lovers that I’ll help them facilitate their romance . . . and somehow, I must still be able to profit from all of them with no acrimony!! We were only blocking tonight, but there were definitely some very fun ideas and interactions beginning to develop. Anne and I had a chance to talk about our characters’ earlier relationship. We agreed on a
lot of elements that will help define, specify, and deepen our interactions onstage. I’ll go into detail in my character analysis.

The second scene that we blocked tonight was 3.5, when I return to Falstaff to try and convince him to go back to Mistress Ford and try again. I had a tendency to “play one note” with my script in hand and just blocking it out. However, we worked on it a few times, the lines began to stick a bit and at the end, Kate gave me some great ideas to give it some more levels and variation as well as an even greater sense of play.

For the past few days I’ve been trying out different physical attributes, postures, and ways of movement. I’m starting to really like working with a wider, almost bow-legged stance and walk (just this side of an actual waddle!)

October 18, 2002

Today we worked on a scene between Falstaff and I (4.5) where he finally invites me up into his chamber. (Mistress Quickly’s ‘dream come true!’) I’ve brought him the letter that will draw him to the woods and give the ladies sport in cuckoldling him. For myself, (MQ,) this is an important moment; not only am I doing the bidding (and am being richly paid) by the Mistresses Page and Ford, but also, my own hopes reside in Falstaff’s ego and reputation being laid low; he may become a truly willing and accessible match for me! Of course, this is my private, secret, motivation throughout; the driver behind some of the choices I make in facilitating the requests of the others. And in terms of the actual action on stage, it remains only in my dreams. (Paula’s and Mistress Quickly’s!) (I would love to see an end tableau include something drawing Falstaff and Quickly

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together in some way, but from the current blocking and Kate’s comments, I don’t see it in the cards. Nevertheless, for my own sense of completion of through line, I’ll have to figure out a way to communicate with Falstaff just before lights out at the end, my interest in a future assignation with him. (Act 6, as it were!)

The blocking we did of 4.5 tonight is only meant to be a vague outline. Once we get the actual stair unit to work on, we can try out the different levels and see what feels and looks the best. It will also help with furthering the specificity of our choices by providing variations in status and mobility.

Emotionally in this scene, I am very defensive of the ladies. I want Falstaff to see that they meant him no real harm (and for him to believe that I only want what’s good for him). I need to entice him into one more escapade, because then, not only will the ladies get what they want, I’ll be paid handsomely and Falstaff’s humiliation by the ladies may ultimately lead him to my willing arms! By going into his chamber, perhaps I can give him a taste of the joys of Mistress Quickly and turn his fancies toward me! (For goodness sake, doesn’t he see how well matched we are??!?)

My primary vocal note for tonight: Keep working on smoothing out the dropped “h” and let the words flow into each other more easily. More elisions.

October 20, 2002

We reworked 3.4 (A-C) and 3.5 (A-C) today. (4.5 (A-B later.) There are some of changes in blocking and intention to keep in mind:
• I need to take my initial cross to Fenton and Anne a bit slower. Spend the time to respond to Shallow’s request for me to break them up, to assure him that I agree and hasten to do his bidding.

• At the same time, be sure cross a bit farther to the right so that I’m not blocking Fenton’s implied threat to Slender.

• Find myself caught between the two and needing to do a mini-cross back to Shallow to reassure him and then back to hold off Fenton while at the same time, encouraging Anne to put on a show of interest in Slender for her father’s sake.

• Once Anne crosses to the two other gentlemen, I need to maneuver Fenton half way up the stairs to the first landing and try to calm him down before he acts rashly.

I feel that I am the “protector” of Master Fenton and Anne’s secret courtship, and, as their elder, believe that I know best in terms of what actions should be taken when. (Particularly as all actions impact my ultimate collection of fees!) I want to keep Master Page from even seeing that he’s there, but his impetuosity drives him to leap over the balustrade past me down to Page. I try to hold him back. (As well as let Page know I’m as appalled as he is at this young whippersnapper!) After Master Page goes off with the other suitors, I encourage Fenton to approach Mistress Page (knowing his charm and gallantry will sweep her off her feet!). Throughout, I need to keep my own feet in the middle of all the excitement and make sure to protect my own financial and personal relationships
with all of them!! My ‘moment after’ with Fenton needs to be full of promise, to transmit to him a sense that his victory is close.

At the close of the scene, I use direct address with the audience. I need to keep my comments sharp, pointed, specific, and very *quick*. Kate wants me to take the last line as I cross around (keep movements circular) and out DL. (Continue talking to the audience while crossing along apron to right to give space for the exit.)

In the second scene with Falstaff, I need to walk a fine line between nursing him and mothering him, with a bit of flirtatious cooing thrown in! The scene between us is a matter-of-fact accounting of what is going on, while at the same time seducing and enticing him to follow our plan. At some point, looking at the fuller picture of the scene, as I fondle and play with him, I’ll go under the blanket with him and have a bit of a “tickle-fest.” (This will probably fall somewhere between “. . . yearn your heart to see it” and “. . . her husband goes this morning. . . .” (p 46.)

Anne and I continued our chat from the other day about the relationship between our characters. We’ve agreed that I have known her since she was a baby, and that I was, in fact, her wet nurse. (Mistress Page had little milk and I had just lost my babe and husband due to illness.) Hence, the great degree of confidence between the two of us and her trust in my embassy.

**October 21, 2002**

We (well, I judge we, but at least, I) had a blast tonight! We were working on the scene between Mistress Page, William, Master Parson Evans, and myself.
The scene is full of misunderstood language (selectively and randomly!) as well as puns and a real dialect scramble between Evans and Quickly. The rehearsal was very lighthearted and forgiving, there was a lot of laughter throughout. Once we are rid of scripts and can really play with this, it should start to soar.

Major POV note/observation: I’m appalled by what I perceive as Evans’ corruption of young Will. This is not because I’m a prude about the subjects I misconstrue as to his meaning. I’m all about being lascivious, in touch with my sensuous nature. (Kate was succinct, “. . . I’m not a whore, but some of my best friends are whores!”) My reaction stems from the same place it does earlier in the script with Falstaff’s page, Robin. I am the quintessential “earth mother,” and have a very definite sense of propriety as per what is acceptable to expose children for, “tis not good that children should know any wickedness: old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world.” (24) It’s the mother hen side of Quickly; I am extremely protective of children!

October 22, 2002

We blocked the Fairy Circle scene tonight. It should be a lot of fun and visually very cool. At the end of the circle, all the townsfolk pull back to the various levels on the side staircases, framing out the tree and central tableau. It’s interesting to consider the physical (and mental) challenges and choices the blocking will present just for my own artistic journey as the character. I would still like to find a way to integrate some of the ideas I’ve been playing with regarding my relationship with Falstaff, though I may need to refine tactics (much less expectations!) I still question whether or not the implied flirtations from both sides
are actual attraction or façade. For Quickly's sake, I lean toward the more romantic choice. At any rate, all this minutiae is for my own 'psychic use' as I feel out my options toward the final moments of the show. This is my favorite part of the puzzle: finding my way down a path from beginning to end, and having it all connect for me.

October 23, 2002
We had a stumble through of Act 2 tonight.

First, the notes (company and personal) from the rehearsal:

- Tomorrow we'll start to bring in some of the scene crossovers and "slice of city life" moments.
- General note to entire company: Keep diction crisp throughout, especially during more "action-packed" sequences!
- We'll work the " . . . they mistook their erection" (p 46) section of the scene to make it clearer.
- (Individual company member's notes not included unless related in some way to MQ.)
- The rest of the evening will be spent on the fairy circle dance.

When we worked my last scene previous to the fairy circle tonight (5.1) it was/it felt very different. JJ's Falstaff was a big, gruff mean guy to my Quickly. We hadn't talked about any changes ahead of time . . . but man, it certainly impacted my reactions to him! We certainly tore to the other side of the spectrum! Instead of seductively luring me (or allowing me to lure him) into his chamber, he was quite brusque and dismissive. It made my approach to him change radically.
I found myself feeling more wary and distrustful of him. And more inclined to be
devious and calculating from a colder, more dispassionate place inside. If we
continue in this vein, I'll need to really examine my original intentions, my
motivations for those intentions, and my tactics for achieving those intentions. I
wonder if this is just JJ trying out new directions, a suggestion from Kate, or
something I'm not giving him that he needs . . . the original attraction we played
with in earlier scenes just isn't happening, at least not now, not tonight. My own
personal hope is that tonight was either an experiment or an aberration, and that
at least some of that attraction and playfulness can return. Although I'll play it
however it lays out...it certainly would add a much darker streak to my character
and my intentions.

I think the sense of disappointment I walked away from rehearsal with is
related to my own ideas and hopes in shaping my relationship with Falstaff. To
my own mind, Queen Elizabeth's reported charge to Shakespeare to write *Merry
Wives* as a vehicle to show Falstaff in love holds out as much hope to Mistress
Quickly. I think in my (Quickly's) heart of hearts, the knight would be as good a
match as any available to a woman of my station, and his appetites seem to
match mine in every way. I think that by pulling the errant knight down a few
pegs, I can secure my own heart's desire, even if by default as he is virtually
emasculated by his original prey!! By the same token, if I think of the jilted, jaded
Hostess Quickly...it can make sense as well...at any rate, something I'll need to
keep on the back burner for further late night hot tub musings...
I will have to look for any opportunities that present themselves to me within the scope of the final scene blocking choreography to tie up my personal loose ends, however it lays out. This is part of the puzzle that’s especially fun, and can constantly change and stay fresh. . . .

October 24, 2002
Tonight we worked more on entrances, exits, transitional pieces, and extra vignettes: the piecing together of this quilt has begun.

I am in a very unsettled and vulnerable place right now, it seems. Despite the personal drama (which is harrowing enough) and still feeling a bit off balance and “at sea” as my character (hell, as a person,) this rehearsal somehow proved to have a rather calming effect over me. At least, I felt like my ‘sense of place’ and ‘forward movement’ was firmed up substantially. I guess, looking at our production calendar, we’re really right at that point I’ve always had in rehearsals: the cusp between struggling with lines and movement, character and relationship, and then everything settling in so you can really play. It must be like childbirth; you always forget how painful the process can be once the ‘baby’ has been born!!

It is more than a little depressing to me at times how much harder it is for me to memorize lines now from how I used to even just five or ten years ago. Yikes! But I’m sitting tight on the script constantly, and I know that if I can relax a bit with it, it’s not going to be long before the language on the page finally enters into my body and helps to inform and clarify my energies and choices.
We spent more time on the final scene. We kept specifying and clarifying moments. It’s really shaping up and should be a lot of fun. I get be the real facilitator between Mistress Anne and Master Fenton and help lead Anne on her quest to be with her love! I like that very much. It’s helping me put together the line of my final actions and intentions.

I can only imagine how cool this scene will look with the costumes, lights, and set in place.

October 25, 2002

We had our first stumble through of the entire show tonight. Quite fun, actually! It’s certainly going to be a physical workout as much as anything; I run back and forth and through and around Windsor like a whirlwind!!!

JJ and I both found some great ways to make our attraction to each other specific and carry through straight to the end. The last scene seemed to be a contradiction of all we’d played with up to that point, but we’ve found places to make a connection of some sort, that leaves us with (at least) an unfinished coda to our relationship. And actually, by taking my last line as a chastisement directed at Falstaff for not recognizing that he and I were “destined” to be together, (aren’t I woman enough for him?!) it then can motivate me to cast my eyes and interests elsewhere.

Chris’ Bardolf is the logical choice, both in terms of what we’ve been playing with in our brief scene onstage and our proximity to each other in the last scene. Chris and I have already set up a really fun “moment before” for the scene where he announces my arrival to Falstaff. It’s only a moment or two that we’re
out there together, but the relationship is now so active and alive. We talked about the moment we first espy each other, and we'll use it as a catalyst to hook up in the last scene. (Yay! Mistress Quickly gets a boyfriend!) We also talked briefly about how the characters we play may be reflected in the “actors” we are also playing just before the show actually begins. (The itinerant showmen and women entering the provincial town.) I think the beginning feels a bit muddled now. Once we all figure out exactly who we are to each other, it should become sharper. I need to do my own ‘homework’ on that and figure out how I feel about each one of the “members of the troupe.”

All in all, though, it’s a perfect answer to my dilemma as per my overall through line. It keeps me well grounded in my relationships within Windsor as well as teasing along the edges of MQ’s place and relationships in the canon.

October 27, 2002

We’ve begun scene-by-scene work throughs. Last day “on book” is Wednesday. The clock is loudly ticking now! I’m very frustrated still by how long it’s taken me to get cold on these lines. I keep plugging away. We’re starting to get line cuts daily now as well, which complicates the process. I’ve had a number of lines cut, but most everyone has, so I am trying not to take it personally. Wouldn’t you know, some of the sections that I was most comfortable with and was using to help me mentally transition from one thought to the next got sliced; now I’ll need to re-chart my mental path. It actually threw me a bit; I’m going to need to put daily homework aside for a while (as much as I can get away with, anyway) and really focus on lines only for the next few days.
BIG NOTE FOR THE NIGHT: from the very top of my first scene I need to up the stakes even higher, really raise the level of urgency in my communication with Simple. He has already told me upstairs (moment before) why he’s here and I need to make my plans and quick. I need to be able to balance facilitating access to Mistress Anne for three different suitors without letting anyone (well, anyone but Anne; we have each other’s total confidence) know that I’m playing the go-between for all of them!!!

October 28, 2002
We worked on the first scene between Falstaff and me tonight. Had to reference the script still, just to keep us closer to staging speed (Kate’s request.) I hated how encumbered I felt. I will not sleep until I’ve got these freaking lines embedded into my brain. Tonight is my personal deadline. I can’t schlep this damn paper around anymore. Nevertheless, despite my own distractions, we actually were able to clarify some moments and made some good general blocking changes that opened JJ and I up so we can play more with the physical broadness of our characters.

October 29, 2002
I was only called to work on a specific crossover moment between scenes tonight. It was right after the scene where I introduce Robin to Mistress Page for the first time. Blocking-wise, it was relatively simple, but it was key in how it helped me clarify for myself some elements in my relationships with these two people as well as some of the physicality I want to bring to Mistress Quickly. And
the best part of it all was that we were done inside of twenty minutes, which allowed me to go home early and finish memorizing my lines!

**October 30, 2002**

We worked on 3.4 tonight. This is the scene where I enter with Slender and Shallow as their go-between in pursuit of Mistress Anne. Of course, all the parties think I’m working in their behalf, while my true intent is to help the young lovers, Anne and Master Fenton, realize their own desire to be with each other. The end of the scene focuses on Fenton confronting Master Page and then courting the favor of Mistress Page after her husband goes off with Shallow and Slender.

We all had some terrific developments in our characters and relationships over the course of the evening. My moment where I move away from Shallow and Slender and approach Mistress Anne and Master Fenton is much more specific and pointed, as is my relationship with Anne. Anne, the actress, and I had some time to talk about our characters and develop our back-story together. It was fun to share the ideas we’d both had and begin to blend them into something upon which we could both agree. Through our discussion, we were able to forge a connection between the two of us that we hadn’t before this rehearsal. Granted, the scene is very short, but I think that this is such a key relationship in terms of our character’s overall intentions. The connection between the two of us was definitely lacking before and seemed to come out of left field. Now, I think that it is clearer for both of us, (and, hopefully it will be clear to our audience,) that Mistress Anne and I share the sort of a relationship that a
surrogate “aunt” or favored confidante might share. As we’ve constructed it, I was the wet nurse her mother used for her as a baby. Mistress Page began to depend upon me as a trusted go-between in situations where it would be inappropriate for her to do so herself, and to help her with her children, when needed. Mistress Anne was raised with my presence a common occurrence in her life.

Another part of the scene that we worked was Master Fenton and I on the stage-right stairway during the moment between Anne and Masters Slender and Shallow. Fenton and I will need to ultimately tone down the work we were discovering in this moment. As we worked on it during the rehearsal, we started to explore some very specific thoughts and the moments when we are relating to each other in regards to the scene we are watching in the courtyard below. It was great fun, and again, went a long way towards clarifying for each of us who and what we are to each other. Now that we are more comfortable with our intentions in the scene and what we need from each other, we can tone it down to something at least a bit more filmic in order to keep from upstaging the more key scene occurring below.

Yet another amusing addition to Fenton and my relationship developed as we worked the last part of the scene. When he can’t take it anymore, Fenton leaps over the banister of the stairs and goes to confront Page. I rush down to try and stop him, but when I realize that my position with the Pages might be compromised (Master Page is, after all, interested in my facilitating as go-between for HIS choice for his daughter, Master Slender, and Mistress Page has
her own “favorite choice”), I pretend to turn on Fenton, slapping his arm and chastising him for his brazen behavior!

The rest of the scene will be played as we originally blocked it, but by supplementing the previous actions with a richer underlying intent and layers of connection between our characters it has made this relatively short and simple scene really take off . . . as a result, it’s a lot more fun to play for all of us!

Some line notes from this evening’s rehearsal: In our search to play every possible bawdy reference, Kate is having me hit the line, “. . . a woman would run through fire and water for such a kind heart. . . . ” as if referencing Fenton’s nether regions. Then, I use the line to cross along the apron of the stage from DL to DR, using the audience liberally in direct address. (I use this technique at a couple of other moments in the play as well.) I immediately catch myself with the memory of my next errand to Falstaff for the ladies, and so cross back DL (after one of my “Quickly circles” and out on my last line. (Kate has suggested that I work into my physicality a tendency to move in roundabout ways as opposed to walking in a straight line.)

**October 31, 2002**

Another hoot of a rehearsal! We worked on 4.1, my scene with Mistress Page, Will and Sir Hugh. This was a laugh riot for all of us as we worked on specifying our actions and intentions. We spent most of the time working on finding a slower build to anger from Sir Hugh and, at the same time, a greater sense of my being genuinely appalled at what I mistakenly perceive as the material he is teaching the boy. We also spent time working on some more
physical reaction from me to his queries. At the top of the scene, I need to be more insistent with Mistress Page, really push her to hurry and come with me – then, as the scene with Sir Hugh progresses, I need to start with a slow burn and then get increasingly agitated as I am alternately insulted, appalled, and disgusted by what I think Sir Hugh is talking about with Will. Kate has me ending with actually grabbing (covering?) my crotch as Sir Hugh asks me if I know my “cases” and “gender!”

This can be a rather obscure scene in terms of the language; it will be interesting to see if the audience will have as much fun watching the scene as we’ve had working on it!!

November 1, 2002
This evening we worked two scenes for me: 3.5 and 4.5. The scene in Act 3 is a scene between Falstaff and I where I try to encourage him to try with Mistress Ford again. The scene in Act 4 is my third attempt to entice him to Mistress Ford by bringing him a letter from her inviting him to meet her at Herne’s Oak. (My own intention in that scene is to get invited into his chamber myself!!)

Our work in the first of the two scenes was clarified in this rehearsal physically and vocally. Kate outlined specific lines that she wants me to point up. I’ll slow down my delivery and use the lines to clearly “set him straight” as to what he needs to do to be successful in his plans. We also found a great way to really clarify my line, “. . . they mistook their erection . . . ” I’ll let it come to me as an epiphany, a sudden realization, as opposed to something I was aware of before. We tried it both ways, and it definitely worked and felt better this way. Vocally, I’m
going to really focus on using my Lessac “call” technique to cry out, “No!” before correcting Falstaff as to the time of the assignation (between 8 and 9, NOT 9 and 10!) It should sharpen the exchange and help point out how I need to control the situation for the ladies and I to be successful in our plans.

Final suggestion for this scene from Kate: take a beat (an audible sigh of relief would work) just before my last line to Falstaff (“Peace be wif you, sir!”) and then turn and run out and up.

In 4.5, I enter the scene close on Falstaff’s heels, but from CR and thus, surprise him. No matter how he treats me, I do not back down. He doesn’t really faze me at all; I know that I am easily his match (if only I could get him to see it!!) So, I go up the stairs after him in defense of Mistress Ford, and it becomes a battle of wills between the two of us (my breasts eventually overcoming his stubborn will). As the enticement of my clearly “available” charms seems to calm him, I begin to coddle and baby him a bit, then move on to more serious flirtation. After that, it’s an attempt to throw him off balance, alternating between temptation and chastisement (kind of like an early Mary Poppins, “. . . you bad little boy . . . I’ll have to spank you . . . you’d like that, eh?!”) until he is either excited (or whipped) enough to invite me into his chambers! My focus as I work on this scene will be to find very specific changes in tactic for each line.

Line note for tonight: work on consistently dropping my H’s.

November 3, 2002

This afternoon was another terrific rehearsal! The first half of rehearsal was spent working on our entrances at the top of the show. It’s a great set-up,
and should be fun both for the audience as well as for us. It also helps set up pretty specifically the time period in which we are presenting this particular production. Originally, Kate talked to us about how the stage design was created to give the feel of an Elizabethan stage, so that my impression was that we were setting this in Shakespeare’s time. However, today’s rehearsal actually belies that, and I think it makes far more sense now (especially taking into consideration some of the things JJ and I have been playing with in the relationship between Falstaff and Quickly.) As the show opens, the company enter from “outside” the staging area; outside “the theatre.’ Our premise, as explained by Kate, is that we are players in a theatre company who were forced to leave London when the theatres were closed down due to plague and we are now an itinerant company touring with our repertoire in the provinces. This provides a solid foundation for us in terms of where we are in the span of time and culture in England. It also makes the direct audience address that we use throughout the actual show even more easily accessible, especially for those in the company without the previous experience with street theatre that some of us have. All in all, I think it’s the right tone and should be a fun layer to throw on top of what we are doing.

So, I’m in the left vom, entering in the “B” pocket from the back of the house: the second group into the theatre. I enter with Mark (Shallow,) Chris (Master Page,) and Nick (Doctor Caius.) We’ve been “designated” by Kate as the true “professional actors” of the company, the long-term members of the group. We enter greeting our public expansively, confident of our own “drawing power!” As we step upon the stage, we begin greeting the other actors and start warming
up physically and vocally, exploring the space, getting ready to play our parts—but still as the itinerant actors rather than our characters in *Merry Wives*. When JJ enters (he is our impresario, the leading member of the company), I go to him to complain about my costume (after he has received his weapon from Aaron/Pistol). JJ appeases me and passes me off to Aaron who walks me away and focuses my attentions elsewhere. At that point, I’m free to play with several options: go upstairs to check my movement patterns on the bridge, check my entrances and exits from the above rooms, or interact with the various actors around me. Finally, the stage manager calls for places, we reply accordingly (“Thank you, places” or “Merde!”) and go to our locations for our first entrances. (Mine is upstairs in the left above room.) This will be fun to see how it develops as we drop it into our performance, and, of course, once we have an audience, we can really let loose and play with it all!

The second half of the rehearsal was spent working on the final fairy scene. Kate cut a few more lines from the scene. It threw me off a bit at first, as I’d just really nailed mine down for myself, but by specifying some movement patterns and clarifying some emotional connections and intentions moment to moment, I think the end result is much cleaner and smoother. The very last moments of the show are still a bit unclear, and I’m not sure how I can complete my own internal through-line yet as we’ve been directed movement-wise, but we haven’t had the chance to really play the full scene out yet. As we move into our full run-throughs, I’m sure everything will ultimately fall into place. Sometimes I think my greatest challenge as an actor is to just take a deep breath and relax. I
want to be “on top of things” and to automatically understand everything, to figure out the details to everything right away. I need to trust myself more and accept that some things are better discovered more gradually, more organically.

At the end of the evening, we revisited 4.5, and it really threw me for a loop. I’m not sure if Kate has redirected JJ, or if he was experimenting with some different intentions, or if he was just in a nasty mood tonight . . . but the scene flew off into a completely unexpected direction as we worked on it. It came off very cut and dried, he was clearly eager to be rid of me and there was none of the give and take or sense of play between the characters that we’d established the other night. It didn’t seem to get any better as we worked through it a few times, although I tried several ways to approach the material and adjust to what I was being given. JJ was very gruff at the end of rehearsal and left immediately. This has left me wondering about it all, whether I need to readdress my character’s “packing:” Mistress Quickly’s intentions, inner life and dreams, relationships. I left rehearsal feeling completely out of sorts and confused as to what had just happened. It was especially troublesome as the bulk of the rehearsal seemed to have gone so well. I will need to sleep on this development and figure out where I go from here.

**November 4, 2002**

On my drive home from rehearsal last night, I began to examine and reassess my character and all that pertains to Quickly and what I do: the who, what, when, where, and why. I am, admittedly, fairly loathe to completely abandon my earlier thoughts, writings and musings about Quickly and what
motivates her. However, for the time being, I need to at least put it aside and focus on how I can integrate Kate’s desires and JJ’s apparent change in intent into my own performance. Instead of seeing the potential changes as a roadblock, I need to see them as a challenge. I will need, to an as yet unspecified degree, to reconfigure my analysis of who I am as a character, what I want, possibly even my internal through-line over the course of the play as well as my character’s dreams and hopes. It may be that my entire relationship with Falstaff will need to change on my part – to one that is colder, more calculating – not truly attracted to him, but using him and his lack of control over his own lust just as he uses other women. In fact, if I use it to “get back” at him for spurning my own desire for him (now and in our past relationship in the previous histories) then I could still keep some of my packing and intentions as motivation, but turn it around for revenge as opposed to using it to try and seduce him for myself. It will undoubtedly take a few rehearsals for me to set up the specifics clearly in my own mind, but we have time for me to do that. We have our first full run-through tonight, so it will give me a chance to see what I can do with all these competing thoughts and ideas.

(Later on after rehearsal)

The rehearsal itself went pretty well, I guess, as first run-throughs go. I’ll address the notes I received at the end of this entry, but first, overall impressions of how it all went:

I spent a great deal of time yesterday and today thinking about the changes I need to effect in my character, intentions, and relationships. Then, with
Kate’s notes from tonight’s run-through, I can see more clearly what she wants and what I will need to do to get there. The good news for me is that it appears it will be achievable without losing the sense of play and lusty innuendo Falstaff and I had established from our first read at the audition. 4.5 was much closer in tonight’s run to what we had originally developed in our relationship, so rather than worry about it, I will just open myself to play off JJ’s Falstaff however he approaches me and adjust my reactions and choices as to how to “play” him accordingly! (Not only as Paula, the UCF grad student, but also as “Joan the itinerant actor” and my character, Mistress Quickly! No wonder actors can be considered schizophrenic…we have so many layers to who we are at any given time!!) As per Kate’s wishes, both Falstaff and I need to have our focus on our primary intention, i.e., each of us is looking out for our own personal financial benefit. After we spent some time talking about our choices tonight, JJ and I both agreed that the sexual attraction is still there between Falstaff and Quickly. Quickly, because she can’t help the love she feels for this reprobate (and the poor old dear is more than a bit desperate for affection) and Falstaff because he’s just an inveterate horn-dog! (He’d prefer beauty, but he’d ultimately take an old nag like me for a quick fix.) The trouble is, of course, that Quickly has no money and that’s what Falstaff desires above all else!

Through our discussions with Kate after rehearsal tonight, I can see more clearly how she’d like us to shape this relationship, and I feel much more comfortable with it now. JJ and I really probed her as to her feelings about our relationship. We had both been feeling a bit at odds between her concept and
our own inclinations. Now that we’ve spent time hashing it out, I really think that it
will be just as much fun, and potentially far richer in layers. She doesn’t want us
to lose the sense of fun and physical attraction we’d been developing, but we just
need to make adjustments so that those feelings don’t overwhelm our individual
jobs and personal missions. I have no money, and that is Falstaff’s greatest need
and desire (besides having sex with beautiful women!) For me, it’s all about
making extra money as well as helping Mistress Anne to be successful in her
own pursuit of love. Both of us are driven by economics; sexual desire is only
secondary to that primary motivation. I’m really glad we were able to spend the
time with Kate, as it’s definitely helped both of us as we navigate towards
opening. I’m starting to tap into some solid ideas as to where and how my own
internal though line can run through all of this.

The fairy scene was still quite rough tonight, very much “still in transition.”
We made a few changes tonight, and more are probably in the offing until we get
it as clean and sharp as we’d like. Everyone is still kind of ambling around
without specific actions, and with the full company on the stage it’s quite a traffic
issue! Our timing and spacing as well as simple moment to moment intentions
are still being formulated, but once final placement is set by Kate and we get a
sense for who is actually going to be around us to interact with, everything should
fall into place. We’re going to be speeding down to the wire at this point. It’s
exciting and just a bit scary!!

OK, now I’ll turn my attention to the notes I received this evening.
• With my dialect, I just have to keep reminding myself to keep my
diction crisp, especially as I’m dropping my H’s and making
selective consonant changes elsewhere. I especially need to
remember to hit my final consonants and not just slide over
them. My dropped H’s are going alright, but I did get a few
specific notes: “the ‘ouse,” “call ‘im my master,” “she ‘opes,”
“not ‘er fault,” “shall ‘ear,” “serve ‘eaven.” Also, I had two
specific notes on hitting consonants a bit harder: “‘ods nouns”
and “gift ‘after gift.”

Other notes:

• In general, think and speak more speedily – more “quickly!” The
flirtatiousness and sexy, bawdy choices have been fine, but
don’t let them slow down my energy or become too predictable.
On the other hand: my entrance in the last scene with Falstaff
was very bossy and full of myself; Kate LOVED IT! Wants me to
keep it. My Quickly was energized and busy and had a job to do
and was damned if Falstaff was going to slow me down! Keep
the flirtiness, but don’t let it become more important than the job
at hand, the money to be earned, or the information to impart. It
is especially true in scenes with Falstaff, but keep it in mind for
all scenes.

• I need to be such a busybody that people have a hard time
getting a word in edgewise with me around!
• We made a few small line cuts on pp12-14.

• Change of direction from Kate: she still wants me moving in circular patterns, but in the scene where I go to the closet to get the doctor’s green box, tighten up my movement pattern just a bit – not so wide a circle.

• “. . . Shall I vouchsafe your worship . . .” in the course of saying this line, physically include a request for a stool to sit on. It doesn’t need to be a separate action.

• While Fenton and I are on the staircase and Mistress Anne and Slender are below in the courtyard, be sure to keep most of my focus on Anne and Slender. Find key moments to check on Fenton’s reactions and calm him.

• Tone down some of the play with Falstaff (in the “tub” scene) and make sure that the important plot points are hit and emphasized (i.e., Mistress Ford wants to see you again and when!)

• “od’s nouns” – make ODDS the key word (two’s an even number…)

November 5, 2002

In tonight’s rehearsal, we began with some adjustments to the final scene. I was pleased to see that I’ll have more of a direct relationship with Anne and Fenton at the end, clearly being the one who facilitates their happy unification. We worked out the details of the final moments of the fairy scene, keeping me
with them and then picking up the end of the villager’s conga line as we dance out to party. This also gives me a last moment of contact with Falstaff before I leave the stage, which we are using to our advantage! (Even if in the crush of humanity it gets lost to the audience, it’s really more important as closure to my internal through-line and I can leave the stage feeling like I achieved some degree of success in enticing Falstaff (in Quickly’s mind, now that he’s been brought low by the ladies’ humiliations, he’s ripe for the picking!!!)

The rest of the night was spent working on specific scenes, especially those that had recent cuts, and some cast members still needed to run lines to get them cold. (I’m glad I got through that bear last week!)

**November 6, 2002**

This was our first night running on the stage! Finally! It was weird, but great!

We started with a session with the wardrobe mistress, Kyla, as she laid out the plans for tomorrow night’s costume parade. (All questions and concerns regarding wardrobe are to go through her.) It’s the usual parameters for a dress parade: come out when called and stand in the light (or move as they direct you) as your character. They really want us to “sell it,” really move about as the character in their own clothes, not as an actor in costume. No talking allowed. I will need to bring in my own bloomers (no problem, what Renaissance wench doesn’t own a pair or two!!).

The next “job” of the evening was for all of us to wander the set and make note of the logistics for our individual entrances and exits. The downstairs doors
have antique handles and only open one way, so all of us that use them need to practice using them. I also need to check out my escapes from upstairs in the back; each one of them is slightly different in size. Important note: DO NOT lean on railings or pull on them in any way!

This was a very “slow go” rehearsal tonight. We re-set a number of entrances and exits and adjusted timing for our negotiating around onstage and off. (There are a few places where people (including me) run out through the voms into the lobby and then have minimal time to run back down to the dressing rooms, change, and make a new entrance. For me, the toughest timing issue is just previous to the fairy scene.)

November 7, 2002

Tonight was costume parade. Everyone looked so great! Kristina and her crew did an amazing job.

After the costume parade, we did a full run-through. I had Julia and Be watching (both on my thesis committee), so I definitely felt some pressure! I want to start out by writing my own observations and concerns, then I’ll refer to Kate’s notes and end with Julia and Be’s.

I had a few line stumble/bumbles and one call for “line” tonight. Nothing severe, but I’ll go back over my script tonight when I get home and tomorrow before our run. Overall, though, I’m starting to really feel like the flow of the show is gelling for me, so I’m not too concerned about my line flubs tonight.

Just before we began tonight, we received our notes from last night’s work. (I’ll include those notes below.) Kate wants us to make the adjustments
immediately, of course. One of the notes was referring to a blocking change that has seemingly affected some of my underlying motivations. At the top of the show, I’m now leading Simple down the stairs, as opposed to pushing him down ahead of me. It felt a bit odd at first, but I understand the rational for it, so it’s just a matter of letting the logic of it seep into my body. Tomorrow I should feel better (Maybe Joe and I can catch a few minutes during the day tomorrow to run it a few times.).

I also noticed last night that for some reason my voice seemed to be set at a much higher pitch at the top of the show than I am generally using for Mistress Quickly. It seemed very much like I was using my “head voice.” I will need to focus some attention (and warming up sufficiently) to get it back to a deeper, more grounded, earthier sound from the very top.

Onward to Kate’s notes:

- Remember to keep my vocal energy up. Don’t let others get much of a chance to break in once I start talking!
- Raise the urgency in my conversation with Simple as we come downstairs. Make him chase me down and struggle to keep up physically, mentally.
- The second time I call out “. . . John, John!” only pretend to be looking for him, don’t worry about actually making eye contact with him.
React quicker when clapping my hands over Robin’s ears to protect his innocence. That entire section of the scene can move quicker.

Now Julia’s comments:

- She would like me to make clearer my relationship with Dr. Caius and a more specific sense of why we’re so worried about him catching Simple there.

Finally, Be’s comments:

- Remember to keep my sounds forward and crisp; with the dialect, I run the risk of losing some understanding of my speech.
- Be aware of repetitive hand movements (stroking my bodice?)
- Score ‘canaries’ monologue more tightly, specifically. Break down my thoughts even further…second by second.
- She wanted to see more of a personal, physical attraction between Falstaff and Quickly.

I explained to Be Kate’s direction to turn our relationship into more of a “business arrangement” whereby we use each other to further our own separate intentions.

There has indeed been a shift in Falstaff’s treatment of Quickly. It was very clear throughout the run tonight. He plainly discounts me emotionally right away and continues throughout. And while I need to follow through more coldly myself, it nevertheless felt very weird and cold. Our last scene together in
particular was $180^\circ$ from any original intentions, motivations or tactics available for use. It was as though any physicalization was repulsive, the blocking was all over the place; I found myself questioning why I should force myself up the stairs after him. There was no sense of invitation, acceptance, or interest on his part. All in all, it was a very odd feeling, odd moment, for me.

Of course, it also presents a very interesting conundrum for me to play with in my mind as I continue my construction of Quickly. After all, since when has the “course of true love” ever “run true?” It would also make all the sense in the world that Mistress Quickly is hopelessly and irreparably crazy about the big lug and no matter what he ever does or says, she’s still smitten?! So, while I know I need to use him to achieve specific ends for the support of the ladies, I can still be dreaming of and lusting after him for myself. It should, actually, help deepen the struggle, if I keep it more “buried in my breast” (as it were!)

In other matters: my relationship with Mistress Anne has continued to strengthen and intensify, which has been great fun and helped my sense of Quickly’s power and strong nurturing side. (That “earth mother” essence Kate brought up in one of our first meetings.)

I’ve also been focusing my attentions on remaining as conscious as possible at all times of various class and status issues. I’ll need to do some further research on particulars; I’ve read a bit already, and am thrilled by the number of fascinating sources available. I have decided that even though he is a Knight, and in a class (or two?) above me, I recognize an elemental, baser quality in Falstaff that lays us, in human terms, on similar, if not equal, footing in
our world. This feeds into my brazenness and comfort in taking the liberties that I
do with him.

**November 8, 2002**

We had our second run through on stage tonight. Just before we started, Kate passed out a few more cuts, some of my lines included. I managed to cover all of mine. The show had very good energy overall. There were a few specific diction notes (to follow.) Mostly I bumbled over lines due to fighting a phlegm ball (I seem to be picking up some creeping crud that’s invading the department). At any rate, rest, warm liquids and good warm-up will (hopefully) keep it going.

I’m still really struggling with getting a handle on my relationship with Falstaff. JJ thought it went OK, but it’s still a puzzle for me internally. I’ll just have to keep hammering away at it myself. I know I’m just starting to psyche myself out a bit as well, haunted by that paralyzing fear that all you’ve got is a two-dimensional rendition of a three-dimensional character. I’m still waiting for that mind/body meld. . . .

Having a day off is going to feel really good right now; everything needs to stew. . . .

**November 10, 2002**

Today was cue to cue. A very long, dullish afternoon. My congestion was horrible by today (after building up since Friday.) I felt like it was a struggle to sustain my voice. I was surprised when Kate told me that it actually sounded pretty good from the house. A bit rough, but maybe my efforts to speak over the congestion helped me use it even more correctly, i.e. supporting it more diligently.
and taking advantage of the corseting! She said it actually sounded like a fairly clear flow of sound. (Kate also says I don’t have to come in early before call time tomorrow to work any of my scenes. I can just rest . . . aaaaahhhhh!!!)

**November 11, 2002**

I spent the bulk of the day just reveling in vocal rest. I’m still very hoarse, my voice very rough and raspy with constant sinus drainage . . . yuck. When I woke up this morning, I had no voice whatsoever. At about noon or so, I started to do some light humming and slowly worked into some vocalizations. There is a bit of a voice there, but it’s pretty nasty sounding. I’ll need to be extra careful in using it tonight.

Tonight is our first “dress,” but without makeup or hair.

My super-objective is to bring about the match for Mistress Anne that will be the most beneficial to me. There are some enticing possibilities out there that would bring me economic benefit, and economics do weigh heavily in my perception of what is important. But, I am also a hopeless romantic. In that light, my best interests always seem to lie where my heart sits. I love Anne as if she were my own, and her heart has been captivated by that terribly good-looking, young, and quite promising Master Fenton! From Quickly’s perspective, he’s cute, wealthy, and (certainly as Ryan is playing him) he seems to actually like Quickly as a person and trusts me with his darling Anne. This could bode well for me in the future! As I don’t particularly like working for the irritable Dr. Caius, I would welcome a chance to serve in the household of the young couple instead.
It would be a pretty pleasant alternative for me to Caius (although that young barkeep, Bardolph, has interesting prospects too!)

I also need to keep in consideration that I need to stay in the good graces of Mistresses Page and Ford by faithfully doing their bidding in regards to Falstaff. I’m hoping my success in that effort will encourage them to rely on me more often. I also want to appease Mistress Page sufficiently that when faced with the picture of her daughter, Anne with Fenton, the man she loves, Mistress Page will forgive my working at cross purposes to her wishes for Anne’s betrothal.

As for Falstaff, hmmm . . . yeah, he’s kind of cute, definitely my type . . . but he probably is too far above me class-wise for me to seriously consider having a chance with him. Although he does frequently hang with a rougher, lower class crowd, and there is ‘something’ about him; I should just use his tendency to lust freely for the smell of any feminine conquest and play him for a fool. I’ll just turn the tables on him! Manipulate him the way he manipulates others. (Maybe if I can bring him down a bit, I can then be there to help him lick his wounds!)

(Later after rehearsal)

Act 1 seemed to go well for me tonight. Falstaff and I seemed to have rediscovered some moments of real play that we’ll hopefully be able to keep in production. Act 2 was a bit more problematic, especially blocking-wise. There are a number of fast crosses that Kate had originally envisioned that aren’t working in
terms of either timing or level of visual distraction. At any rate, we’ve cut the bridge crosses in general. (There may be one or two that stay.)

Other notes from tonight’s rehearsal:

- Really hit the line “... my master himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page ...” and play it out center a bit more. Pare the number of times you turn between the two. Minimize.
- Keep myself turned out more in tub scene with Falstaff. (It’s too easy to get swallowed up in the closeness of the scene.)
- In the last scene between Quickly and Falstaff (heading upstairs) take a moment while Falstaff is heading up to share a wink with the audience.
- When congratulating Fenton and Anne at the end, pull myself a bit more upstage of them.
- In Act 1: change in blocking. Rugby will be the one to start downstairs and switch the sign. Our cue to head out is the banging of the lower door below us. Then, when I say “... out upon’t...” I turn and take the sign out with me.
- Delay my entrance with Robin when I’m taking him to Page’s. Take the sign in with me when we enter the Page’s.

November 12, 2002

It was a good run tonight, but very long. I hear we hit three hours plus. Yikes! I’m feeling so much better about where I’m going. I’m starting to feel healthier, which of course helps. (Though with my congestion, I still need a puff
on a steroid inhaler just before the run.) But the relationships I'm developing with each character also just seem to be jelling more with each pass, and I'm much calmer about how my relationship with Falstaff has been shaping. We have been increasingly adding to our level of play, and haven't been asked to cut it back. Yea! We may have finally found that elusive “happy medium!” All in all, I have a pretty good feeling about our work tonight.

November 13, 2002
Tonight is our final dress rehearsal. Emotions and tensions are running high. I feel like I'm operating on a razor edge of sanity myself tonight. We cut some time off, but were reminded overall to keep everything crisp and tight; lines, cues, crosses, everything. General and personal notes for the run:

- At the top of the show, when we enter and then move onto the stage, remember to share our focus equally between interactions with each other and playing with the audience, including them in our awareness.
- Go over all my dialect essentials, especially the “h” links and elisions. (Example: “... seldom from ‘ome ... ”)
- When talking to Falstaff about sending Robin as an emissary, reference Mistress Page by name rather than simply as “her.” (It’s too confusing at that moment.)
- Remember house left during tub scene with Falstaff, I still need to turn our more. (Maybe pull myself just a tad back as well.)
• Our fairy “diamond” dance in the end scene needs to pull more center stage.

OK. Ready or not, here we come. . . .

November 14, 2002

Pre-show: I don’t recall ever feeling this kind of edgy, freaked-out way before an opening. I just need to let go (or use) all this pent-up energy, frustration, anxiety, and just plain nerves!! The group warm up will be important; I’m going to try and get in there early and shake some shit out of myself so I can focus.

Post-show: OK. I can breathe again! Actually, I’m very pleased. It proved to be a lovely, lively show – with all of the fun and energy between everyone that we had found during the discovery process of rehearsal, but more polished. The audience seemed to respond very positively. They appeared to be having as much fun watching us as we had playing.

I can think of a number of really good lessons for me in this process right off the bat. It’s nothing earth shattering or epiphanous, really, just basic stuff that in the heat of creation sometimes gets lost. I need to simply breathe, and to trust, both others and myself, more freely. Sometimes, the ways in which I allow myself to over-stress about things is really laughable. Although I also find interesting how the most adverse conditions on other levels (personal, health sometimes) can bring out an even sharper, brighter performance. It’s something I’ve noted before, but it seems especially important to look at it here. I wonder if it’s the same with everyone committed to work as an actor. I imagine it is; I’ve
noticed it as a producer and director as well. At any rate, the stress of opening
my first Shakespeare is officially over and I can relax and do what I love best:
explore the dimensions of my character and my relationships in performance as
we grow and play over the next two weeks. Certainly, with all the other “outside”
factors to contend with, (daily class work, health, family issues and
responsibilities) it should be an interesting two weeks!

November 15, 2002

OK. Second night. The house was kind of quiet, but clearly attentive.
(Of course first night is always filled with a lot of folks that love you!)

I had mixed feelings about the first act. I was finding all kinds of new
levels in my first scene with Rugby, Simple, and Caius. Our timing with each
other was really on the mark; it was a great time! But then in my initial scene with
Falstaff I flubbed a part of my monologue that just pulled me out of the moment
for a nanosecond. HATE IT when that happens! The scene actually was smooth
for the remainder, so the only real scar was my own ego as I lashed myself
mentally every chance I could.

The rest of the show seemed run smooth as well, I found new moments
in each scene and had fun playing. If anything, I would have to say that the
pacing felt a bit slow overall; probably the smaller, quieter house contributed, but
then, we have to lead the way with our own energy!

November 16, 2002

We had a great run tonight. Our pace and energy was back up,
everyone seemed sharp and we just all got together and played well as a
company. Everyone seemed to be discovering new moments. In Act 1, JJ was all over the place, new discoveries of his world and elements in his relationship with me; it was a real hoot to just jump onto the canoe and ride out the current of his river!! Everything was so playful and sweet. Even the audience seemed to be giddy and enraptured along with us!

Act 2 just took off from there. It really rocked! I was noticing subtle adjustments with everyone, but nothing out of character or against the soul of the show. No self-indulgent toying with the material. Just a real settling and collective sense of trust in the play that made every moment feel very real and alive!

Our *Orlando Sentinel* review had come out today. (It always holds more cachet than it should, being the primary, though not the only, news source in the area.) A lot of actors don’t like to read reviews while in production, if at all. I’ve always read them, but I try and keep them in perspective; after all, it is just one person’s opinion, expressed with varying degrees of alacrity. At any rate, a few of the actors, including myself, received some nice comments from Betsy (in her signature back-handed compliment kind of way). But unfortunately, she was pretty brutal about the bulk of the production. I won’t argue the merits of her commentary; in truth, it’s too difficult to be objective as I’m in the thick of things. What I loved, though, is how everyone came in, most of whom had read the paper today, and blew off any ghosts or fears or concerns and just kept playing our moments, and enjoying our shared reality of life in Windsor. Screw critics! We had a great show today!
November 17, 2002

We had a fairly typical, quiet but attentive Sunday matinee house today. My mom, husband and kids came, so it was an extra charge for me. Something very particular that I noticed about the run in general, however: the energy of the smaller, quieter house really rubbed off on a lot of the performances today. I was hyper, because my family was out there. But I also felt like the air around the stage was filled with sticky syrup, and I could feel how much energy it took to push through it. JJ and I really tore through our scenes; it felt like we were on fire! We just kept driving through moment to moment. It was really great fun. Unfortunately, there were some in our company today who were less successful at breaking through the doldrums, and our pace suffered as a result, especially in the first act. Things seemed to pick up a bit through the second act, but I'll bet that ultimately, our time ran long; it felt long. Nevertheless, everyone in the audience still seemed to enjoy the show overall, and we were having a good time. It’s hard to believe that we’re at the end of the first weekend already!

Be was also in the audience today, and I’ll include her notes and comments in tomorrow’s entry after I speak with her.

November 18, 2002

My feedback from Be was very positive, very encouraging. She really enjoyed the show yesterday. She felt that my diction was much clearer and my intent and relationships much more specific. Besides my improved vocal clarity, she noted that my choices were strong and clear-cut as well. All of the intent in my relationships was clearer to her, the specificity deeper. In particular, my
relationship with Caius, which she had had difficulty with earlier, was much plainer and understandable to her. (I feel that way about a number of the characters, especially some of the other smaller roles like myself: we’ve really worked on developing a breadth to our relationships that extends beyond the world of the immediate scene being played.)

Be only had a couple of areas she’d like to see further expanded upon. Some of the class distinctions between myself and those higher up the social ladder need to be sharpened – from both sides, as Be saw it. All I can do is to make sure that I do my part keeping my awareness and behavior at an appropriate social level depending upon whom I’m with whenever I am interacting.

November 20, 2002

We had a really fun show tonight! Even with the two days off, everyone seemed to jump right into Windsor World fully and with both feet firmly planted in our 17th century reality! The energy was as sharp and exciting as our opening had been. The rest seems to have been beneficial for the entire company. Quite a few of the students from the class I teach were there tonight as well as students from some of the other grad students’ classes. It was the standard “student night,” so the audience was quite loud and raucous. The audience was quite responsive and the energy onstage was sky high! It made it extra fun to let loose and play!

One of the things I played around with tonight was my physicality. My walk was definitely unsteadier; I had almost a waddling, rolling sort of gait. I also
really played more with the “simple-mindedness” of my character. It really seemed to add to the contrast between myself and the other characters. Additionally, it gave me some other options to play at various moments. It’s not that I played Quickly “stupid,” but rather more intellectually naïve while still being an astute judge of character. For some reason, it also appeared to lull the men I deal with in the show into a false sense of trust . . . and, at the same time, gave me in return a real sense of power over them! What a blast!

I found a really nice moment in my first scene with Falstaff where I was able to point out that he is easily as dense as he (and others) perceives ME to be! JJ, of course, is brilliant at just riding the wave and really talking and listening. He just played right along with everything I gave him. The audience response was gratifying too, which always adds to the fun!

Overall, I’m just having such a great time with this show. It’s pretty clear to me that a lot of the stress and frustrations of the past weeks have been a factor of the family stresses combined with trying to fulfill the requirements of full-time studies all on nearly no sleep whatsoever. I’ve certainly noticed an emotional fragility in myself and during this particular process that is different than anything I’ve undergone before. Nevertheless, despite the frustrations and my overly-dramatic tirades (usually, thank God, when closeted off somewhere by myself!) I have found this to be a truly joyous experience.

November 21, 2002

Pre-show: This afternoon I got some terrific notes and additional ideas to play with onstage from Kate! The major changes are in my blocking. On my
two full stage crosses (the first one to Mistress Page in order to introduce Robin to her and the second cross when I go to pick up Mistress Page to take her to Mistress Ford’s at 8am in the morning.) Kate wants me to go ahead and break the fourth wall again, really use the audience and include them in our plans. In particular, if the slip stage is still out, and they are having problems moving it back, take advantage of the time lag to interact more with the audience. (It should be a hoot, and harkens me back to my days in the street for SAK at renaissance fairs! I can’t wait to try it out at this evening’s performance!)

**Post-show:** Indeed, the slip stage got stuck again, but the actors moving it had a lazze of sorts going, so we just held our entrance a few moments. It will be nice, however, to have some ideas to fall back on in case of continued technical difficulties!

The rest of the show went really well. There was a nice flow and energy throughout. The house was a bit quiet, and a few of the other actors said they felt out of sorts, but I didn’t feel any of that in any of the scenes that I was involved.

No doubt, at least some of the stresses are attributable to this hellish week of finals prep as well as auditions and callbacks for next spring’s shows. Everyone is physically and emotionally spent. Everyone seems to have a little “private Idaho” of their own that they are wrestling with as we roll rapidly to the end of this show and the semester. It’s extremely demoralizing. Nevertheless, I am trying very hard not to let my own frustrations get me down . . . especially this week; it’s important to me that I channel my energies so that any impact they may have on my work (and I believe that it has certainly fueled various moments)
in *Merry Wives* is a constructive and positive one. As this will be my last show at UCF, I want to make sure that my last performance is solid and not let outside irritants diminish it.

**November 22, 2002**

Very bizarre vibe from the audience tonight. Sometimes they would be laughing hysterically, almost manically, at the goings-on on stage . . . then they would just as suddenly seem like they had fallen completely asleep. The first part of Act 1 seemed to be odd energy-wise for us. It felt like entire sections would go smoothly, and then it was like suddenly the transmission fell out and the show would shift jerkily before settling back into gear. Everyone, including me, seemed to garble at least one or two lines, our tongues jumping cues or smothering replies. The blips were covered pretty well, and by Act 2 everyone seemed to have revved back up to speed. By then, our energy seemed to have revived and the show had a nice strong finish. The audience reaction was very positive at the end, one of our more vocal houses in that respect, so it’s all good.

**November 23, 2002**

As usual, the second Saturday night was a totally rocking performance!! It has always seemed to me that the second Saturday is where the “stew” finally sets and all the flavors meld perfectly . . . and tonight was no exception. Although I can only speak from my perspective, my understanding from talks with other cast members is that everyone was reaching new levels and depth and fuller connection in their scenes between each other. It really felt like an outstanding
effort by everyone, and as much fun as we’ve had playing all along, this was a really special performance.

I must say, it always surprises me how the most adverse conditions (illness, exhaustion, personal disappointment or strife) can very often bring out terrific performances. Maybe it’s the relishing of the opportunity to “escape” our real worlds for a while; the more completely that we pour ourselves into another time and place the further we are from whatever is hurting here. I don’t know, but pouring 180% into the show tonight was certainly good therapy for me!

November 24, 2002

Final show of the run today. It was a quiet, but attentive crowd, pretty typical Sunday matinee. The show went pretty well, if a tad slow. I think everyone was a bit sad to see the end of this production, I know I was. It’s been so much fun to work on this show with everyone, especially JJ and those actors whom I’d had the chance to work with in other productions. I’ll miss getting to play on stage here, but I’m glad that I had the chance to end my work here with such a great role.
CONCLUSION

There were so many fascinating levels of inquiry for me to approach as I began my exploration into the world of Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Many of them, of course, were of the sort that, as an actor developing a role, I would expect to investigate. That this was my first role in a complete production of a Shakespearean work made it already of special value to me. Thus, my expectation from the start was that this would be, above all, a learning experience like no other. I was not to be disappointed.

To begin, I would like to point out some of the areas of my greatest learning in this overall process. These are things that came to light during our rehearsals and my journaling as well as within the course of my research. I feel that each element, in its own way, impacted my thinking and the development of my character. These elements also contain lessons that I’ve taken with me in the intervening years since our production. They have, to one extent or another, continued to serve me well. The primary areas that I’d like to focus upon are that of movement, vocalization, trust, and balance.

In going back over my journal entries, I’m aware of what seems to be a continuous struggle to keep a strong body/mind connection together with overall physical endurance in the midst of a grueling full-time graduate student / show rehearsal / full-time mother schedule. Often operating in a sleep deprived state became the standard. However, with only a few day’s exceptions due to some demanding stage combat break-fall class work (noted specifically in my journal),
the bulk of the body and movement work we were doing daily with our professor, Chris Neiss, was tremendously valuable. What the work brought to my attention most clearly was not only the irreplaceable value of maintaining a strong physical core to support the rest of the body’s work; the work also clarified how improv and exploration into different physical intensities and levels, speeds and weights can color and enhance the development of a character. In terms of the purely physical, it’s not about weight or looks but rather strength, endurance, and power.

This is a value that I have worked hard to maintain and strengthen ever since. It proved essential a year and a half later when I played an over-padded, but wildly athletic, swing-dancing Nana in the Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Festival’s production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* in the spring of 2004. Without the proper strength conditioning, the physical demands of the role would have been incredibly daunting. The role also necessitated a high level of vocal potency and versatility, particularly as I began experimenting with possible voices – various pitches, levels, and intensities – I could use that would set Nana apart as an indelible character. I feel that I owe much of my success to the same work we were doing in class and rehearsals previous to and during *MMW* at the University. It proved to be a continuation of and an enhancement to my own developing process.

There was one more unexpected “gift” from this process: it was a bud that burst into full blossom only later, after our show had closed. In combining my movement work in class with Chris and the direction I received from Kate in
rehearsals for *MMW*, I became aware of the distinctive power and strength of circular patterns in movement and blocking. It was something that I worked on with both of them as well as on my own. I would experiment with smaller and smaller circles, then larger and larger ones. I would alter my time and tempo; mix them up, spiral up, and then spiral back down -- getting a sense of the ever-changing energies I was creating. It was a fun exercise for me, an enjoyable game of sorts; I used it, as directed (and, I thought, well), within the construct of the show and my character. But this was to be a lesson that would return to delight me yet again.

My role in this show earned me an Irene Ryan scholarship nomination and I was honored to represent the University of Central Florida at the Kennedy Center / American College Theatre Festival Southeast Region IV competition in Savannah, Georgia in February 2003. I asked one of the older undergraduates, Ryan Jones, to be my partner for the scene work. He and I worked on a scene from Caryl Churchill’s *Ice Cream*, and I was then going to transition into a monologue of Queen Margaret’s from Shakespeare’s *King Henry VI Part III*. As we worked with our coach, faculty member Be Boyd, on the two pieces I was generally quite pleased with our progress. My only frustration was with myself; I was never quite satisfied with any of the transitions we worked up for me between the two selections. They never seemed quite natural or organic, and the leap between the two styles always seemed too abrupt and forced. It all started to come together for me during the drive from Orlando to Savannah. While I don’t remember exactly who drove with me, I do remember a lively conversation in the
car about internal vs. external character explorations and physical character traits that had helped (or hindered) our previous character developments. I also clearly remember talking about the circular blocking we had used in *MMW* specifically and my impression of the concept in general. I shared how freeing it had proved to be for me as I constructed Mistress Quickly. Much later that night, Ryan and I rehearsed for a while in one of the hotel rooms. It was, of course, ridiculously cramped. Due to the tight space, in order to transition from our ending passionate embrace in the duet scene, I needed to literally pirouette in place. It was kind of silly, and reminded me of a revolving door -- however, together with the force of my character in the first scene pushing Ryan's away, I discovered some fun and unexpected momentum with which I could work. It seemed to hint at some as yet unexplored possibilities. I decided to take a chance and try utilizing “the power of circles” to transition at the competition the next morning.

The next morning, the first rounds were held in small meeting rooms at a downtown hotel. The space was only slightly bigger and roomier than the hotel room from the night before, but we did have some clear floor space -- approximately an eight by twelve foot space directly in front of a small table where the judges sat. My push away from Ryan was able to enlarge itself somewhat, the pirouette expanding into a small but decisive arc around before Queen Margaret confronts Henry. (I was careful to control myself vocally, as the judges were within six feet of me.) It felt like a strange, almost filmic performance due to the highly controlled vocal work necessary; what I also discovered however was that the circular movement energized me in unexpected ways and
gave me an emotional impetus and springboard I hadn’t felt before. I was intrigued and I felt good about our presentation of the pieces. We were thrilled to be among the sixteen out of around three hundred duet teams passed on to the semi-finals to be held a couple of hours later. In fact, continuing our department’s history of excellence, six of the semi-finalist teams were from the University of Central Florida.

For the semi-final round, we were walked down the road to another venue. We went from the small meeting rooms to the Lucas Theatre for the Arts -- a 1920’s era restored 1200-seat proscenium theatre complete with side and back balconies. It literally took my breath away to walk in and see the magnitude of the space. We were, of course, given some minutes, albeit, en masse, to walk the stage and accustom ourselves to the acoustics in the hall. Our stage manager reminded us we would have a nearly full house for the competition absorbing sound once we began.

It was here that a most wonderful synchronicity occurred for me. It includes the second area of my greatest learning in this process: the area that concerns my vocal work. For me, it tied together so much. It reminded me of the power of experimentation and play in movement and the variable power of circular patterns. It brought to mind my previous training in street theatre and my use of the Lessac “call” technique. And finally, it included the demanding vocal work and focus on support, clarity and breath that Kate had been re-instilling in me throughout classes, rehearsal and production.
We were not given time to actually rehearse freely in the space. There was only time to quickly “feel it out” and get a sense of the space before we were called to “go to places”. So that when our turn onstage finally occurred, it was necessary to call upon all my street savvy and ability to react organically to any situation (much as Mistress Quickly must have needed in her daily scramble to make a way for herself in her world), to come into play and serve my own needs. I found it, I was surprised to note, especially freeing. It was like stepping off an abyss into the unknown. Suddenly, we had all of this room to spread out. The scene went very well; it was at the end when, for me at least, real magic happened. After the deep kiss at the end of the scene, I flung Ryan away from me as we had rehearsed and pushed off into the most expansive, intense, full-on diva arc I could manage in that space -- and there was room for plenty on that huge stage. As I was in the midst of my circular movement, I literally felt my spine articulate into an interior corset of steel will. My arc took me closer to the end of the apron than we had been during the scene, but still within the onstage lighting, and I mentally placed Henry straight ahead of me, just over the heads of the first few rows of audience. As I came around to confront Henry, it was as if some sort of energy outside of myself came into me. The intensity and the clear vituperative power of this Margaret was so strong, so palpable, that I could hear a collective intake of breath from the house and sense the entire room being blown back like someone caught in a wind tunnel or the guy in the Dolby Stereo commercials. I can’t explain it other than to say that there seemed to me (upon later reflection) to be an energy explosion that was clearly facilitated by the delicate balance of
pointed, specific objectives, intense focus, well-supported breath, and the mystery of the power in movement. My journey in that particular circle at that particular moment took me well beyond a simple transition between acting pieces. It transformed and changed me in what appeared to be a nearly molecular way. After completing that arc, I wasn’t just acting another role; I had become somebody else entirely, channeling the essence of a Queen. This lesson, forged as it was in class and production both, provided further tangible reward in our being selected to be among the final eight teams to move on to the finals. It was a great honor indeed.

I referenced above the vocal lessons I gleaned from our rehearsal/production and class time that I have utilized in my later endeavors since our production ended. I’d like to return to and address this second area of my learning briefly at this time.

I had entered the theatre department as a theatre professional with over twenty years in theatre, ten of those years focusing primarily on street theatre. Intense vocal work, in particular, work with Lessac’s “call” technique had been a staple of those years. However, like the recharging of a battery, having the luxury of an additional two years of daily lessons and guided vocal instruction along with the requisite constant practice, warm-ups, and repetition allowed me to discover new growth and development in my own work. I found it to be a vital tool in preparation for the role. It was also a pointed reminder of the essential need in keeping the voice strong through daily efforts; the vocal muscles need to be worked out as religiously as I do the other muscles of my body. The necessity of
proper warm-ups especially, and allowing for play and experimentation in the
development of a character’s “sound” is also a lesson I’ve kept close at hand. As
with the body, the voice needs proper hydration and rest in order to stay in peak
condition. Committing to a regular routine of physical and vocal maintenance is
not just an enhancement to the artist’s work, it is the very foundation to creating
the art. Along with this, by learning and then continuing to use the proper
physical support of the breath, an outlet is provided whereby even during rough
patches (as during our dress rehearsals when I caught whatever flu bug was
running rampant through the department) one can hopefully carry one’s voice
safely and clearly through to the audience.

Finally, the specificity in the detailed work we did on dialect, including the
decisions we made regarding which sound substitutions to use and which to
discard for the sake of clarity, were an important element in my development of
my character’s sound. In its own way, it helped me in my further defining qualities
and parameters of my personality. As I became more confident in the dialect and
comfortable with which sounds we were keeping in place, my sense of my
character sharpened tremendously. In the years since, I have used similar
techniques of experimentation and pointed sound specificity in my development
of other characters. It has been especially useful when a more unusual character
voice is called for, as it was in *The Velveteen Rabbit* and again this past year, as
I played another character with a clear dialect, Ruth Berlau in *Brecht in L.A.*
The third area of my learning process that I’d like to address is that of trust. It’s actually as easy as taking a breath. I laughed when I looked back at what I wrote in my journal on November 3\textsuperscript{rd}:

…Sometimes I think my greatest challenge as an actor is to just take a deep breath and relax. I want to be “on top of things” and to automatically understand everything, to figure out the details to everything right away. I need to trust myself more and accept that some things are better discovered more gradually, more organically. (103-104)

Indeed. It seems to be one of the hardest of my lessons to learn -- perhaps not just onstage but in life as well -- and the irony of it speaks volumes to me. Firstly, there is irony in the pure provable truth of the statement. Every time that I do let go and just trust to the moment and my ability to respond to that moment, the results have always been beyond my wildest expectations, and the stress factor generally so much lower! Also, it seems that it’s not even the “onstage” time when this particular “malady” strikes me, when I struggle the most with this demon. Actually being onstage with a live audience tends to free me in a way that rehearsals rarely do. I have always felt that I “played better than I practiced” and was once even teasingly accused by a director of “not really ‘bringing it’ until there was an audience in the house.” Of course, this is not really true. I work long and hard in the rehearsal process both with the cast and director and on my own. However, I have noted on my own that a live audience does indeed seem to spark a freedom in me that is not as apparent or as accessible as I would like during rehearsals.
This is an area of my performance work that I know I will want and need to continue developing. And it has been through this production, that I began to discover a stronger sense of the kind of ‘letting go” I need to develop that will help make the rehearsal process even more productive for myself. I want to persevere in improving my interactions with the other actors and the director as well as stop putting so many preconceived expectations upon myself so that our explorations can be full of greater possibilities and choices. Ultimately, I was delighted to re-discover by the end of this production (and it was even clearer by the end of the writing of this monograph document) that what has been the cornerstone of my most basic, organic work still held true in this case. That even after all the research and reading, the questions and struggles within the act of creation, it’s still about releasing all of that and simply stepping on the stage and really talking with the person or people in front of you, really listening actively to them -- what they are actually saying verbally as well as the non-verbal cues they are giving you -- and then reacting honestly and fully in the moment as your character. It’s about trusting both them and yourself with that act of spontaneous creation.

It’s this last aspect that I feel ties so clearly to the fourth area of my learning that I’d like to examine: balance. When I speak of balance, I speak of it within a very wide spectrum of definition. There were so many facets of this attribute to explore. I learned about balancing different vocal elements like dialect and sound to provide for clarity in my diction. I learned about the need to balance various physical traits and quirks in order to develop a character that had a life
and a sense of movement and carriage that was built upon and yet distinct from my own. I learned about the importance of balancing the needs of the text with the audience’s need to comprehend and follow what might sometimes be unfamiliar heightened language. I also learned that I could (with effort) balance my own natural curiosity and impatience for “result” with, instead, a deeper focus on taking in the human moment for what it is, and then, luxuriating in that moment, allowing myself to respond more organically. As much as I love the research side of the equation, the importance lies in understanding that while research and the information that it brings can be and is, in many ways, vital, to constructing a well-rounded character, it’s still about who you are, who you are speaking with, and what each of you wants and needs…as simple as that.

That being said, I was excited to be using the role of Mistress Quickly as a thesis role, because it enabled me to delve more deeply into some of the sociological details of the period; I relished the opportunity to dig in deeper to my subject and explore its deepest corners. The social and cultural development of man over the centuries has always been a favorite sidebar interest of mine, with the various ebbs and flows, similarities and differences among peoples and nations as a source of constant bemusement. It seems the more we change the more we stay the same in many respects.

But back to MMW and Mistress Quickly. It did not take long before I began to see some very intriguing parallels. We needed to make relevant a piece of classical “old-fashioned” theatre. At least, something that might be deemed so by our modern-day, somewhat theatrically naïve, audience, containing a high
number of first time Shakespeare-goers among the student body. It was the first Shakespeare production the University had attempted to put on in a number of years. How do we help our audience understand and enjoy a romp in the past even as they bring their 21st century sensibilities to the story? Contrary to the way in which many others may decide to approach the material, I don’t think it always means simply changing the circumstance, time and place, per se. While that is often done with the Bard’s work, and done well, it can sometimes seem gratuitous.

A deep parallel resonated for me. By setting us up as not merely opening at the top of Shakespeare’s Act I and proceeding straight from the top of the show -- but instead, beginning with an improvisational prologue as an itinerant company (including a “false start” miscue of the wrong Shakespeare production which results in us starting the real show yet again) we created a specific life and time not only for ourselves, but for our audience as well. It was a life that had certain similarities. For both our Orlando audience, as well as it would have been for an audience in the provinces, the opportunity to see Shakespeare (“classical”, “old-fashioned”) was an infrequent one. Our audience today has certainly seen women onstage before, so it’s not the relative novelty it would have been in the 1660s, in particular in the provinces. What was amazing to me in our audience’s reaction was the combination of prurience and, I don’t know how to call it, but an expectation of a certain degree of propriety and decorum within a piece of “holy” Shakespeare. I don’t want to be flip about this, because some people seemed very concerned about it, but frankly, I was rather taken aback. From both of the
classes at the university that I taught (a smaller acting class and a 300-person Theatre Survey class in which I was a Teaching Assistant) I had a surprising number of students approach me simply SHOCKED at the sexual innuendo and physically demonstrative behaviors in the show (and these are hip, young twenty-somethings)! After all, they protested, “THIS WAS SHAKESPEARE!” Others seemed not so much appalled as titillated, saying, “They didn’t know the old boy had it in him!” In both cases, I imagined how much more agog they would have been had they been exposed to the undoubtedly comparatively obscene possibilities a true Restoration production might have offered! Not that I felt that our “tamer by comparison” production needed to be anything else. I really think it was a perfect representation of the blend of the teasing innuendo and innocent charm and joy of the show while at the same time delicately playing on some of the more daring sexual elements – with, of course, a cautionary word for transgressors thrown in to keep the Puritans happy! I enjoyed being able to start to connect dots such as these, through the ages, between the centuries, crossing cultural boundaries; it’s what made this such a satisfying process for me.

Examining the changing perceptions of women – by men and by their own selves, through the ages – has been another illuminating experience. I limited my view during the rehearsal and production process to that which would best serve the task at hand, and narrowed my scope at that time accordingly. Since then, I have had the luxury to be able to discover further parallels, explanations, wander down paths that open up doors to entire new worlds. I found the information on family life in the 1500 – 1880s by Lawrence Stone, which I’ve already mentioned
earlier in this paper, particularly fascinating when I looked at a comparison with the women of the Greek classical period: another period of time when women were not permitted to portray their own gender on stage. In fact, that women of all three eras – Classical, Elizabethan, and Neo-classical or Restoration – were operating in patriarchal systems is a given: women have had to toe the patriarchal line ever since the power of Gaia was first usurped by other, masculine gods, well before the sophistication of the Golden Age of the Greeks. For many cultures in our world today, it still has not changed very much at all.

When comparing Stone’s descriptions of the various family structures in the Elizabethan and Restoration times, I was struck by the similarity in basic form and functionality with the structures in place well over 2000 years earlier. I was fortunate in finding some material on the Greek family structure that was taken from Herodotus’ writings, an historian, who wrote in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. in an edited volume by Helene Foley. In Classical times, as with the Elizabethan and early restoration periods, all property, of course, belonged solely to the husband and the male line exclusively, even that which was obtained through marriage. The wife and any children were his property as well. The function of the wife was to bear heirs and a potential labor source for the husband’s use and keep the home. In ancient Greece, as in mid-1660s England, there were great anxieties surrounding the marriage of daughters of rich or famous men -- the matches were fraught with potential land mines and challenges -- and it was always about the political or economic connection being made by the family, never about any sort of emotional connection. Herodotus
makes a powerful observation and I believe it is reflected not only in the plays portraying strong women emanating out of classical Greece, but also in fact, in our own relatively “fluffy” Shakespearean comedy. His comment is in praise of “women who act” versus what he terms “passive women.”¹ Contrary to what many of his countrymen felt, he wrote that strong, active women don’t “…exacerbate strains implicit in the way marriage and society works…”² as much as the passive women seem to! On the other hand, the strong women seem to be “…working to guarantee stability of both family and culture.”³ Most importantly, and I believe this to be especially pertinent as I compared this perspective of women with the Mistresses Quickly, Page, Ford and Anne and the world they lived in: active, strong women who not only teach succeeding generations the societal conventions, but also “…remind their male peers of the rules within which the whole society is supposed to act!”⁴ Even further, Herodotus continues that he considers it completely acceptable to go against the wishes of a man if a societal convention is being breached in any way, as it is perceived to be the woman’s ultimate responsibility to guide the man back onto the correct path.⁵ There is no question in my mind that Shakespeare meant these incredibly strong, incredibly active women to “gently guide” their male peers along the path to a greater understanding of proper societal behavior!

There were some marked differences I’d like to point out between a wife of Classical times and the wives of our production. Although the lower classes had a somewhat similar freedom of movement out of doors (needing to work in the fields, the market, for others, etc.), the wives of Windsor had a much freer
existence than a woman of equal status would have had in ancient Greece. Women of an upper or any sort of “respectable” class in Greece would have been expected to have kept themselves out of public life completely -- to have no public reputation whatsoever, good or bad. They were expected to remain in the home, taking care of all the domestic duties (with, presumably, the help of slaves) weaving, cooking, supervising the running of the household, and rearing the children. If they went out, it was supervised and only with other women or to attend female-centric religious rituals. They were most likely illiterate, or near to it, as education was extremely limited, except as to what pertained to domestic duties. Most importantly -- and one of the clear differences between these two eras -- was that the “…concept of female virtue and male honor…depended on the respectability, public silence and invisibility of the Athenian wife.” It was fascinating to me how so much of the familial and public social structure, including how women were portrayed dramatically, both literarily and practically onstage, was so very similar. At the same time, the strictures guiding their behavior seemed to be very different. Socrates was possibly the only Greek, save Pythagoras (perhaps the only man for centuries), to argue that the virtue of man and woman was the same, and the women of their time were treated accordingly. However, considering the stiffly authoritarian religious world the English women of 1660 lived in, it's somewhat surprising how much freedom they had finally managed for themselves. While they were already some decades or more behind their sisters in France and Italy, whose movement into both the renaissance and the neo-classical eras had begun earlier, the women of 1600s
England had begun to make themselves heard publicly and that public power was gradually increasing all the time. Nevertheless, in terms of family, the lives of the well off of the seventeenth century were ones where the marital relations were relatively remote, with both spouses tending to lead very separate lives. Unlike poorer families that many times worked together to make ends meet, well-to-do families (like the Pages and the Fords) often lived nearly separate lives to a great extent. Each would often have their own bedroom and servants; generally the marriage had been a political or economic transaction to begin with, and “…the expectations of felicity from marriage were pragmatically low…the pair did not need to see much of each other, either in elite circles, where they could go their own way, or among the plebs, where leisure activities were segregated.”

So, unlike their Greek counterparts, it was quite common and expected that these wives would be going out and about in town, and if they happened upon their husbands along the way, then it was only to greet them or perhaps to plan on meeting up at dinner at the common home. This implies one of two things. On one hand, it’s been observed that as the matches so rarely ever grew into bonds of true affection (although it did certainly happen) that an ambivalence developed where the woman did her wifely duty, while the husband would be free to “…find sexual alternatives through casual liaisons…” if necessary. This was considered completely acceptable. In an era where “…there was a less than fifty-fifty chance that the husband and wife would both remain alive more than a year after the departure from home of the last child,” marriage was rarely seen as more than a vehicle for reproduction, rarely long-term companionship. It is thought that in
most cases, however, that there was at least an understood level of trust and, presumably, some degree of emotional connectedness (if not actual intimacy) between spouses, that allowed for the freedom of movement without constant suspicions, one that clearly has been established between the Pages, but which is lacking between Ford and his wife. The societal taboo against women in public which made that trust a moot point in Greece seems to be the only way Master Ford would see clear to trust his own wife. Hopefully through this lesson the women play on Falstaff, Ford is able, in the end, to truly see his own folly as well and repent his jealous rages.

The fairly cynical and gloomy perspective of the society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seems to belie the visions of “romantic love and sexual intrigue” woven into the literature and poetry of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. There’s a very good reason for it, as it turns out. Rather than being merely a fantasy, it simply was a picture that existed within only a very specific, limited social group -- where it had always existed since medieval times -- that of the royal classes. It’s only here where young men and women were “…thrown together, away from parental supervision and in a situation of considerable freedom…as they performed their duties…they also had a great deal of leisure…in the enclosed hot-house atmospheres of these great houses…love intrigues flourished as nowhere else.”11 So these were not idle fantasies…but a version of the sort of “celebrity-fueled fodder” we purchase at the drugstore today. And those who lived the lives of quieter desperation ate it up. Then and now. In addition to the “Love Matches of the ‘Rich and Famous’,
there were also those individuals who either because of late marriage (with both parents already dead) or a second or third marriage or a poorer person with little to care how their match went, were able to marry who and how they wished. This was not very common, and more so for men than for women, but it did happen.

The fact remains that this was a harsh period in which to live and create a life for yourself, much less a family. Stone lists four factors that he feels are crucial to understanding the familial relationships, particularly prior to 1660:

…the lack of a unique mother figure in the first two years of life, the constant loss of close relatives, siblings, parents, nurses and friends through premature death, the physical imprisonment of the infant in tight swaddling-clothes in early months, and the deliberate breaking of the child’s will [first by the harshest physical beating and later by overwhelming psychological pressures] all contributed to a ‘psychic numbing’ which created many adults whose primary responses to others were at best a calculating indifference and at worst a mixture of suspicion and hostility, tyranny and submission, alienation and rage.

It is not being claimed that everyone in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries suffered from this psychic numbing…there were certainly plenty of cheerful and affectionate Wives of Bath in real life as well as in the works of Shakespeare. But it is remarkable how difficult it is to find in the correspondence and memoirs of that period that ease and warmth which is so apparent in the eighteenth century. So far as the surviving evidence goes, England between 1500 and 1660 was relatively cold, suspicious, and violence-prone.¹²

With this in mind, and even considering that any change that may have been taking place at the time was at an admittedly glacial pace, it still made the placement of our production after the 1660s seem such a right fit. The energy, the excitement, the potential for change was so palpable, just as the heady (and frightening) years of a new millennium are for us today. It all just seemed very synchronous to me, very organic and basic, making many of my choices crystal
clear. Certainly we, as human creatures, have changed little over the past few millennia, despite our pretensions otherwise. For all our culture and intellectual snobbery, the comedy (and what is also not so funny) in *Merry Wives* is that in fact, all of these types and situations and relationships do exist, have existed, will continue to exist…and that we will never seem to actually learn from our individual or collective follies.

Regardless, these are all people who are living fully in the present. They know they must, because the future is always a huge question for them. In addressing my role, I realized that as a secondary character, I would ordinarily have only a minimal impact on the essential thrust of the show. After all, although providing the physical catalyst, I am not actually involved in two of the three climaxes. But with my similar role, as messenger and confidante to Anne in the romantic sub-plot, it really helps color and define my character as something of a softie, a nice contrast to the manipulative woman we see working with the ladies against Falstaff. As Mistress Quickly, in this world I’ve created, my life in Windsor has been, in many ways, leading me to this time. I’m getting on in years, not old yet, but I do want to ensure that I’ll have someplace comfortable in my later years. As street smart and calculating as I am, and as sincerely as I feel that I care for Mistress Anne, it’s only natural that I would be hoping that she’d find a place for me in her household when she married. (Okay…full disclosure…I’ve been speaking with her about it in her chamber….)

While it seems pretty clear to me that Mistress Ford deems me just some foolish servant, I know that Mistress Page has a greater understanding of my
virtues and good traits and that we share a degree of trust. When I do her bidding, it's from my heart; for Mistress Ford, it's just for the money. That's how I divide people up in my life; it's how I've always managed to get by in difficult times. Of course, if the people I care for want to help me out, I have no problem with that! However, I'm a strong woman. I have taken care of myself, as many a woman has over the centuries, without a man as my primary source of protection. I have learned how to make my way by working for others. I deal in information and access. My back story includes wet nurse and scullery maid. According to the script, I'm also a housekeeper, cook, nurse, laundrywoman, washer, wringer…. I imagine that if need be, my Mistress Quickly could/would adapt myself to any occupation offered me! A complication in this particular case with the ladies is that I am quite a bit taken by this rustic knight. He seems to be the perfect fit for my Quickly's passion and energy. The challenge for my character, then, is to make sure that my own lusts don't distract me from the duties I've been charged to carry out neither for the ladies nor in my hopeful plans for Anne.

I started my analysis by saying that I thought the spine, the seed of the play lay in the word, "desire." That it was, quite simply, a play about each and every one of us driven passionately to seek our objectives. Truly, the clarity of that comes back to me as I look at every character, every scene. Undeniably, Mistress Quickly is a woman of great desires and passions -- sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting -- and in her struggle to get by in her crazy, convoluted world, I could see that it was as easily not just her story, or the
story of the Fords and Pages or Falstaff or even the town of Windsor itself.
Because to me, the story, the lesson, that is Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is in many ways the lesson man has been trying to learn, perhaps since the beginning of time – no doubt it is part of the original lesson of Eden as well:
Even if you don’t get everything you desire, you often get what you deserve. The trick is learning to make do with that. It’s a trick I don’t doubt that Mistress Quickly can master.
APPENDIX A
WORKING SCRIPT
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

ACT I. SCENE I. [Windsor. Before Page's house.]

[Enter JUSTICE SHALLOW, SLENTER, and SIR HUGH EVANS.]

SHALLOW.
Sir Hugh, persuade me not; if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, Esquire.

SLENTER.
In the county of Gloster, justice of peace.

SHALLOW.
Ay, cousin Slender.

SLENTER.
Ay, and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself 'armiger' in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, 'armiger,' 'Esquire.'

SHALLOW.
Ay, that I do; and have done any time these three hundred years.

SLENTER.
All his successors gone before him hath done't; and all his ancestors that came after him may.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Yes, py'r Lady. But that is all one. If Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements unto you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and compromises between you.

SHALLOW.
The Council shall hear it; it is a riot.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is not meet the Council bear a riot; there is no fear of God in a riot: the Council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of God, and not to hear a riot; take your vizards in that.

SHALLOW.
Ha! o' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is better that friends is the sword, and end it. And there is also another device in my prain, which peradventure prings good discretions with it;—there is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master George Page, which is pretty virginity.

SLENTER.
Mistress Anne Page! She has long hair, and speaks small like a woman.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is that very person for all the world, as just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold, and silver, is her grandate upon his death-bed (God deliver to a joyful resurrection!); when she is able to overtake seventeen years old. It were a good motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham Slender and Mistress Anne Page.
SHALLOW.
Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.

SHALLOW.
I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Seven hundred pounds and possiblities is goot gifts.

SHALLOW.
Well, let us see honest Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Shall I tell you a lie? I do despise a liar as I do despise one that is false, or as I despise one that is not true. The knight, Sir John, is there; and, I beseech you, be naizt by your wellwishes. I will peat the door for Master Page.

[Knocks.] What, ho! Got pless your house here?

PAGE [within].
Who's there?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Here is God's pleasure, and your friend, and Justice Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that peradventures shall tell you another tale, if matters grow to your likings.

[Enter PAGE.] PAGE.
I am glad to see your worship's well.

SHALLOW.
Master Page, I am glad to see you: much good do it your good heart! How doth good Mistress Page? - and I thank you always with my heart, ia; with my heart.

PAGE.
Sir, I thank you.

SHALLOW.
Sir, I thank you; by yea and no, I do.

PAGE.
I am glad to see you, good Master Slender.

EVANS.
(aside to Page) He comes to look upon your daughter. He has three thousand pound a year.

PAGE.
(aside to Evans) We'll quickly have it a match.

SLENDER.
How does your fallow greyhound, sir? I heard say he was outrun.
PAGE.
It could not be judged, sir.

SLENDER.
You'll not confess, you'll not confess.

SHALLOW.
That he will not. ‘Tis your fault, ‘tis your fault; tis a good dog.

PAGE.
A cur, sir.

SHALLOW.
Sir, he's a good dog, and a fair dog: can there be more said? he is good and fair.- Is Sir John Falstaff here?

PAGE.
Sir, he is within; and I would I could do a good office between you.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

SHALLOW.
He hath wrong'd me, Master Page.

PAGE.
Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

SHALLOW.
If it be confess'd, it is not redress'd: is not that so, Master Page? He hath wrong'd me; indeed he hath; at a word, he hath; believe me; Robert Shallow, esquire, saith he is wrong'd.

PAGE.
Here comes Sir John.

[Enter SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and PISTOL.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Now, Master Shallow - you'll complain of me to the king?

SHALLOW.
Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
But not kiss'd your keeper's daughter?

SHALLOW.
Tut, a pif! this shall be answer'd.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I will answer it straight; I have done all this; that is now answer'd.

SHALLOW.
The Council shall know this.
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
'Twere better for you if it were known in counsel: you'll be laugh'd at.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
'Pauca verba', Sir John, good worts.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Good worts! good cabbage.- Slender, I broke your head: what matter have you against me?

SLENDER.
Marry, sir, I have matter in my head against you: and against your cony-catching rascals, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol; they carried me to the tavern and made me drunk, and afterward picked my pocket.

BARDOLPH.
You Banbury cheese!

SLENDER.
Ay, it is no matter.

PISTOL.
How now, Mephistophilus!

SLENDER.
Ay, it is no matter.

NYM.
Slice, I say! 'pauca, pauca', slice! that's my humour.

SLENDER.
Where's Simple, my man?—can you tell, cousin?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Peace, I pray you. Now let us understand. There is three umpires in this matter, as I understand; that is, Master Page, 'fideliciet' Master Page; and there is myself, 'fideliciet' myself; and the three party is, lastly and finally, mine host of the Garter.

PAGE.
We three, to hear it and end it between them.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Fery goot: I will make a brief of it in my notebook; and we will afterwards erk upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Pistol,-

PISTOL.
He hears with ears.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
The tevil and his tam! what phrase is this, "He hears with ear"? why, it is affectations.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?
SLENDER.
Ay, by these gloves, did he - or I would never come in mine own great chamber again else - by these gloves.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Is this true, Pistol?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
No; it is false, if it is a pick-purse.

PISTOL.
Ha, thou mountain-foreigner! Sir John and master mine, I combat challenge of this rotten bilbo. - Word of denial in thy labor here; Word of denial: - froth and scum, thou liest!

SLENDER.
By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

NYM.
Be advised, sir, and pass good humour. I will say "marry, marry," with you, if you run the nuthook's humour on me; that is the very manner of it.

SLENDER.
By this hat, then, he in the red face had it; for though I cannot remember what I did when you made me drunk, yet I am not altogether an ass.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
What say you, Scarlett and John?

BARDOLPH.
Why, sir, for my part, I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five sentences.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is his five senses: fie, what the ignorance is!

BARDOLPH.
And being fap, sir, was, as they say, cashiered; and so conclusions passed the careers.

SLENDER.
Ay, you spake in Latin then too; but 'tis no matter: I'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick: if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
So God judge me, that is a virtuous mind.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
You hear all these matters denied, gentlemen; you hear it.

[Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE.]

PAGE.
It is dinner time. Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome. - Come, we have a hot venison-pasty to dinner: How now!
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Mistress Ford, I think your name is, if I mistake not. [Kisses her.]

MISTRESS FORD.
Your mistake, sir, is nothing but in the 'mistriss.' But my husband's name is Ford, sir.

FALSTAFF.
I shall desire you more acquaintance. The like of you, good Mistress Page.

MISTRESS PAGE.
With all my heart, Sir John. Come, dinner stays for us.

PAGE.
Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness.

[Exeunt all except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and EVANS.]

SLENDER.
O heaven! To meet Mistress Anne Page! I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here. [Enter SIMPLE.]
How now, Simple! where have you been? I must wait on myself, must I? You have not the Book of Riddles about you, have you?

SIMPLE.
Book of Riddles! why, did you not lend it to Alice Shortcake?

SHALLOW.
Come, cox; come, cox; we stay for you. A word with you, cox; marry, this, cox;—there is, as 'twere, a tender, a kind of tender, made afar off by Sir Hugh here. Do you understand me?

SLENDER.
Ay, sir, you shall find me reasonable; if it be so, I shall do that that is reason.

SHALLOW.
Nay, but understand me.

SLENDER.
So I do, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Give ear to his motions, Master Slender: I will description the matter to you, if you be capacity of it.

SLENDER.
Nay, I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray you, pardon me; he's a justice of peace in his country.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
But that is not the question: the question is concerning your marriage.

SHALLOW.
Ay, there's the point, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Marry, is it; the very point of it; to Mistress Anne Page.
SLENDER.
Why, if it be so, I will marry her upon any reasonable demands.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
But can you affection the enman? Let us command to know that of your mouth or of your lips; for divers philosophers hold that the lips is parcel of the mouth. Therefore, precisely, can you carry your good will to the maid?

SHALLOW.
Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

SLENDER.
I hope, sir, I will do as it shall become one that would do reason.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Nay, God's lords and his ladies, you must speak positable, if you can carry her your desires towards her.

SHALLOW.
That you must. Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?

SLENDER.
I will do a greater thing than that, upon your request, cousin. In any reason.

SHALLOW.
Nay, conceive me, conceive me, sweet coz: what I do is to pleasure you, coz. Can you love the maid?

SLENDER.
I will marry her, sir, at your request: but if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are married and have more occasion to know one another; I hope, upon familiarity will grow more contempt: but if you say, "marry her," I will marry her, that I am freely dissolved, and disolutely.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is a very discretion answer; save the fall is in the ort "dissolutely:" the ort is, according to our meaning, "resolutely:" his meaning is goot.

SHALLOW.
Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

SLENDER.
Ay, or else I would not have been hang'd, la.

SHALLOW.
Here comes fair Mistress Anne.
[Enter ANNE PAGE.]
Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

ANNE PAGE.
The dinner is on the table; my father desires your worship's company.

SHALLOW.
I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
O't's plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace. [Exeunt SHALLOW and EVANS.]
ANNE PAGE.
Will't please your worship to come in, sir?

SLENDER.
No, I thank you, forsooth, heartily; I am very well.

ANNE PAGE.
The dinner attends you, sir.

SLENDER.
I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth. - Go, sirrah, for all you are my man, go wait upon my cousin Shallow. [Exit SIMPLE.] A justice of peace sometime may be beholding to his friend for a man.

ANNE PAGE.
I may not go in without your worship: they will not sit till you come.

SLENDER.
I' faith, I'll eat nothing; I thank you as much as though I did.

ANNE PAGE.
I pray you, sir, walk in.

SLENDER.
I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised my shin th' other day with playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence, - and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. - Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears in th'town?

ANNE PAGE.
I think there are, sir; I heard them talk'd of.

SLENDER.
I love the sport well; but... You are afraid, if you see the bear loose, are you not? That's meat and drink to me, now. I have seen Sackerson, the Bear, loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain; but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shriek'd at it, that it pass'd: - but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favour'd rough things.

[Enter PAGE.]
PAGE.
Come, gentle Master Slender, come; we stay for you.

SLENDER.
I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

PAGE.
By cock and pie, you shall not choose, sir: come, come.

SLENDER.
Nay, pray you, lead the way.

PAGE.
Come on, sir.

SLENDER.
Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.
ANNE PAGE.
Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

SLENDER.
Truly, I will not go first; truly, la; I will not do you that wrong.

ANNE PAGE.
I pray you, sir.

SLENDER.
I'll rather be unmannerly than troublesome. You do yourself wrong, indeed, la. [Exeunt.]

ACT I. SCENE II. [Windsor. Before Page's house.] [Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Go your ways, and ask for Doctor Caius's house: and there dwells one Mistress Quickly, which is in the manner of his nurse, or his housekeeper, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, and his wringer.

SIMPLE.
Well, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Nay, it is better yet. Give her this letter; for it is a man that altogether's acquaintance with Mistress Anne Page: and the letter is, to desire and require her to solicit your Master Slender's desires to Mistress Anne Page. I pray you, be gone: I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and sease to come. [Exeunt.]

ACT I. SCENE III. [A room in the Garter Inn.]

[Enter FALSTAFF, HOST, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL, and ROBIN.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Methinks host of the Garter.

HOST.
What says my bully-rook? speak scholarly and wisely.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Truly, mine host, I must turn away some of my followers.

HOST.
Discard, bully Hercules; cashier: let them wag; trot, trot.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I sit at ten pounds a-week.

HOST.
Theu't an emperor, Caesar, Kesar, and Pheezar. I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Do so, good mine host.

HOST.
I have spoke; let him follow. Let me see thee froth and lime: I am at a word; follow. [Exit.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade: an old cloak makes a new jerkin; a winder's serving-man a fresh tapster. Go; adieu.

BARDOLPH.
It is a life that I have desired: I will thrive.

PISTOL.
O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

[Exit BARDOLPH.]

NYM.
He was gotten in drink: is not the humour conceited? His mind is not heroic, and there's the humour of it.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I am glad I am so acqut of this tinder-box: his thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer; he kept not time. Well, sir, I am almost out at heels. There is no remedy; I must cony-catch; I must shift.

PISTOL.
Young ravens must have food.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Which of you know Ford of this town?

PISTOL.
I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

PISTOL.
Two yards, and more.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
No quips now, Pistol:- indeed, I am in the waist two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift. Briefly, I do mean to make love to Ford's wife: I spy entertainment in her; she discourses, she carves, she gives the leer of invitation: I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behaviour, to be English'd rightly, is, "I am Sir John Falstaff's."

PISTOL.
He hath studied her well, and translated her well, will out of honesty into English.

NYM.
Will that humour pass?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.
PISTOL.
As many devils entertain; and, "To her, boy," say I.

NYM.
The humour rises; it is good: humour me the angels.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I have writ me here a letter to her; and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious ocelliades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL.
Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NYM.
I thank thee for that humour.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
O, she did so course o'er my exterior with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorched me up like a burning-glass! Here's another letter to her: she bears the paroxysm; she is a region in Guinea, all gold and bounty. I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall be catchers of theirs; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

PISTOL.
Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become, And by my side wear steel? then, Lucifer take all!

NYM.
I will run no base humour: here, take the humour-letter: I will keep the haviour of reputation.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF [to ROBIN].
Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly; Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores.- Rogues, hence! vanish like hailstones, go! Trudge, plod away, sidle, seek shelter, pack! Falstaff will learn the humour of the age - French thrift, you rogues; myself and planted page.

[Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN.]

PISTOL.
Let vultures gripe thy guts! for gourd and fullam holds,
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor:
Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack, Base Phrygian Turk!

NYM.
I have operations in my head, which be humour of revenge.

PISTOL.
Wilt thou revenge?

NYM.
By welkin and her star!

PISTOL.
With wit or steel?
NYM.
With both the humours, I: I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

PISTOL.
And I to Ford shall ake unfold
How Falstaff, valet vile,
His dove will prove, his gold will hold,
And his soft couch defile.

NYM.
My humour not cool: I will incense Page to deal with poison; I will possess him with yellowness, for the revolt of men is dangerous: that is my true humour.

PISTOL.
Thou art the Mars of malecontents: I second thee; troop on.

[Exeunt.]
MISTRESS QUICKLY.
A softly-sprightly man, is he not?

SIMPLE.
Ay, forsooth:

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
O, I should remember, Jim; does he not hold up his head, as it were, and strut in his gait?

SIMPLE.
Yes, indeed, does he.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Well, Heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune! Tell Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master.
Anne is a good girl, and I wish—

[Enter RUGBY.]

RUGBY.
Out, alas! here comes my master!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
We shall all be shent:—Run in here, good young man; go into that closet: He will not stay long. [Shuts SIMPLE in the closet.] What, John Rugby! John! what, John, I say! Go, John, go inquire for my master; I doubt He be not well, that He comes not home.

[Exit RUGBY.]
[Sings.] And down, down, adown-o, etc.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS.]

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vat is you sing? I do no like dese toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet 'un boiter vert', a box, a green-a box: do intend vat I speak? a green-a box.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Ay, forsooth; I'll fetch it you.—[aside.] I am glad He went not in himself; if He had found the young man, he would have been flog-naid.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
'Fe, fe, fe, fel ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais a la cour,—la grande affaire.'

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Is it this, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
'Oui; mette le au mon' pocket: 'depeche', quickly.—Vere is dat knave Rugby?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
What, John Rugby! John!

[Enter RUGBY.]

RUGBY.
Here, sir.
DOCTOR CAIUS.
Come, take a your rapier, and come after my heel to de court.

RUGBY.
'Tis ready, sir, here.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By my rote, I tarry too long.- Od's me! 'Qu'ai-je-oublie!' dere is some simples in my closet, dat I vill not for de varid I shall leave behind.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Ay me, child; we're the young man there, and bewail-

DOCTOR CAIUS.
'o diable, diable!' vat is in my closet? Villain! 'larron!' [Pulling SIMPLE out.] Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Good master, be content.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Verefore shall I be content-a?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
The young man is an honest man.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vat shall de honest man do in my closet? dere is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. Hear the truth of it: He came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vale.

SIMPLE.
Ay, forsooth; to desire her to-

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Peace, I pray you.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Peace-a your tongue.- Speak-a your tale.

SIMPLE.
To desire this honest gentlewoman, Mistress Quickly your maid, to speak a good word to Mistress Anne Page for my master, Master Slender, in the way of marriage.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
This is all, indeed, la!

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Sir Hugh send-a you? Rugby, 'baile' me some paper.- Tarry you a little-a while. [Writes.]
MISTRESS QUICKLY.

I am glad he is so quiet; if he had been thoroughly moved, you should have heard him so loud and so melancholy. -

But notwithstanding, man, I'll do you your master what good I can; and the very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master. - I may call him my master, look you, for I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scor, dress meat and drink, make the beds, and do all myself. -

SIMPLE.

'Tis a great charge to come under one body's hand.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Are you seized o' that? you shall find it a great charge, and to be up early and down later, but notwithstanding, to tell you in your ear. - I would have no words of it, my master himself is in love with Miss Anne Page: but notwithstanding that, I know Anne's mind, that's another tale nor there.

DOCTOR CAIUS.

You jack-a-nape, - give a dis letter to Sir Hugh; by gar, it is a challenge: I will cut his throat in de park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest to meddle or make: - you may be gone; it is not good you tarry here: - by gar, I will cut all his two stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw at his dog. [Exit SIMPLE.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

DOCTOR CAIUS.

It is no matter, a ver dat: - do not you tell me dat I shall have Anne Page for mysell?: - by gar, I will kill de Jack priest; and I have appointed mine host of de Jarteez to measure out our weapon: - by gar, I will myself have Anne Page.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We must give folk a leave to praise what, the good-year!

DOCTOR CAIUS.

Rugby, come to court vit me. - By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door. - Follow my heels, Rugby. [Exeunt CAIUS and RUGBY.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

You shall have - An fool's head of your own. No, I know Anne's mind for that: never a woman in Windsor knows more of Anne's mind than I do; nor can do more than I do with her. I thank heaven.

[Enter FENTON.]

FENTON.

How now, good woman! how dost thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

O! The better that it pleases your good worship to ask...

FENTON.

What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

In truce, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle; and one that is your friend, I can tell you that by the way; I praise heaven for it.

FENTON.

Shall I do any good, think'st thou? shall I not lose my suit?
MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Troilus, my lord, all is in Je temper above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on a book, she loves you. Have not your worship a wart above your eye?

FENTON.

Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Well, thereby hangs a tale: good faith, it is such another Nan: but, I detest, an honest maid as ever broke bread: we had an hour's talk of that wart: I shall never laugh but in that maid's company: but--indeed, she is given too much to affability and amusing: but for you, 'tis well for her.

FENTON.

Well, I shall see her to-day. Hold, there's money for thee; let me have thy voice in my behalf: if thou seest her before me, commend me.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Will I? P'faith, that we will; and I will tell your worship more of the wart the next time we have conference; and of other wooers.

FENTON.

Well, farewell. I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Farewell to your worship. [Exit FENTON.] Truly, an honest gentleman: but Anne loves him not; for I know Anne's mind as well as another does. Out upon't! what have I forgot? [Exit.]

[END ACT I]

ACT II. SCENE I. [Before Page's house.] [Enter MISTRESS PAGE, with a letter.]

MISTRESS PAGE.

What, have I spared love-letters in the holiday-time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them? Let me see. [Reads.] *"Ask me no reason why I love you; for though I have been Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to, then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page, at least, if the love of soldier can suffice, that I love thee. I will not say, pity me, 'tis not a soldier-like phrase; but say, love me. By me,*

Thine own true knight,
   By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might,
For thee to fight,

John Falstaff."

What a Herod of Jewry is this! O wicked, wicked world! one that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age to show himself a young gallant! What an unweigeable behaviour hath this Flemish drunkard picked out of my conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? I was then frugal of my mirth: Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting-down of fat men. How shall I be revenged on him? For revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.
[Enter MISTRESS FORD.]
MISTRESS FORD.
Mistress Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

MISTRESS PAGE.
And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill.

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, I'll ne'er believe that; I have to show to the contrary.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Faith, but you do, in my mind.

MISTRESS FORD.
Well, I do, then; yet, I say, I could show you to the contrary. O Mistress Page, give me some counsel!

MISTRESS PAGE.
What's the matter, woman?

MISTRESS FORD.
O woman, if it were not for one trifling respect, I could come to such honour!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Hang the trifle, woman! take the honour. What is it?- dispense with trifles; what is it?

MISTRESS FORD.
If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so, I could be knighted.

MISTRESS PAGE.
What? thou liest!- Sir Alice Ford?

MISTRESS FORD.
We burn daylight- here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted.- I shall think the worse of fat men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking; and yet he would not swear; praised women's modesty; and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all unseemliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they did no more adhere and keep pace together than the Hundred Psalm to the tune of 'Greensleeves'. What tempest, I row, threw this whale, with so many tun's of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own greese.- Did you ever hear the like?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs!- To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy letter: but let thine inherit first; for, I protest, mine never shall. I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names,- sure, more,- and these are of the second edition: he cares not what he puts into the press, when he would put us two. I had rather be a giantess, and lie under Mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles, ere one chaste man.

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, this is the very same; the very hand, the very words. What doth he think of us?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Nay, I know not: it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. I'll entertain myself like one that I am not acquainted withal; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.
MISTRESS FORD.
Boarding, call you it? I'll be sure to keep him above deck.

MISTRESS PAGE.
So will I: if he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again. Let's be revenged on him: let's appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in his suit; and lead him on with a fine-bated delay, till he hath paid his horses to mine host of the Garter.

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, I will consent to act any villainy against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O, that my husband saw this letter! it would give eternal food to his jealousy.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, look where he comes:-- my good man, too: mine's as far from jealousy as I am from giving him cause; and that, I hope, is an unmeasurable distance.

MISTRESS FORD.
You are the happier woman.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Let's consult together against this greasy knight. Come hither. [They retire.]

[Enter FORD, PISTOL, PAGE, and NYM.]

FORD.
Well, I hope it be not so.

PISTOL.
Hope is a curtail dog in some affairs: Sir John affects thy wife.

FORD.
Why, sir, my wife is not young.

PISTOL.
He woos both high and low, both rich and poor, both young and old, one with another, Ford. He loves the gallimaufry: Ford, perpend.

FORD.
Love my wife!

PISTOL.
With liver burning hot. Prevent, or ... O, odious is the name!

FORD.
What name, sir?

PISTOL.
The horn, I say. Farewell. Take heed; have open eye; for thieves do foot by night: Take heed, ere summer comes, or cuckoo-birds do sing.-
Away, Sir Corporal Nymp! Believe it, Page; he speaks sense. [Exit.]

FORD.
I will be patient; I will find out this.
NYM [to PAGE].
And this is true; I like not the humour of lying. He hath wrong'd me in some humours: I should have borne the humour'd letter to her; but I have a sword, and it shall bite upon my necessity. He loves your wife; there's the short and the long. My name is Corporal Nym; I speak, and I avouch 'tis true: my name is Nym, and Falstaff loves your wife. - Adieu. And there's the humour of it. Adieu. [Exit.]

PAGE.
"The humour of it," quoth 'z! here's a fellow frights humour out of his wits.

FORD.
I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE.
I never heard such a drawling, affecting rogue.

FORD.
If I do find it: - well.

PAGE.
I will not believe such a Catajan, though the priest o' th' town commended him for a true man.

FORD.
'Twas a good sensible fellow: - well.
[MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD come forward.]

PAGE.
How now, Meg!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Whither go you, George? - Hark you.

MISTRESS FORD.
How now, sweet Frank! why art thou melancholy?

FORD.
I melancholy! I am not melancholy. - Get you home, go.

MISTRESS FORD.
Faith, thou hast some crotchets in thy head now. - Will you go, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Have with you. - You'll come to dinner, George? [Aside to MISTRESS FORD.] Look who comes yonder; she shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

MISTRESS FORD [aside to MISTRESS PAGE].
Trust me, I thought on her: she'll fit it.

MISTRESS PAGE.
You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Ay, forsooth; and, I pray, how does good Mistress Anne?
MISTRESS PAGE.
Go in with us and see: we have an hour's talk with you.
[Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

PAGE.
How now, Master Ford!

FORD.
You heard what this knave told me, did you not?

PAGE.
Yes: and you heard what the other told me?

FORD.
Do you think there is truth in them?

PAGE.
Hang 'em, slaves! I do not think the knight would offer it: but those that accuse him in his intent towards our wives are a yoke of his discarded men; very rogues, now they be out of service.

FORD.
Were they his men?

PAGE.
Marry, were they.

FORD.
I like it never the better for that. - Does he lie at the Garter?

PAGE.
Ay, marry, does he. If he should intend this voyage toward my wife, I would turn her loose to him; and what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it lie on my head.

FORD.
I do not misdoubt my wife; but I would be loth to turn them together. A man may be too confident: I would have nothing lie on my head: I cannot be thus satisfied.

[Enter HOST.]

PAGE.
Look where my ranting host of the Garter comes: there is either liquor in his pate, or money in his purse, when he looks so merrily. How now, mine host!

HOST.
How now, bully-rook! thou'rt a gentleman.- Cavalero-justice, I say!

[Enter SHALLOW.]

SHALLOW.
I follow, mine host, I follow.- Good even and twenty, good Master Page! Master Page, will you go with us? we have sport in hand.

HOST.
Tell him, cavalero-justice; tell him, bully-rook.
SHALLOW.
Sir, there is a fray to be fought between Sir Hugh the Welsh priest and Caius the French doctor.

FORD.
Good mine host o’ th’Garter, a word with you.

HOST.
What say’st thou, my bully-rook? [They go aside.]

SHALLOW [to PAGE].
Will you go with us to behold it? My merry host hath had the measuring of their weapons; and, I think, hath appointed them contrary places; for, believe me, I hear the parson is no jester. Hark, I will tell you what our sport shall be. [They go aside.]

HOST.
Hast thou no suit against the knight, Sir John Falstaff, my guest-cavalier?

FORD.
None, I protest: but I’ll give you a potte of burnt sack to give me recourse to him, and tell him my name is Brook, only for a jest.

HOST.
My hand, bully; thou shalt have egress and regress;—said I well?—and thy name shall be Brook. It is a merry knight,—Will you go, mynheers?

SHALLOW.
Have with you, mine host.

PAGE.
I have heard the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier.

SHALLOW.
Tut, sir, I could have told you more. In these times you stand on distance, your passes, stoccadoes, and I know not what: ’tis the heart, Master Page; ’tis here, ’tis here. I have seen the time, with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.

HOST.
Here, boys, here, here! shall we wag?

PAGE.
Have with you.—I had rather hear them soold than fight. [Exeunt HOST, SHALLOW, and PAGE.]

FORD.
Though Page be a secure fool, and stands so firmly on his wife’s frailty, yet I cannot put off my opinion so easily; she was in his company at Page’s house; and what they made there, I know not. Well, I will look further into’t, and I have a disguise to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not my labour, if she be otherwise, ’tis labour well bestowed. [Exit.]

ACT II. SCENE II. [A room in the Garter Inn.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I will not lend thee a penny.
PISTOL.
Why, then the world's mine oyster, Which I with sword will open.-

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Not a penny. I have grated upon my good friends for three reprieves for you and your coach-fellow Nym; or else you had look'd through the grate, like a glimny of baboons. I am damn'd in hell for swearing to gentlemen my friends, you were good soldiers and valiant fellows; and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I look'd upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

PISTOL.
Didst not thou share?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Reason, you rogue, reason: think'st thou I'll endanger my soul gratis? At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbon for you: go! You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour. Why, thou unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise. I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand, and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch; and yet you, rogue, will enconce your eyes, your ear a mountain looks, your red-latice phrases, and your bold-beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour! You will not do it, you!

PISTOL.
I do relent: what would thou more of me?

[Enter ROBIN.]
ROBIN.
Sir, here's a woman would speak with you.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Let her approach.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY.]
MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Give your worship good morrow.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Good morrow, good wife.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Not so, sir, an't please your worship.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Good maid, then.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
I'll be sworn.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I do believe the swearer. What with me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Shall I vouchsafe your worship a word or two?
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Two thousand, fair woman: and I'll vouchsafe thee the hearing.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
There is one Mistress Ford, sir: - I pray, come a little nearer this ways: - I myself dwell with Master Doctor Caius.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Your worship says very true: - I pray your worship, come a little nearer this ways.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I warrant thee, nobody hears: - mine own people, mine own people.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Are they so? God bless them, and make them his servants!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Well, Mistress Ford: - what of her?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Why, sir, she's a good creature: - Lord, Lord! your worship's a wanton! Well, heaven forgive you, and all of us, I pray.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Mistress Ford: - come, Mistress Ford.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Marry, this is the short and the long of it: you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best cour tier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary. Yet there had been knights, and lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches; I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift; smelling so sweetly - all muck- and so rushing, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in such alligiant terms; and in such wine and sugar of the best and the fairest; that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of her, they could never get her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of them all: and yet she has been early, nay, which is more, pensioners; but, I warrant you, all is one with her.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
But what says she to me? be brief, my good she-Mercury.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Marry, she hath received your letter; for the which she thanks you a thousand times: and she gives you to notify, that her husband will be absent from his house between ten and eleven.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Ay, forsooth; and then you may come and see the picture; she says, that you wot of; - Master Ford, her husband, will be from home. Alas, a sweet woman leads an ill life with him; he's a very jealous man: she leads a very frumpold life with him, good heart.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Ten and eleven: - woman, commend me to her; I will not fail her.
MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Why, you say well, But I have another messenger to your worship. Mistress Page hath my hearty commendations to you, too: and let me tell you in your ear, she's as fatuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss your morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor, who's to be otherwise, and she bade me tell your worship that her husband is seldom from home; but, she hopes, there will come a time. Surely, I think you have charms, let; yes, in truth.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Not I, I assure thee: setting the attraction of my good parts aside, I have no other charms.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Blessing on your heart, fort! [Stuns that snake!]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

But, I pray thee, tell me this, has Ford's wife, and Page's wife acquainted each other how they love me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

That were a jest indeed; they have not as little grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed! But Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page... [Finshes of all loves.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Tush, tush. Page is an honest man. Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does; do what she will, say what she will, take all she pays; go to bed when she list, sit when she list, all is as she will. You must send for your page; no remedy.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Nay, but do so, then: and, look you, he may come and go between you both; and, in any case, have a say-word, that you may know one another's mind, and the boy never need to understand anything; for 'tis not good that children should know any wickedness; old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Fare thee well: commend me to them both; the's my purse: I am yet thy debtor. Boy, go along with this woman. [Exit MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN.] This news distresses me!

PISTOL.

This punk is one of Cupid's carriers.- Clap on more sails, pursues, up with your fights; give fire; she is my prize, or my reward for the wall. [Exit.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Say'st thou so, old Jack? go thy ways; I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. Will they yet look after thee? Wilt thou, after the expense of so much money, be now a gainer? Good body, I thank thee. Let them say't's grossly done; so it be fairly done, no matter.

[Enter BARDOLPH; with a cup of sack.]

BARDOLPH.

Sir John, there's one Master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Brook is his name?

BARDOLPH.

Ay, sir.
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Call him in. [Exit BARDOLPH.] Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflow such liquor. Ah, ha! Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, have I encompass'd you? go to; 'via'!

[Faster BARDOLPH, with FORD disguised.]

FORD.
'Bless you, sir!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
And you, sir? Would you speak with me?

FORD.
I make bold to press with so little preparation upon you.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
You're welcome. What's your will? Give us leave, drawer. [Exit BARDOLPH.]

FORD.
Sir, I am a gentleman that have spent much; my name is Brook.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

FORD.
Good Sir John, I sue for yours: the which hath something embolden'd me to this unseason'd intrusion; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on.

FORD.
Truth, and I have a bag of money here troubles me: if you will help to bear it, Sir John, take all, or half, for easing me of the carriage.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Sir, I know not how I may deserve to be your porter.

FORD.
I will tell you, sir, if you will give me the hearing.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Speak, good Master Brook: I shall be glad to be your servant.

FORD.
Sir, I will be brief with you: you have been a man long known to me, though I had never so good means, as desire, to make myself acquainted with you. I shall discover a thing to you, wherein I must very much lay open mine own imperfection: but, good Sir John, as you have one eye upon my follies, as you hear them unfolded, turn another into the register of your own; that I may pass with a reproof the easier, sith you yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Very well, sir; proceed.
FORD.
There is a gentlewoman in this town, her husband's name is Ford.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Well, sir.

FORD.
I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestow'd much on her: follow'd her with a doting observance; engross'd opportunities to meet her; fee'd every slight occasion that could but give me sight of her; not only bought many presents to give her, but have given largely to many to know what she would have given; briefly, I have pursued her on the wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have merited, either in my mind or in my means, need, I assure you, I have received none.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

FORD.
Never.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

FORD.
Never.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

FORD.
When I have told you that, I have told you all. Some say that though she appear honest to me, yet in other places she enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your place and person.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
O, sir!

FORD.
Believe it, for you know it:—There is money; spend it, spend it; spend more; spend all I have; only give me so much of your time in exchange of it, as to lay an amiable siege to the honesty of this Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as any.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Would it apply well to the vehemency of your affection, that I should win what you would enjoy? Methinks you prescribe to yourself very preposterously.

FORD.
O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on the excellency of her honour, that the folly of my soul dares not present itself: she is too bright to be looked against. Now, could I come to her with any detection in my hand, my desires had instance and argument: I could drive her then from the ward of her purity, her reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand other her defences, which now are too-too strongly embattled against me. What say you to't, Sir John?
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Master Brook, I will first make bold with your money; next, give me your hand; and last, as I am a gentleman, you shall, if you will, enjoy Ford's wife.

FORD.
O good sir!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Master Brook, I say you shall.

FORD.
Want no money, Sir John; you shall want none.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want none. I shall be with her - I may tell you - by her own appointment; even as you came in to me, her assistant, or go-between, parted from me: I say I shall be with her between ten and eleven; for at that time the jealous rascally knave her husband will be forth. Come you to me at night; you shall know how I speed.

FORD.
I am bless'd in your acquaintance. Do you know Ford, sir?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Hang him, poor cuckoldy knave! I know him not: yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the jealous knave hath masses of money; for the which his wife seems to me well-favour'd. I will use her as the key of the cuckoldy rogue's coffer, and there's my harvest-home.

FORD.
I would you knew Ford, sir, that you might avoid him, if you saw him.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Hang him, mechanical salt-butter rogue! I will scare him out of his wits; I will awe him with my cudgel - Master Brook, I will predominate over the peasant, and thou shalt lie with his wife. - Come to me soon at night: Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style; thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold: - come to me soon at night. [Exit.]

FORD.
What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! - My heart is ready to crack with impatience. - Who says this is improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him, the hour is fix'd, the match is made. Would any man have thought this? - See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransack'd, my reputation guzzn at; and I shall not only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms; and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names! - Amonson sounds well, Lucifer well ... yet they are the devil's additions! but Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass; he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, or an Irishman with my aqua-vitae bottle, than my wife with herself: then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. Heaven be praised for my jealousy! - Eleven o'clock the hour: I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it; better three hours too soon than a minute too late. Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold! [Exit.]
RUGBY.
Sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vat is de clock, Jack?

RUGBY.
‘Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to meet.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come; he has pray his Piblo vell, dat he is no come: by gar, Jack Rugby, he is dead already, if he be come.

RUGBY.
He is wise, sir; he knew your worship would kill him, if he came.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, de herring is no dead so as I vill kill him. Take your rapier, Jack; I vill tell you how I vill kill him.

RUGBY.
Alas, sir, I cannot fence.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Wilhurs, take your rapier.

RUGBY.
Forbear; here’s company.

[Enter HOST, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and PAGE.]

HOST.
‘Bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW.
‘Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE.
Now, good master doctor!

SLENDER.
‘Give you good morrow, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vat be all yus, one, two, tree, four, come for?

HOST.
To see thee fight, to see thee foine, to see thee traverse; to see thee here, to see thee there; to see thee pass thy punto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethipian? is he dead, my Francisco? ha, bully! What says my Aesculapius? ha! is he dead, bully-stale? is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, he is de coward Jack priest of de world; he is not show his face.
HOST.
Thou art a Castilian, King Urinal! Hector of Greece, my boy!

DOCTOR CAIUS.
I pray you, bear witness that me have stay six or seven, two, tree hours for him, and he is no come.

SHALLOW.
He is the wiser man, master doctor: he is a crater of souls, and you a crater of bodies; if you should fight, you go against the hair of your professions. - Is it not true, Master Page?

PAGE.
Master Shallow, you have yourself been a great fighter, though now a man of peace.

SHALLOW.
Bodkins, Master Page, if I see a sword out, my finger itches to make one. Though we are justices, and doctors, and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt in us; we are the sons of women, Master Page.

PAGE.
'Tis true, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW.
Master Doctor Caius, I am come to fetch you home. I am sworn of the peace: you have show'd yourself a wise physician, and Sir Hugh hath shown himself a wise and patient churchman. You must go with me, master doctor.

HOST.
Pardon, guest-justice.- A word, Monsieur Mock-water.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Mock-water! vat is dat?

HOST.
Mock-water, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, den, I have as mush mock-water as de Englishman.- Seurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill cut his ears.

HOST.
He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Clapper-de-claw! vat is dat?

HOST.
That is, he will make thee amends.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, me do look he shall clapper-de-claw me; for, by gar, me vill have it.

HOST.
And I will provoke him to't, or let him wag.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Me tank you for dat.
HOST.
And, moreover, bully.- But first, master guest, and Master Page, and oke Cavalero Slender, [Aside to them.] go you through the town to Frogmore.

PAGE.
Sir Hugh is there, is he?

HOST.
He is there: see what humour he is in; and I will bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do well?

SHALLOW.
We will do it.

PAGE, SHALLOW and SLENDER.
Adieu, good master doctor. [Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER.]

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, me will kill de priest; for he speak for a jack-a-nape to Anne Page.

HOST.
Sheathe thy impatience, throw cold water on thy choler: go about the fields with me through Frogmore: I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou shalt woo her. Cried I game? said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, me dank you vor dat: by gar, I love you; and I shall procure-a you de good guest, de earl, de knight, de lords, de gentlemen, my patients.

HOST.
For the which I will be thy adversary toward Anne Page. Said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, 'tis good; vell said.

HOST.
Let us wag, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Come at my heels, Jack Rugby. [Exeunt.]

END ACT II.

ACT III. SCENE I. A field near Frogmore. [Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
I pray you now, good Master Slender's serving-man, and friend Simple by your name, which way have you look'd for Master Caius, that calls himself doctor of physic?

SIMPLE.
Marry, sir, the pittle-ward, the park-ward, every way; old Windsor way, and every way but the town way.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
I most vehemently desire you you will also look that way.
SIMPLE.
I will, sir.  [Retires.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Pless my soul, how full of chokers I am, and trempling of mind! I shall be glad if he have deceived me:- how melancholies I am!- I will knog his urinals about his knave's costard when I have goot opportunities for the ork:-
Pless my soul!  [Sings.]  To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals;
There will we make our pads of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies.
To shallow-

Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry:-
  [Sings.]  To shallow rivers, to whose falls-
Melodious birds sing madrigals;
Whenas I sat in Babylon,-
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow-

SIMPLE [coming forward].
Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
He's welcome.--  [Sings.]  To shallow rivers, to whose falls-
Heaven prosper the right!- What weapons is he?

SIMPLE.
No weapons, sir. There comes my master, Master Shallow, and another gentleman, from Frogmore, over the stile, this way.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Pray you, give me my gown; or else keep it in your arms.

[Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER.]

SHALLOW.
How now, master parson! Good morrow, good Sir Hugh.

SLENDER [aside].
Ah, sweet Anne Page!

PAGE.
'Save you, good Sir Hugh!

SIR HUGH EVANS.
'Pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!

SHALLOW.
What, the sword and the word! do you study them both, master parson?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
There is reasons and causes for it.

PAGE.
We are come to you to do a good office, master parson.
SIR HUGH EVANS.
Fery well: what is it?

PAGE.
Yonder is a most reverend gentleman, who, belike having received wrong by some person, is at most odds with his own gravity and patience that ever you saw.

SHALLOW.
I have lived fourscore years and upward; I never heard a man of his place, gravity, and learning, so wide of his own respect.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
What is he?

PAGE.
I think you know him; Master Doctor Caius, the renown'd French physician.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
God's will, and his passion of my heart! I had as lief you would tell me of a mess of porridge.

PAGE.
Why?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
He has no knowledge, - and he is a knave besides; a cowardly knave as you would desires to be acquainted withal.

PAGE.
I warrant you, he's the man should fight with him.

SLENNDER [aside].
O sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW.
It appears so, by his weapons. - Keep them asunder; here comes Doctor Caius.
[Enter HOST, CAIUS, and RUGBY.]

HOST.
Disarm them, and let them question: let them keep their limbs whole, and hack our English.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
I pray you, let a me speak a word vit your ear. Ver&ore will you not meet-a me?

SIR HUGH EVANS [aside to CAIUS].
Pray you, use your patience: in good time.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John ape.

SIR HUGH EVANS [aside to CAIUS].
Pray you, let us nor be lauging-stogs to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will ony way or other make you amends. - [loud] I will knock your urinals about your knave's cogscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.
DOCTOR CAIUS.
'Diable!'—Jack Ruggly,—mine host de Jarteer,—have I not stay for him to kill him? have I not, at de place I did appoint?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
As I am a Christians soul, now, look you, this is the place appointed: I'll be judgement by mine host of the Garter.

HOST.
Peace, I say, Gallia and Guallia, French and Welsh, soul-curer and body-curer!

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

HOST.
Peace, I say! hear mine host of the Garter. Am I politic? Am I subtle? am I a Machiavel? Shall I lose my doctor? no; he gives me the potions and the motions. Shall I lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? no; he gives me the proverbs and the noverbs. Give me thy hand, terrestrial, so. Give me thy hand, celestial, so. Boys of art, I have deceived you both, I have directed you to wrong places: your hearts are mighty, your skins are whole, and let burnt sack be the issue. Come, lay their swords to pawn. Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

SHALLOW.
Trust me, a mad host. Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER [aside].
O sweet Anne Page! [Exeunt SHALLOW, SLENDER, PAGE and HOST.]

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Ha, do I perceive dat? have you make-a de sot of us, ha, ha?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
This is well; he has made us his vailing stog. I desire you that we may be friends; and let us knock our prains together to be revenge on this same scall, scurry, cowering companion, the host of the Garter.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, vit all my heart. He promise to bring me vere is Anne Page; by gar, he deceive me too.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Well, I will smile his noddles. Pray you, follow.
[Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE II. [The street, in Windsor.] [Enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Nay, keep your way, little galant; you were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader.
[Enter FORD.]
FORD.
Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Truly, sir, to see your wife. Is she at home?
FORD.
Ay, and as idle as she may hang together, for want of company. I think, if your husbands were dead, you two would marry.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Be sure of that, two other husbands.

FORD.
Where had you this pretty weathercock?

MISTRESS PAGE.
I cannot tell what the dickens his name is my husband had him of. What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

ROBIN.
Sir John Falstaff.

FORD.
Sir John Falstaff!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Hc, hc; I can never hit on's name. There is such a league between my good man and he! Is your wife at home indeed?

FORD.
Indeed she is.

MISTRESS PAGE.
By your leave, sir; I am sick till I see her. [Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN.]

FORD.
Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them. He pieces out his wife's inclination; he gives her folly motion and advantage: and now she's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her: a man may hear this shower sing in the wind: and Falstaff's boy with her! Good plots! they are laid; and our revolted wives share damnation together. Well; I will take him, then torture my wife, pluck the borrow'd veil of modesty from the so seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself, and to these violent proceedings all my neighbours shall cry aim. [Clock strikes.] The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me search: there I shall find Falstaff: I shall be rather praised for this than moock'd; for it is as positive as the earth is firm that Falstaff is there; I will go.

[Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, SLENDER, HOST, SIR HUGH EVANS, CAIUS, and RUGBY.]

SHALLOW, PAGE, etc.
Well met, Master Ford.

FORD.
Trust me, a good knot: I have good cheer at home; and I pray you all, go with me.

SHALLOW.
I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

SLENDER.
And so must I, sir: we have appointed to dine with Mistress Anne, and I would not break with her for more money than I'll speak of.
SHALLOW.
We have linger'd about a match between Anne Page and my cousin Slender, and this day we shall have our answer.

SLENDER.
I hope I have your good will, father Page.

PAGE.
You have, Master Slender; I stand wholly for you:- but my wife, master doctor, is for you altogether.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Ay, by gar; and de maid is love-a me; my nursh-a Quickly tell me so much.

HOST.
What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May: he will carry't, he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons; he will carry't.

PAGE.
Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having: he kept company with the wild prince; he is of too high a region; he knows too much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with the finger of my substance: the wealth I have waits on my consent, and my consent goes not that way.

FORD.
I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with me to dinner: besides your cheer, you shall have sport; I will show you a monster.- Master doctor, you shall go; so shall you, Master Page; and you, Sir High.

SHALLOW.
Well, fare you well: we shall have the freer wooing at Master Page's. [Exeunt SHALLOW and SLENDER.]

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Go home, John Rugby; I come anon. [Exit Rugby.]

HOST.
Farewell, my hearts: I will to my honest knight Falstaff, and drink canary with him. [Exit.]

FORD [aside].
I think I shall drink in pipe wine first with him; I'll make him dance. Will you go, gentles?

ALL.
Have with you to see this monster. [Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE III. [A room in Ford's house.] [Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE.]

MISTRESS FORD.
What, John! What, Robert!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Quickly, quickly: is the buck-basket-

MISTRESS FORD.
I warrant.- What, Robin, I say!

[Enter SERVANTS with a basket.]
MISTRESS PAGE.
Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD.
Here, set it down.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Give your men the charge: we must be brief.

MISTRESS FORD.
Marry, as I told you before, John and Robert, be ready here hard by in the bww-house; and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and, without any pause or staggering, take this basket: trudge with it in all haste, and carry it to Datchet Mead and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by in the Thames riverside.

MISTRESS PAGE.
You will do it?

MISTRESS FORD.
I ha' told them over and over; they lack no direction.- Be gone, and come when you are called. [Exeunt SERVANTS.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Here comes little Robin.

[Enter ROBIN.]

MISTRESS FORD.
How now, what news with you?

ROBIN.
My master, Sir John, is come in at your back-door, Mistress Ford, and requests your company.

MISTRESS PAGE.
You little Jack-a-Lent, have you been true to us?

ROBIN.
Ay, I'll be sworn. My master knows not of your being here, and hath threatened to put me into everlasting liberty, if I tell you of it.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Thou'rt a good boy:- I'll go hide me.

MISTRESS FORD.
Do so.- Go tell thy master I am alone.- [Exit ROBIN.] Mistress Page, remember your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE.
I warrant thee; if I do not act it, hiss me. [Exit.]

MISTRESS FORD.
Go to, then: we'll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumion; we'll teach him to know turtles from jays.
[Enter FALSTAFF.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Have I caught thee, my heavenly jewel? Why, now let me die, for I have lived long enough; this is the period of my ambition: O this blessed hour!

MISTRESS FORD.

O sweet Sir John!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prace, Mistress Ford. Now shall I sin in my wish; I would thy husband were dead; I'll speak it before the best lord; I would make thee my lady.

MISTRESS FORD.

I your lady, Sir John! alas, I should be a pitiful lady!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Let the court of France show me such another. I see how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast the right areol'd beauty of the brow that becomes any tire of Venetian admittance.

MISTRESS FORD.

A plain kercbief, Sir John: my brows become nothing else, nor that well neither.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

By the Lord, thou art a tailor to teare; thou wouldst make an absolute courtier; Come, thou canst not hide it.

MISTRESS FORD.

Believe me, there's no such thing in me.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

What made me love thee? let that persuade thee there's something extraordinary in thee. Come, I cannot cog, and say thou art this and that, like a many of these lispings hawthorn-bads, that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklerbury: I cannot: but I love thee; none but thee, and thou deservest it.

MISTRESS FORD.

Do not betray me, sir. I fear you love Mistress Page.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the reek of a lime-kiln.

MISTRESS FORD.

Well, Heaven knows how I love you; and you shall one day find it.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Keep in that mind; I'll deserve it.

MISTRESS FORD.

Nay, I must tell you, so you do; or else I could not be in that mind.

ROBIN [within].

Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! here's Mistress Page at the door, sweating, and blowing, and looking wildly, and would needs speak with you presently.
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
She shall not see me: I will ensconce me behind the arras.

MISTRESS FORD.
Pray you, do so: she's a very tattling woman. [FALSTAFF hides himself.] [Enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN.] What's the matter? how now!

MISTRESS PAGE.
O Mistress Ford, what have you done? You're shamed, you're overthrown, you're undone for ever!

MISTRESS FORD.
What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE.
O well-a-day, Mistress Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion!

MISTRESS FORD.
What cause of suspicion?

MISTRESS PAGE.
What cause of suspicion! Out upon you! how am I mistook in you!

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, alas, what's the matter?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Your husband's coming hither, woman, with all the officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that he says is here now in the house, by your consent; to take an ill advantage of his absence: you are undone.

MISTRESS FORD.
'Tis not so, I hope.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Pray heaven it be not so, that you have such a man here! But 'tis most certain your husband's coming, with half Windsor at his heels, to search for such a one; I come before to tell you. If you know yourself clear, why, I am glad of it; but if you have a friend here, convey, convey him out. Be not amazed; call all your senses to you; defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

MISTRESS FORD.
What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his peril! I had rather than a thousand pound he were out of the house.

MISTRESS PAGE.
For shame! never stand "you had rather" and "you had rather:" your husband's here at hand; betheke you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot hide him: O, how have you deceived me! Look, here is a basket: if he be of any reasonable stature, he may creep in here; and throw foul linen upon him, as if it were going to bucking: - send him by your two men to Dutchet-mead.

MISTRESS FORD.
He's too big to go in there. What shall I do?

[Enter FALSTAFF.]
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Let me see't, let me see't, O, let me see't! I'll in, I'll in; follow your friend's counsel: I'll in.
MISTRESS PAGE.
What, Sir John Falstaff? Are these your letters, knight?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF [aside to MISTRESS PAGE].
I love thee, and none but thee:- [aloud] help me away: let me creep in here. I'll never-
[ Goes into the basket; they cover him with foul linen.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Help to cover your master, boy. - Call your men, Mistress Ford. - You dissembling knave! [Exit ROBIN.]

MISTRESS FORD.
What, John! Robert! John! [Enter SERVANTS.]
Go take up these clothes here quickly:- look, how you drumble!- carry them to the laundress in Datchet-mead; quickly, come.

[Enter FORD, PAGE, CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS.]

FORD.
Pray you, come near: if I suspect without cause, why then make sport at me; then let me be your jest; I deserve it. - How now! whither bear you this?

SERVANTS.
To the laundress, forsooth.

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, what have you to do whither they bear it? You were best meddle with buck-washing.

FORD.
Buck! I would I could wash myself of the buck! - Buck, buck, buck! Ay, buck; I warrant you, buck; and of the season too, it shall appear. - [Exeunt SERVANTS with the basket.]

Gentlemen, I have dream'd to-night; I'll tell you my dream. Here, here, here be my keys: ascend my chambers; search, seek, find out: I'll warrant we'll unkennel the fox. - Let me stop this way first. - [Locks the door.] So, now.

PAGE.
Good Master Ford, be contented: you wrong yourself too much.

FORD.
True, Master Page. - Up, gentlemen; you shall see sport anon: follow me, gentlemen. [Exit.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
This is very fantastical humours and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, 'tis no de fashion of France; it is not jealous in France.

PAGE.
Nay, follow him, gentlemen; see the issue of his search. [Exeunt PAGE, CAIUS, and EVANS.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Is there not a double excellency in this?

MISTRESS FORD.
I know not which pleases me better, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John.
MISTRESS PAGE.
What was it he said when your husband asked what was in the bucket?

MISTRESS FORD.
I am half afraid he will have need of washing; so throwing him into the water will do him a benefit.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Hang him, dishonest rascal!

MISTRESS FORD.
I think my husband hath some special suspicion of Falstaff's being here; for I never saw him so gross in his jealousy till now.

MISTRESS PAGE.
I will lay a plot to try that; and we will yet have more tricks with Falstaff; his dissolute disease will scarce obey this medicine.

MISTRESS FORD.
Shall we send that foolish Mistress Quickly to him, and excuse his throwing into the water; and give him another hope, to betray him to another punishment?

MISTRESS PAGE.
We will do it; let him be sent for to-morrow eight o'clock, to have amends.
[Enter FORD, PAGE, CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS.]

FORD.
I cannot find him: may be the knave brag'd of that he could not compass.

MISTRESS PAGE [aside to MISTRESS FORD].
Heard you that?

MISTRESS FORD [aside to MISTRESS PAGE].
Ay, ay, peace.—You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

FORD.
Ay, I do so.

MISTRESS FORD.
Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

FORD.
Amen!

MISTRESS PAGE.
You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

FORD.
Ay, ay; I must bear it.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
If there be any pody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgement!
DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, nor I too: dere is no bodies.

PAGE.
Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination? I would not ha' your distemper in this kind for the wealth of Windsor Castle.

FORD.
'Tis my fault, Master Page: I suffer for it.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
You suffer for a pad conscience: your wife is as honest a omans as I will desires among five thousand, and five hundred too.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
By gar, I see tis an honest woman.

FORD.
Well; I promised you a dinner:- I pray you, pardon me; I will make known to you why I have done this.- Come, wife; come, Mistress Page.- I pray you, pardon me; pray heartily, pardon me.

PAGE.
Let's, gentlemen; but, trust me, we'll mock him. I do invite you to-morrow morning to my house to breakfast; after, we'll a-birding together; I have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
If there is one, I shall make two in the company.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
If dere be one or two, I shall make-a de turd.

FORD.
Pray you, go with me.

--------- intermission ---------
ACT III. SCENE IV. [A room in Page's house.]

FENTON.
I see I cannot get thy father's love;
Therefore no more turn me to him, sweet Nan.

ANNE PAGE.
Alas, how then?

FENTON.
Why, thou must be thyself.
He doth object I am too great of birth;
And that, my state being gait'd with my expense,
I seek to heal it only by his wealth:
Besides these, other bars he lays before me,-
My riots past, my wild societies;
And tells me 'tis a thing impossible
I should love thee but as a property.

ANNE PAGE.
May be he tells you true.

FENTON.
No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!
Albeit, I will confess, thy father's wealth
Was the first motive that I wo'd thee, Anne:
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

ANNE PAGE.
Gentle Master Fenton,
Yet seek my father's love; still seek it, sir:
If opportunity and humblest suit
Cannot attain it, why, then - Hark you hither. [They go aside.]

[Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

SHALLOW.
Break their talk, MISTRESS QUICKLY: my kinsman shall speak for himself. Be not dismay'd.

SLENDER.
No, she shall not dismay me: I care not for that,- but that I am afeard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Mark ye: Master SLENDER would speak a word with you.

ANNE PAGE.
I come to him. [aside] This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favoured faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
And how does good Master FENTON? Pray press a word with you.
SHALLOW.
She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hast a father!

SLENDER.
I had a father, Mistress Anne; my uncle can tell you good jests of him.- Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress Anne the jest, how my father stole two geese out of a pen, good uncle.

SHALLOW.
Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.

SLENDER.
Ay, that I do, as well as I love any woman in Glastershire.

SHALLOW.
He will maintain you like a gentlewoman.

SLENDER.
Ay, that I will, come cut and long-tail, under the degree of a squire.

SHALLOW.
He will make you a hundred and fifty pounds jointure.

ANNE PAGE.
Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

SHALLOW.
Marry, I thank you for it; I thank you for that good comfort.- She calls you, coz; I'll leave you.

ANNE PAGE.
Now, Master Slender,-

SLENDER.
Now, good Mistress Anne,-

ANNE PAGE.
What is your will?

SLENDER.
My will! od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank heaven; I am not such a sickly creature, I give heaven praise.

ANNE PAGE.
I mean, Master Slender, what would you with me?

SLENDER.
Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle hath made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole! They can tell you how things go better than I can: you may ask your father; here he comes.

[Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE.]
Now, Master Slender:- love him, daughter Anne.- Why, how now! what does Master Fent on here? You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house: I told you, sir, my daughter is disposed of.

FENTON.
Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

PAGE.
She is no match for you.

FENTON.
Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE.
No, good Master Fenton.- Come, Master Shallow; come, son Slender, sir.- Knowing my mind, you wrong me, Master Fenton.

[Execut PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Speak to Mistress Page.

FENTON.
Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
In such a righteous fashion as I do,
Perforce, against all checks, rebukes, and manners,
I must advance the colours of my love,
And not retire: let me have your good will.

ANNE PAGE.
Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

MISTRESS PAGE.
I mean it not; I seek you a better husband.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
That's my master, master doctor.

ANNE PAGE.
Alas, I had rather be set quick 'tis earth,
And bow'd to death with turnips!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Come, trouble not yourself.- Good Master Fenton,
I will not be your friend nor enemy:
My daughter will I question how she loves you,
And as I find her, so am I affected.
Till then farewell, sir; she must needs go in;
Her father will be angry.

FENTON.
Farewell, gentle mistress.- Farewell, Nan.  [Execut MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE.]
MISTRESS QUICKLY.

This is my doing now:—"Nay," said I, "will you cast away your child on a fool and a physician? Look on Master Fenton;"—this is my doing.

FENTON.

I thank thee, and I pray thee, once to-night
Give my sweet Nan this ring: there's for thy pains.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Now, Heaven send thee good fortune! [Exit Fenton.] A kind heart he hath: a woman would run through fire and water for such a kind heart. But yet I would my master had Mistress Anne; or I would Master Slender had her; or, in scoops, I would Master Fenton had her. I will do what I can for them all three; for so I have promised, and I must be as good a woman, but specially for Master Fenton. Well, I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it! [Exit.]

ACT III. SCENE V. [A room in the Garter Inn.] [Enter FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Bardolph, I say—

BARDOLPH.

Here, sir.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in't. [Exit Bardolph.] Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains taken out, and butter'd, and give them to a dog for a new-year's gift. The rogues slighted me into the river with as little remorse as they would have drown'd a bitch's blind puppies, fifteen of them: and you may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the bottom were as deep as hell, I should be glad. I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow. —Adon, that I abhor, for the water swells a man; and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled? I should have been a mountain of mummy.

[Enter BARDOLPH with sack.]

BARDOLPH.

Here's Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with you.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Come, let me pour in some sack to the Thames water, for my belly's as cold as if I had swallow'd snowballs for pills to cool the kidneys.

BARDOLPH.

Come in, woman! [Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

By your leave; I cry you mercy:—give your worship good morrow.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Take away these chalices. Go brew me a potter of sack finely.
BARDOLPH.

With eggs, sir?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Simple of itself, sir; it was puffing up in my breweage. [Exit BARDOLPH.] How now!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Marry, sir, I come to your worship from Mistress Ford.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Aha! the day! good heart, that was not her fault: she does go take on with her men; they mistook their erection.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

So did I mine, to build upon a foolish woman's promise.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Well, she laments, sir, for it, that it would yearm your heart to see it. Her husband goes this morning a-hunting: she desires you once more to come to her between eight and nine: I must carry her word quickly; she'll make you amends, I warrant you.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Well, I will visit her: tell her so; and bid her think what a man is: let her consider his frailty, and then judge of my merit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

I will tell her.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Do so. Between nine and ten, say'st thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Eight and nine, sir.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Peace be with you, sir. [Exit.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

I marvel I hear not of Master Brook: he sent me word to stay within: I like his money well: O, here he comes. [Enter FORD disguised.]

FORD.

Bless you, sir!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Now, Master Brook, you come to know what hath pass'd between me and Ford's wife?

FORD.

That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me.

FORD.
And how sped you, sir?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Very ill-favouredly, Master Brook.

FORD.
How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
No, Master Brook; but the pecking corunto her husband, Master Brook, dwelling in a continual larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, after we had embraced, kiss'd, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy; and at his heels a rabble of his companions, thither provoked and instigated by his distemper, and forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love.

FORD.
What, while you were there?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
While I was there.

FORD.
And did he search for you, and could not find you?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
You shall hear. As good luck would have it, comes in one Mistress Page; gives intelligence of Ford's approach; and, in her invention and Ford's wife's distraction, they convey'd me into a buck-basket.

FORD.
A buck-basket!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
By the Lord, a buck-basket! ran'md me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril.

FORD.
And how long lay you there?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Nay, you shall hear. Master Brook, what I have suffer'd. Being thus ran'md in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his kinds, were call'd forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Dutchet-lane; they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave would have search'd it; but fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark the sequel, Master Brook: I suffer'd the pangs of three several deaths; first, an intolerable fright, to be detected with a jealous rotten bell-wether; next, to be compass'd, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck; and then, to be stopp'd in, with stinking clothes that frett'd in their own grease: think of that, a man of my kidney, think of that, that am as subject to heat as butter; it was a miracle to escape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half stew'd in grease, like a Dutch dish, to be thrown into the Thames, and cool'd, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of that, hissing hot, think of that, Master Brook.
FORD.
In good sadness, sir, I am sorry that for my sake you have suffer'd all this. My suit, then, is desperate; you'll undertake her so more?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Master Brook, I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus. Her husband is this morning gone a-birding: I have received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

FORD.
'Tis past eight already, sir.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be crow'd with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford. [Exit.]

FORD.
Hum,- ha! Is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford, awake! awake, Master Ford! there's a hole made in your best coat, Master Ford. This 'tis to be married! this 'tis to have linen and buck-baskets! Well, I will now take the lecher; he is at my house; he cannot scape me; 'tis impossible he should; he cannot creep into a halfpenny purse, nor into a pepper-box: I will search impossible places. If I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go with me; I'll be horn-mad. [Exit.]

END ACT III.

ACT IV, SCENE I. [The street.]

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and WILLIAM.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Is he at Master Ford's already, think'st thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Sure, he is by this, or we shall be presently: but, truly, he is very courageous mad about his throwing into the water. Mistress Ford desires you to come suddenly.

MISTRESS PAGE.
I'll be with her by and by; I'll but bring my young man here to school. Look, where his master comes: 'tis a playing-day, I see. [Enter SIR HUGH EVANS.]

How now, Sir Hugh! no school to-day?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
No, Master Slender is let the boys leave to play.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Blessing of his heart!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Sir Hugh, my husband says my son profits nothing in the world at his book. I pray you, ask him some questions.
SIR HUGH EVANS.
Come hither, William; hold up your head; come.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Come on, sirrah; hold up your head; answer your master, be not afraid.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
William, how many numbers is in nouns?

WILLIAM PAGE.
Two.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Truly, I thought there had been one number more, because they say, Ox’s-nouns.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Peace your tattlings. What is “fair,” William?

WILLIAM PAGE.
“Pulever”.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Polecats! There are fairer things than polecats, sure.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
You are a very simplicity oman: I pray you, peace.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
That is a good William. What is he, William, that does lend articles?

WILLIAM PAGE.
Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, “Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc”.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
“Nominativo, hig, hag, hog”:- pray you, mark: “genitivo, hujus”. Well, what is your accusative case?

WILLIAM PAGE.
“Accusativo, hine”.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
I pray you, have your remembrance, child; “accusativo, hing, hang, hog”.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Hang-hog is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Leave your prattles, oman:- What is the focative case, William?

WILLIAM PAGE.
“O, vocativo, O”.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Remember, William; focative is ‘caret’.
MISTRESS QUICKLY.

And that's a good root.

SIR HUGH EVANS.

Oman, forbear.

MISTRESS PAGE.

Peace.

SIR HUGH EVANS.

What is your genitive case plural, William?

WILLIAM PAGE.

Genitive case!

SIR HUGH EVANS.

Ay.

WILLIAM PAGE.

'Genitivorum, horum, harum, horum'.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Vengeance of Jenny's case! fie on her! never name her, child, if she be a whore.

SIR HUGH EVANS.

For shame, oman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

You do ill to teach the child such words: fie teaches him to kick and to buck, which they'll do fast enough of themselves, and to call whorum: fie upon you!

SIR HUGH EVANS.

Oman, art thou lunatics? hast thou no understandings for thy cases, and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as I would desires.

MISTRESS PAGE.

Prithee, hold thy peace. He is a better scholar than I thought he was.

SIR HUGH EVANS.

He is a good sprag memory. Farewell, Mistress Page.

MISTRESS PAGE.

Adieu, good Sir Hugh. [Exit EVANS.] Get you home, boy. Come, we stay too long. [Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE II. [A room in Ford's house.] [Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS FORD.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

Mistress Ford, your sorrow hath eaten up my sufferance. I see you are obsequious in your love, and I profess requital to a hair's breadth; not only, Mistress Ford, in the simple office of love, but in all the accoutrement, complement, and ceremony of it. But are you sure of your husband now?
MISTRESS FORD.
He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE [within].
What, ho, gossip Ford! what, ho!

MISTRESS FORD.
Step into the chamber, Sir John. [Exit FALSTAFF.]

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE.]
MISTRESS PAGE.
How now, sweetheart! who's at home besides yourself?

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, none but mine own people.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Indeed!

MISTRESS FORD.
No, certainly. [Aside to her.] Speak louder.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

MISTRESS FORD.
Why?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, woman, your husband is in his old lunes again: he so takes on yonder with my husband; so rails against all married mankind: so curses all Eve's daughters; and so buffets himself on the forehead, crying, "Peer out, peer out!" that any madness I ever yet beheld seem'd but tameness, civility, and patience, to this his distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, does he talk of him?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Of none but him; and swears he was carried out, the last time he search'd for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here; and hath drawn him and the rest of their company from their sport, to make another experiment of his suspicion: but I am glad the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

MISTRESS FORD.
How near is he, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Hard by; at street end; he will be here anon.

MISTRESS FORD.
I am undone! the knight is here.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, then, you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man. What a woman are you! Away with him, away with him! Better shame than murder.
MISTRESS FORD.
Which way should he go? how should I bestow him? Shall I put him into the basket again?

[Enter FALSTAFF.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
No, I'll come no more i' th'basket. May I not go out ere he come?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols, that none shall issue out; otherwise you might slip away ere he came. But what make you here?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
What shall I do? I'll creep up into the chimney.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Where is it?

MISTRESS FORD.
He will seek there, on my word. Neither press, coffre, chest, trunk, well, vault, but he hath the remembrance of such places: there is no hiding you in the house.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I'll go out, then.

MISTRESS PAGE.
If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John. Unless you go out disguised.

MISTRESS FORD.
How might we disguise him?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Alas the day, I know not! There is no woman's gown big enough for him; otherwise he might put on a hat, a muffler, and a kerchief, and so escape.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Good hearts, devise something: any extremity rather than a mischief.

MISTRESS FORD.
My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brainford, has a gown above.

MISTRESS PAGE.
On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he is: and there's her thrumm'd hat, and her muffler too.- Run up, Sir John.

MISTRESS FORD.
Go, go, sweet Sir John: Mistress Page and I will look some linen for your head.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Quick, quick! we'll come dress you straight: put on the gown the while. [Exit FALSTAFF.]
MISTRESS FORD.
I would my husband would meet him in this shape: he cannot abide the old woman of Brainford; he swears she's a witch; forbade her my house, and hath threatened to beat her.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel, and the devil guide his cudgel afterwards!

MISTRESS FORD.
But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Ay, in good surmise, is he; and talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

MISTRESS FORD.
We'll try that; for I'll appoint my men to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door with it, as they did last time.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Nay, but he'll be here presently: let's go dress him like the witch of Brainford.

MISTRESS FORD.
I'll first direct my men what they shall do with the basket. Go up; I'll bring linen for him straight. [Exit.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Hang him, dishonest varlet! we cannot misuse him enough.
We'll leave a proof, by that which we will do,
Wives may be merry, and yet honest too. [Exit.]

[Enter MISTRESS FORD with two SERVANTS.]

MISTRESS FORD.
Go, sirs, take the basket again on your shoulders: your master is hard at door; if he bid you set it down, obey him: quickly, dispatch. [Exit.]

FIRST SERVANT.
Come, come, take it up.

SECOND SERVANT.
Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

[Enter FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS.]

FORD.
Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you any way then to unfool me again? Set down the basket, villain!-Somebody call my wife. - You, youth in a basket, come out here! O you pandarly rascals! there's a knot, a ging, a pack, a conspiracy against me: now shall the devil be shamed.- What, wife, I say! come, come forth! behold what honest clothes you send forth to bleaching!

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, this passes! Master Ford, you are not to go loose any longer; you must be pinion'd.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Why, this is lunatica! this is mad as a mad dog!
SHALLOW.
Indeed, Master Ford, this is not well; indeed.

FORD.
So say I too, sir. [Enter MISTRESS FORD.]
Come hither, Mistress Ford; Mistress Ford, the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband! I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?

MISTRESS FORD.
Heaven be my witness you do, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.

FORD.
Well said, brazen-face! hold it out.- Come forth, sirrah! [Pulling the clothes out of the basket.]

PAGE.
This passes!

MISTRESS FORD.
Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.

FORD.
I shall find you anon.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
'Tis unreasonable! Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come away.

FORD.
Empty the basket, I say!

MISTRESS FORD.
Why, man, why?

FORD.
Master Page, as I am a man, there was one convey'd out of my house yesterday in this basket: why may not he be there again? In my house I am sure he is: my intelligence is true; my jealousy is reasonable.- Pluck me out all the linen.

MISTRESS FORD.
If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death.

PAGE.
Here's no man.

SHALLOW.
By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford; this wrongs you.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Master Ford, you must pray, and not follow the imaginations of your own heart: this is jealousies.

FORD.
Well, he's not here I seek for.

PAGE.
No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.
FORD.
Help to search my house this one time. If I find not what I seek, let me for ever be your table-sport; let them say of me, "As jealous as Ford, that search'd a hollow walnut for his wife's leman." Satisfy me once more; once more search with me.

MISTRESS FORD.
What, ho, Mistress Page! come you and the old woman down; my husband will come into the chamber.

FORD.
Old woman! what old woman's that?

MISTRESS FORD.
Why it is my maid's aunt of Brainford.

FORD.
A witch, a queen, an old cozening queen! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? we do not know what's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by th' figure; and such daubery as this. Come down, you witch, you hog, you; come down, I say!

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, good, sweet husband,- Good gentlemen, let him not strike the old woman.

[Enter FALSTAFF in woman's clothes, led by MISTRESS PAGE.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Come, Mother Prat; come, give me your hand.

FORD.
I'll put her in. [Beating her.] Out of my door, you witch, you ragg, you polecat, you ronyon! out, out! I'll conjure you, I'll fortune-tell you. [Exit FALSTAFF.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Are you not ashamed? I think you have kill'd the poor woman.

FORD.
Hang her, witch!

SIR HUGH EVANS.
By yea and no, I think the oman is a witch indeed: I like not when a oman has a great peard: I spy a great peard under her muffler.

FORD.
Will you follow, gentlemen? I beseech you, follow; see but the issue of my jealousy: if I cry out thus upon no trail, never trust me when I open again.

PAGE.
Let's obey his humour a little further: come, gentlemen. [Exeunt FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, CAIUS, and EVANS.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, by th' mass, that he did not; he beat him most unpitifully methought.
MISTRESS PAGE.
I'll have the cudgel hollow'd, and hung o'er the altar; it hath done meritorious service.

MISTRESS FORD.
What think you? may we, with the warrant of womanhood and the witness of a good conscience, pursue him with any further revenge?

MISTRESS PAGE.
The spirit of wantonness is, sure, scared out of him: he will never, I think, attempt us again.

MISTRESS FORD.
Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Yes, by all means; if it be but to searce the figures out of your husband's brains. If they can find in their hearts the poor unvirtuous fat knight shall be any further afflicted, we two will still be the ministers.

MISTRESS FORD.
I'll warrant they'll have him publicly shamed: and methinks there would be no period to the jest, should he not be publicly shamed.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Come, to the forge with it, then; shape it: I would not have things cool. [Exeunt.]

(ACT IV. SCENE III. [A room in the Garter Inn.] cut)

continue through – short music interlude –

while the two Mistresses go reveal the events to their husbands (above?)
possible “Windsor street cross-over visuals” downstage:
play with LIGHT FOCUS to help certain moments stand-out –

Pistol & Nym & Simple chasing Falstaff (as old woman)
Mistress Quickly gossiping with John & Robert? escorting Will & Anne Page
Dr. Caius (& Jack Rugby ) steps to flirt with Anne Page
Shallow & Slender also encounter Anne Page – and Dr C? what might transpire?
Anne copies Fenton and is able to spend a few moments in his company?
Improvise street scenes based on character and plot
(include Robin?) (others?)

ACT IV. SCENE IV. RETURN TO [A room in Ford’s house.]

[Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
‘Tis one of the best discretions of a man as ever I did look upon.

PAGE.
And did he send you both these letters at an instant?
MISTRESS PAGE.
Within a quarter of an hour.

FORD.
Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;
I rather will suspect the sun with cold
Than thee with wantonness: now doth thy honour stand
In him that was of late an heretic:
As firm as faith.

PAGE.
'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:
Be not as extreme in submission as in offence. But let our plot go forward: let our wives yet once again, to make us
public sport, appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow, where we may take him, and disgrace him for it.

FORD.
There is no better way than that they spoke of.

PAGE.
How! to send him word they'll meet him in the Park at midnight? Fie, fie! he'll never come.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
You say he has been thrown in the rivers; and has been grievously peaten, as an old man: methinks there should be
terrors in him that he should not come; methinks his flesh is punished, he shall have no desires.

PAGE.
So think I too.

MISTRESS FORD.
Devise but how you'll use him when he comes,
And let us two devise to bring him thither.

MISTRESS PAGE.
There is an old tale goes that Herne the Hunter,
Sometimes a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree, and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed old
Received, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

PAGE.
Why, yet there want not many that do fear
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak:
But what of this?

MISTRESS FORD.
Marry, this is our device;
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us,
Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head.
PAGE.
Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come:
And in this shape when you have brought him thither,
What shall be done with him? what is your plot?

MISTRESS PAGE.
That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter, and my little son,
And three or four more others shall we'll dress
Like urchins, urchins, and fairies, green and white,
With rounds of waxon tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands: upon a sudden,
As Falstaff, she, and I, are newly met,
Let them from forth a sawpit rush at once
With some diffused song: upon their sight,
We two in great amazenedness will fly:
Then let them all encircle him about,
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight;
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel
In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
In shape profane.

MISTRESS FORD.
And till be tell the truth,
Let the supposed fairies pinch him sound,
And burn him with their tapers.

MISTRESS PAGE.
The truth being known,
We'll all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
And mock him home to Windsor.

FORD.
The children must be practised well to this, or they'll ne'er do't.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
I will teach the children their behaviours; and I will be like a jack-an-apes also, to burn the knight with my taber.

FORD.
That will be excellent. I'll go buy them wizards.

MISTRESS PAGE.
My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies, finely attired in a robe of white.

PAGE.
That silk will I go buy:- [aside] and in that time shall Master Slender steal my Nan away, and marry her at Eton:-
Go send to Falstaff straight.

FORD.
Nay, I'll to him again in name of Brock: he'll tell me all his purpose: sure, he'll come.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Fear not you that. Go get us properties and tricking for our fairies.
SIR HUGH EVANS.
Let us about it: it is admirable pleasures and fiery honest knavery. [Exeunt PAGE, FORD, and EVANS.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Go, Mistress Ford, send quickly to Sir John, to know his mind. [Exit MISTRESS FORD.]
I'll to the doctor: he hath my good will,
And none but he, to marry with Nan Page.
That Slender, though well landed, is an idiot;
And he be my husband best of all affects.
The doctor is well money'd, and his friends
Potent at court: he, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.
[Exit.]

ACT IV. SCENE V. [A room in the Garter Inn.] [Enter HOST and SIMPLE.]

HOST.
What wouldst thou have, boor? what, thick-skinned? speak, breathe, discuss; brief, short, quick, snapp.

SIMPLE.
Marry, sir, I come to speak with Sir John Falstaff from Master Slender.

HOST.
There's his chamber, his house, his castle. Go knock and call; he'll speak like an Anthropophaginian unto thee: knock, I say.

SIMPLE.
There's an old woman, a fat woman, gone up into his chamber: I'll be so bold as stay, sir, till she come down; I come to speak with her, indeed.

HOST.
Ha! a fat woman! the knight may be robb'd: I'll call.- Bully knight! bully Sir John! speak from thy lungs military:
art thou there? it is thine host, thine Ephesian, calls.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF [above].
How now, mine host!

HOST.
Here's a Bohemian-Tartar tarries the coming down of thy fat woman. Let her descend, bully, let her descend; my chambers are honourable: fie! privacy? fie!

[Enter FALSTAFF.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
There was, mine host, an old fat woman even now with me; but she's gone.

SIMPLE.
Pray you, sir, was't not the wise-woman of Brainford?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Ay, marry, was it, mussel-shell: what would you with her?
SIMPLE.
My master, sir, Master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go through the streets, to know, sir, whether — I would I could have spoken with the woman herself; I had things to have spoken with her from him.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
What are they? let us know.

HOST.
Ay, come; quick.

SIMPLE.
I may not conceal them, sir.

HOST.
Conceal them, or thou diest.

SIMPLE.
Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne Page; to know if it were my master’s fortune to have her or no.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
’Tis, ’tis his fortune.

SIMPLE.
What, sir?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
To have her, or no; Go, say the woman told me so.

SIMPLE.
May I be bold to say so, sir?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Ay, sir Titel- who more bold?

SIMPLE.
I thank your worship: I shall make my master glad with these tidings. [Exit.]

HOST.
Thou art clerkly, thou art clerkly, Sir John. Was there a wise woman with thee?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Ay, that there was, mine host: one that hath taught me more wit than ever I learn’d before in my life; and I paid nothing for it neither, but was paid for my learning. [Exit HOST.]

I would all the world might be so wise! For I have been censur’d and beaten too. If it should come to the ear of the court, how I have been transform’d, and how my transformation hath been wash’d and cudgell’d, they would meet me out of my hat, drop by drop, and liquor fishmonger’s boots with me. I warrant they would whip me with their fine wits till I were as crested-fallen as a dried pear. Well, if my wind were but long enough to say my prayers, I would repent. [Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

Now, whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
From the two parties, forsooth!
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
The devil take one party, and his dam the other! and so they shall be both best witted. I have suffer'd more for their sakes, more than the villainous inconstancy of man's disposition is able to bear.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
And have not they suffer'd? Yes, I warrant; specially one of 'em; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a white spot about her.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
What tell'st thou me of black and blue? I was beaten myself into all the colours of the rainbow; and I was like to be apprehended for the witch of Brainford: but that my admirable dexterity of wit, my counterfeiting the action of an old woman, deliver'd me, the justice constable had set me in stocks, in the common stocks, for a witch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you shall hear how things go, and, I warrant, to your content. Here is a letter will say somewhat. Good hearts, what ado there is to bring you together! Sure, one of you does not serve heaven well, that you are so cross'd.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Come into my chamber. [Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE VI. [Another room in the Garter Inn.] [Enter FENTON and HOST.]

HOST.
Master Fenton, talk not to me; my mind is heavy.

FENTON.
Yet hear me speak. Assist me in my purpose,
And, as I am a gentleman, I'll give thee
A hundred pound in gold.

HOST.
I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will at the least keep your counsel.

FENTON.
From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her
Of such contents as you will wonder at;
The mirth whereof is larded with fat Falstaff:
Who hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Slender, and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry: she hath consented:
Now, sir,
Her mother, even strong against that match,
And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,
And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot
She, seemingly obedient, likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor:—Now, thus it rests:
Her father means she shall be all in white;
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time
To take her by the hand, and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,—
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded.—
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

HOST.
Which means she to deceive, father or mother?

FENTON.
Both, my good host, to go along with me:
And here it rests,—that you'll procure the vicar
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,
And, in the lawful name of marrying,
To give our hearts united ceremony.

HOST.
Well, husband your device; I'll to the vicar: Bring you the maid, you shall not lack a priest.

FENTON.
So shall I evermore be bound to thee;
Besides, I'll make thee present recompense. [Exeunt.]

ACT V.  SCENE I.  [A room in the Garter Inn.]  [Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Prithee, no more prattling; go—'tis hold. This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers. Away! go.
They say there is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death. Away!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
I'll provide you a chain; and I'll do what I can to get you a pair of horns.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Away, I say; time wears: hold up your head, and mince. [Exit MISTRESS QUICKLY.]

[Enter FORD disguised.]

How now, Master Brook! Master Brook, the matter will be known to-night, or never. Be you in the Park about midnight, at Hern's oak; and you shall see wonders.

FORD.
Went you not to her yesterday, sir, as you told me you had appointed?
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I went to her, Master Brook. That same knave Ford, her husband, hath the finest mad devil of jealousy in him, Master Brook, that ever govern'd frenzy: - I will tell you: he beat me grievously, in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master Brook, I fear not Goliath. I am in haste; go along with me. I'll tell you all, Master Brook. Follow me. I'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford; on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow:- strange things in hand, Master Brook:- follow. [Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE II. [Windsor Park.] [Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER.]

PAGE.
Come, come; we'll couch 't and castle-ditch till we see the light of our fairies.- Remember, son Slender, my daughter.

SLENDER.
Ay, forsooth; I have spoke with her, and we have a nay-word how to know one another: I come to her in white, and cry "mum;" she cries "budget," and by that we know one another.

SHALLOW.
That's good too; but what needs either your "mum" or her "budget"? the white will decipher her well enough. - It hath struck ten o'clock.

PAGE.
The night is dark; light and spirits will become it well. Heaven prosper our sport! No man means evil but the devil, and we shall know him by his horns. Let's away; follow me. [Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE III. [A street leading to the Park.]
[Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Master doctor, my daughter is in green: when you see your time, take her by the hand, away with her to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly. Go before into the Park: we two must go together.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
I know vast I have to do. Adieu.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Fare you well, sir.- [Exit CAIUS.] My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying my daughter: but 'tis no matter; better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

MISTRESS FORD.
Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies? and the Welsh devil Hugh?

MISTRESS PAGE.
They are all crouched in a pit hard by Herne's oak, with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once display to the night.

MISTRESS FORD.
That cannot choose but amaze him. We'll betray him finely.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Against such lewdsters and their lechery.
... Those that betray them do no treachery.
MISTRESS FORD.
The hour draws on. To the oak, to the oak! [Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE IV. [Windsor Park.]

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS disguised as a Satyr, with ANNE PAGE and others as Fairies.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Trib, trib, fairies; come; and remember your parts: be bold, I pray you; follow me into the pit; and when I give the watch-ords, do as I bid you: come, come; trib, trib. [Exeunt.]

ACT V. SCENE V. [Another part of the Park.]

[Enter FALSTAFF, with a buck's head upon him.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me!- Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns: O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast. - You were also, Jupiter, for the love of Leda. O omnipotent love! A-dash done—first in the form of a beast. O Jove, a beastly fault! When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, in all the forest. Send me a cool rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow? Who comes here? my doe?

[Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE.]

MISTRESS FORD.
Sir John! art thou there, my dear? my male dear?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
My doe with the black spots! Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of 'Green Sleeves'; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here. [Embracing her.]

MISTRESS FORD.
Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Divide me like a bribe-buck, each a haunch; I will keep my sides to myself; my shoulders for the fellow of this; and my horns I bequeath your husbands. Am I a woodman, ha? Speak I like Herne the hunter? Why, now Cupid makes restitution. As I am a true spirit, welcome! [Noise of horns within.]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD.
Heaven forgive our sins!

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
What should this be?

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE.
Away, away! [They run off.]
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that's in me should set hell on fire; he would never else cross me thus.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS as a Satyr, ANNE PAGE as Fairy Queen, and others as fairies.]

ANNE PAGE.
Faries, black, gray, green, and white,
You moonshine revelers, and shades of night,
You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hoeboblin, make the fairy eyes.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys.
Peed, Peen, and Cricket, Gnat and Pickle-puss,
All go to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
And when you find a slot that lies asleep
And all her dishes fou and her chamber swept.
With your long nails pinch her till she cry
And swear to mend her slutish waywardy.

NYM
Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttrey.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
They are fairies; he that speaks to them shall die:
I'll wink and couch: no man their works must eye. [Lies down upon his face.]

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Where's Peed? Go you, and where you find a maid
That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
Sleep she as sound as careless infancy:
But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and shins.

ANNE PAGE.
About, about,
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.
Strew good luck, cuphs, on every sacred room;
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.
Away; dispose but till 'tis one o'clock,
Our dance of mirth round about the oak
Of Hesper the hunter let us not forget.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Pay you, lock hand in hand; yourselves in order set;
Some do thus things, some do this,
All do something, none amiss.
SIR HUGH EVANS.
But stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, lest he transform me to a piece of cheese!

NYM

- view them, thou was overlooked every in thy birth.

PISTOL

NYM - see, I have spied him by good luck:

PISTIL - his body man, his head a buck.

QUICKLY.

With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:

If he be chaste, the flame will back descend,

And turn him to no pain; but if he start,

It is the flax of a corrupted heart.

NYM

A trial, come.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Come, will this wood take fire? [They put the tapers to his fingers and he starts.]

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
O, O, O!

ANNE PAGE.

Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!

About him, fairies, sing a scornful rhyme;

And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
It is right; indeed he is full of lecheries and iniquity.

ALL [Song.] Flie on sinful fantasy!

Flie on lust and luxury!

Lust is but a bloody fire,

Kindled with unchaste desire,

And in hearts whose flames aspire...

As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.

Pinch him, fairies, mutually;

Pinch him for his villainy;

Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,

Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

[Here they pinch him and sing about him. The DOCTOR comes one way, and steals away a Boy in green;
SLENDER another way, and takes off a Boy in white; FENTON steals ANNE PAGE. A noise of hunting is made
within. All the Fairies run away. FALSTAFF pulls off his buck's head, and rises.]
FALSTAFF.
What, hunting at this time of night?
Herne the Hunter? — no, not I. 'Sblood, the fairies have made a ghost of me.
How now? Who have we here? What, is all Windsor stirring?

[Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and SHALLOW.]

SHALLOW.
God save you, Sir John Falstaff.

PAGE.
Why, how now, Sir John! Nay, do not fly; I think we have watch'd you now: Will none but Herne the hunter serve your turn?

MISTRESS PAGE.
I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher. - Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?—
See you these, husband? do not these fair yokes become the forest better than the town?

FORD.
Now, sir, who's a cuckold now? - Master Brook, Falstaff's a knave, a cuckoldly knave; here are his horns, Master Brook; and, Master Brook, he hath enjoy'd nothing of Ford's but his buck-basket, his cudgel, and twenty pounds of money, which must be paid to Master Brook.

MISTRESS FORD.
Sir John, we have laid ill luck; we could never meet. I will never take you for my love again; but I will always count you my dear.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass.

FORD.
Ay, and an ox too: both the proofs are extant.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
And those were not fairies? I was three or four times in the thought they were not fairies: and yet the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a received belief; in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Sir John Falstaff, serve God, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you.

FORD.
Well said, fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
And leave you your jealousies too, I pray you.

FORD.
I will never mistrust my wife again, till thou art able to woo her in good English.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Have I laid my brain in the sun, and dried it, that it wants matter to prevent so gross o'er-reaching as this? Am I ridden with a Welsh goat too? 'Tis time I were eloked with a piece of toasted cheese.
SIR HUGH EVANS.
See see is not to give putter; your pelly is all putter.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
"See see" and "puter"! I have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English? This is enough to be the decay of lust and late-walking through the realm.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, Sir John, do you think, though we would have thrust virtue out of our hearts, that ever the devil could have made you our delight?

FORD.
What, a hodge-pudding? a bag of flax?

MISTRESS PAGE.
A puff'd man?

FORD.
And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

PAGE.
And as poor as Job?

SIR HUGH EVANS.
And given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and methogins, and to drinkings, and swearings and starings, pripples and prabbles?

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me; I am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel; ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me; use me as you will.

FORD.
Marry sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one Master Brook, that you have coze'd of money, to whom you should have been a pandar: over and above that you have suffered, I think to repay that money, will be a biting affliction.

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, husband, let that go to make amends; Forgive that sum, and so we'll all be friends.

FORD.
Well, here is my hand; all's forgiven at last.

PAGE.
Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat to-night at my house; where I will desire thee to laugh at my wife, that now laughs at thee: tell her Master Slender hath married her daughter.

MISTRESS PAGE [aside].
Doctors doubt that: if Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius' wife.

[Enter SLENDER.]

SLENDER.
Whoa, ho! ho, father Page!
Son, how now! how now, son! have you dispatch'd?

SLENDER.
Dispatch'd! I'll make the best in Glostershire know on't; would I were hang'd, la, else!

SLENDER.
I came yonder at Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she's a great lubberly boy. If it had not been 'th'church, I would have swunged him, or he should have swunged me. If I did not think it had been Anne Page, would I might never stir! and 'tis a postmaster's boy.

SLENDER.
What need you tell me that? I think so, when I took a boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have had him.

SLENDER.
I went to her in white, and cried "mum," and she cried "budget," as Anne and I had appointed; and yet it was not Anne, but a postmaster's boy.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
Jeshu, Master Slender! cannot you see but marry boys?

PAGE.
O, I am ve'd at heart! what shall I do?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Good George, be not angry: I knew of your purpose; turn'd my daughter into green; and, indeed, she is now with the doctor at the deanery, and there married.

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am cozen'd: I ha' married 'un garcon', a boy; 'un paysan', by gar, a boy; it is not Anne Page: by gar, I am cozen'd.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why, did you take her in green?

DOCTOR CAIUS.
Ay, by gar, and 'tis a boy: by gar, I'll raise all Windsor. [Exit.]

FORD.
This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

PAGE.
My heart misgives me:- here comes Master Fenton.
How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE.
Pardon, good father!- good my mother, pardon!

PAGE.
Now, mistress,- how chance you went not with Master Slender?

MISTRESS PAGE.
Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

FENTON.
You do amaze her: hear the truth of it.
You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed,
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, since she doth shun
A thousand irreverent cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

FORD.
Stand not amazed: here is no remedy:
In love, the heavens themselves do guide the state.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
I am glad, though you have ta'en a special stand to strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

PAGE.
Well, what remedy?- Fenton, heaven give thee joy!- What cannot be eschewed must be embraced.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.
When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.

SIR HUGH EVANS.
I will also dance and eat plums at your weddings.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Well, I will muse no further.- Master Fenton, Heaven give you many, many merry days!- Good husband, let us every one go home, and laugh this sport o'er by a country fire; Sir John and all.

FORD.
Let it be so - Sir John,
To Master Brook you yet shall hold your word;
For he to-night shall lie with Mistress Ford. [Exeunt.]

END. ACT V. END OF PLAY
APPENDIX B
COSTUME ILLUSTRATIONS
Figure 2. Peasant woman (Italian) 1580s.

Figure 3. Costume rendering for Mistress Quickly
Figure 4. Gentlemen (English) 1587, 1570

Figure 5. Gentleman (English) 1595
Figure 6 “I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. Hear the truth of it: he came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.” (The Merry Wives of Windsor 1.4)

Figure 7. Gentleman (England) 1624
Figure 8. Woman’s hat (England) 1530

Figure 9. Women’s hats (England) 1550 – 1570

Figure 10. Costume rendering for Mistress Ford

Figure 11. Costume rendering for Mistress Page
Figure 12. Girl (England) 1644

Figure 13. “Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.” (The Merry Wives of Windsor 3.4)
Figure 14. "Speak to Mistress Page." (The Merry Wives of Windsor 3.4)

Figure 15. "Mistress Ford, I think your name is, if I mistake not." (The Merry Wives of Windsor 1.1)
APPENDIX C
AMERICAN COLLEGE THEATRE FESTIVAL ADJUDICATION
Production Critique
American College Theatre Festival
Region IV (Southeast)

Title of Production: The Men, Women, and Lives of Nuclear

Producing College/University: University of Central Florida

Participating Entry _____ Associate Entry __

Is this an original script? ___

Is this a student original script? ___

Author (if original or student original):

Director: Kate Ingram

Costume Designer: Kristina Dalsness

Scenic Designer: Ricardo Haemann

Lighting Designer: Dan Becker

Sound Designer: Lauren Grishment

Musical Director: ______________

Choreographer: ______________

Technical Director: Dave Greiderman

Makeup Designer: ______________

Irene Ryan Award Nominee(s):

By Department: Matt Greiderman

By Respondent: Paula Roseman

Chris Taylor
Evaluation of Student Design:

___ Costume Design Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Costume Design NOT Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Scenic Design Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Scenic Design NOT Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Lighting Design Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Lighting Design NOT Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Make-up Design Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Make-up Design NOT Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Sound Design Recommended for Regional Festival
___ Sound Design NOT Recommended for Regional Festival

Production Evaluation for Participating Entry:

___ Strongly Recommended for Regional Festival

___ Recommended for Regional Festival

___ Not Recommended for Regional Festival

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Production Evaluation for Associate Entry:

___ No Scene Recommended for National Millennium Series

___ Scene Recommended for National Millennium Series
(should be the type of scene that can play in a crowded standing audience, i.e.
something from a musical or comedy, not Ibsen!)

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Name of Respondent: [Signature]

Signature of Respondent: [Signature]

Date of Response: 1/24/02 Date of Critique Submission: 1/30/02
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Kate Ingram
University of Central Florida
Responded by Jim Simmonds

CHOICE OF PLAY

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR was a unique play in that Shakespeare used his own time and period to set the tale. In fact it is the only contemporary play of the Bard’s. Author Norrie Epstein calls the play an “Elizabethan ‘I LOVE LUCY’”. It has been long believed that Shakespeare wrote this play in a mere two weeks in compliance to the Queen’s request to see the character of Falstaff in love. But Mr. Shakespeare did not let this Elizabethan con man hit at the heats of women. He only wanted their money and maybe a little something on the side but with certainly no commitment. However during the course of the story the tables get turned on Falstaff and his Merry Wives outwit and outlast him, thus beating him at his own game. They become the true survivors! There is nothing heavy-handed about this story. The plot celebrates the domestic lives of couples, their fidelity and trust, all wrapped up in good-natured humor. I believe that is one of William Shakespeare’s works that plays better on stage rather than on the printed page.
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR is a feast of fractured English. Prominent is Doctor Caius, whose pitiful diction and imperfect grasp of meaning renders him farcically comic. Also Sir Hugh Evans has an accent so heavy that words are humorously not understood by anyone. The slow-witted Slender is given to Malaprops- “If there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon greater acquaintance.” Then you have Mistress Quickly who confuses “Alligant” for elegant and “fartuous” for virtuous. It’s all a comic romp of quick-witted schemes, lustful play and hilarious disguise. None of this should be taken seriously, but just to sit back and enjoy the rode. After all I LOVE LUCY has never been regarded as highbrow art, but is regarded as first-rate comedy. Some critics complain that the character of Falstaff was reduced to a figure of a buffoon. Nonetheless THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR has remained a favorite for over 4000 years. Yes, it has out run CATS or PHANTOM OF THE OPERA even though scholars consider it a minor work. This is a most appropriate choice for a university theatre schedule. It offers unbridled fun for actors to create classic comic characters and a chance to handle superb physical comedy. And there are always Shakespeare’s witty lines that are a challenge and a joy to tackle on stage for any actor.

Shakespeare infused his plays with a tremendous range of characters that challenge and train student actors to make creative choices physically while learning to use the voice as a true instrument of communication and musicality. Kate Ingram created a production that was effective directed and visually attractive. The cast worked extremely well together. The ensemble effort was evident in every act and scene of the play. Shakespeare’s themes of love, comic intrigue, lust and fidelity offered the cast to weave a tapestry of comic images that exhibited nicely etched characterizations. One word of caution ladies. According to Shakespearian expert Bob Graham, Falstaff accuses Mistress Ford of “carving” which was the gesture of raising and wiggling their little
finger when drinking from a tankard. It was a popular gesture during the day of whores
telling a man to come and get it! With this in mind we should consider what we wiggle
and to whom! But all in all the play is simply about fun. The script has no heavy
message, ghosts, murder, or evil intentions. The message is simply, “All’s well that
end’s well.” How many times have we as a society of TV viewers tuned in to see Lucy
and Ethel play tricks on Ricky and Fred? How many times did Lucy get the tables turned
on her after she tried to put one of her famous schemes into play? That was all just for
fun and that is exactly what the University of Central Florida’s production turned out to
be for the audience. It proved to be an excellent afternoon of theatre.

DIRECTION

I really enjoyed the contemporary Elizabethan setting for this production. It had no
gimmicks or off the wall interpretations. Ms. Ingram created a visually stunning show
that moved swiftly from scene to scene. The tempo was quick and executed with a
solidly professional comic intent. There was excellent use of the stage space producing
compelling very funny stage compositions. The structure of the play was firmly realized
resulting in a well-told story. Kate provided intricate comic detail that produced natural
and seemingly spontaneous stage situations. The entire cast responded and handled the
comic intrigue with professional ease that made their characters intent visually concise.
This was especially true of the characters of Sir John Falstaff, Master Fenton, Master
Page, Mistress Ford, Mistress Page and Mistress Quickly. The interactions and funny
interplay between Falstaff and the Wives Page and Ford were particularly strong and well
played out on stage. The comic sexual tension between Mistress Quickly and Falstaff
were also directed and executed throughout the performance. Ms. Ingram did an
excellent job in building a quality ensemble effort among her actors. The commitment of
the entire cast had towards the text and physical life of the characters was wonderfully
professional in every aspect. In response to the vocal work of this cast, I never lost
important words or phrases. The diction was strong. I think it was a wise decision not to
go with strong accents. The text itself provides the musicality of the words. The cast
allowed the words to be heard and understood with tremendous confidence. Overall the
show exhibited excellent use of movement, vocalization that greatly detailed all the
comic situations. It was expertly conceived and directed. Kate Ingram conceptually
clear and consistent through-line of story telling, her sensitivity to detail and an eye for
the farcical impress this responder. This production was Shakespeare allowed the
audience to sit back, relax and laugh. The production was colorful, smart and truly
hilarious.

ACTING

The show was outstandingly cast. I thought Kate provided a clever opening as a troupe
of actors picked the theatre to perform their play. Thus the performance became a play
with a play. I liked the sizing up of the stage space at the beginning, and then the take off
of ROMEO AND JULIET and the re-starting of the play was a stroke of comic genius.
This was all in keeping of the comic intent that would have made Shakespeare maybe
wish he had thought of it himself. J.J Ruscella was a wonderful Falstaff. This seemed to
be perfect casting. Ruscella’s timing was impeccable with his witty responses clever and greatly spoken. He has a great physical presence on stage. He did not avoid all the obvious choices for his role but managed to create a warm and endearing presence on stage. Ruscella was always on target never forcing his characterization to be over hearing or emotionally distraught. He is a generous actor giving his fellow cast members their moment in the scene. This became a true ensemble effort with each character connecting with the others. It was never out of balance. Robert Shallow as portrayed by Mark Brotherton had rather a “stiff” look about himself on stage. Regardless, Mark’s performance was centered and a comic dream. Josh Duke as Abraham slender posses great humor and a strong comic sense in his vocal and physical timing. Ryan Gilreath as Master Fenton has a tremendous vocal instrument. His vocal strength was tremendous on the stage. Ryan has the ability to create a credible performance that always demonstrates superior vocal rhythm and impeccable articulation. He is a phenomenal actor with a true comic talent. Matt Greenbaum as Master Ford delivered one of the strongest performances of the afternoon. His physical connections to the character were on target and always visually clean in comic intent and play on stage. His line delivery was superb. Chris Taylor as Master George Page equaled Greenbaum’s performance with verve and tremendous comic flair. Lara Mainard and Annie Forgione as Mistress Ford and Mistress Page made a divine comic duo. Their scenes with Falstaff crackled with wit and sensational physical and vocal humor. Both actresses posses the natural ability to visually own a scene and make it more than what is on the written page. The intellectual and comic interaction between the two ladies was foundational to the success of this production. Paula Rossman as Mistress Quickly also added a waggish brilliance to the proceedings. Her timing and facial responses defined the sportive intent to her role. It was a marvelous performance filled with warm humor and devilish intent.

I also need to mention the role of John the first, the first servant to master Ford. Played by Michael Gill with superior physical skill and precise comic timing, he was a complete joy to watch on stage. This was a finely tuned cast. There were no weak links in the performances. A true sense of ensemble, mastery of physical comedy and delivery of those great lines made was evident throughout the entire cast of performers. It was obvious the students and faculty all enjoyed themselves while on stage. UCF once again demonstrated their mastery in educational theatre. This was one of the strongest casts I have seen in recent months. It was a job greatly done!

DESIGN AND TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

The technical contributions to this production was simply amazing and a joy to behold on stage. Scenic Designer Richard Harmon created a magnificent English tutor setting. It wasn’t exactly a copy of what might have been at the Old Globe 400 years ago. But it became a stylized stage with lots of entrances, exits, spiral staircases, curtains and two basic door units. The setting became with the help of rolling platforms and the drawing back of curtains and the switching of signs the various settings needed to tell the story. But the setting became much more than that. The warm fall colors of muted yellows, gold, browns with the historical map of London painted on the curtain became a superior design that allowed the maximum room for the farcical situations that Kate created in her blocking of the show. It was an historical set that any Shakespearian play could have
been performed upon. But the color scheme and feel of the set gave the audience that we were going to see a comedy. Harmon is a superior designer that makes his designs completely theatrical and inviting to the eye. I really liked the window units on the second floor of the set. The use of shadows of the actors was a visual stunner. I really thought that the scenic contributions were outstanding and always a treat from the eye. However, I have come to expect this from the UCF technical faculty and staff. Their work ranks among the best in Florida. The lighting design by Adri Becker added color and distinction to the environment. It was a well-designed light plot that never drew attention but served the production very well. The shadow effects as I mentioned above were outstanding and artistically accomplished during the performance. Costume designer Kristina Tollefson provided beautiful creations for the cast. I felt that the colors used in the costumes perfectly matched the colors used in the set. The effect was like seeing an older Shakespearian film where the technicolored film gave a warm glow to the outfits and set. It reminded me of the color use in the old Zeffreli Shakespearian films of the 1960’s. I really liked the humor in the outfits especially with the groin cup on Shallow’s outfit. I also admired the outfit for Doctor Caius with the use of blue and the yellow-striped pants. The design and color use for the dresses for Mistress’s Page and Ford was visually superior and a distinct pleasure to the eye. This was a well-costumed play that visually supported Ms. Ingram’s conception of Shakespear’s contemporary world. Lauren Gamber’s sound design was superior in its execution and clarity. I truly believe that the technical support for this production was one of the strongest efforts I have seen this year in theatre. To all it was an incredible effort to produce professional entertainment that was satisfying to the eye and to the ear!
WORKS CITED


Shakespeare, William. *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* (Director’s cut / reprinted with thesis)

BIBLIOGRAPHY


END NOTES

Introduction

1 Melchiori, Giorgio, ed. The Arden Shakespeare: The Merry Wives of Windsor. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 2000) 2-3. Melchiori points out that over the past century or so researchers and scholars have tended to agree that Shakespeare most probably wrote Merry Wives for a “... royal entertainment to be performed at the feast held in Westminster Palace on St. George’s Day, 23 April 1597, to celebrate the election of five new knights to the Order of the Garter.” That one of these knights happened to be George Carey, Lord Hunsdon, patron of Shakespeare’s company was certainly no coincidence!

Director’s Concept

4 Brockett 167.
6 Howe. 3.
8 Linthicum 15-19.
9 Linthicum. 21.
10 Linthicum. 22.
12 Linthicum 47.
13 Linthicum 24.

Play and Character Analysis

1 Thomas, James. Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers: with New Material on Action Analysis. 3d ed. (Boston: Focal Press, 2005) The various subject delineations for my play analysis were taken from this text.
3 Melchiori. 2.
4 Melchiori. 9.
5 Melchiori. 20.
8 Melchiori. 85.
9 Melchiori. 87.
10 The abbreviation (wsp) is meant to refer to the page number in the working script used in our production of The Merry Wives of Windsor. The script can be found in Appendix A of any bound versions. It has also been scanned and will be made available electronically as well.
11 Melchiori. 63-71.
13 Melchiori. 5-9.
14 Hibbert. 124.
15 Hibbert. 124-125.
16 Hibbert. 127-131.
17 Hibbert. 131.
18 Hibbert. 133-134.
19 Hibbert. 134-135.
20 Hibbert. 140.
21 Hibbert. 141-142.
22 McNeill. 183.
23 Howe. 21.
25 Graham. 134.
26 Howe. 21.
27 Howe. 32.
28 Howe. 39.
29 Howe. 34-35.
31 Howe. 30.
32 Howe. 63.
35 Stone. 7.
36 Stone. 7.
37 Stone. 7-8.
Conclusion

2 DeWald. 96.
3 DeWald. 96.
4 DeWald. 96.
5 DeWald. 105.
7 Foley. 132.
8 Stone. 102.
9 Stone. 103.
10 Stone. 103.
11 Stone. 103-104.
12 Stone. 101-102.