

4-2017

Ambiguous Pleasure(ers): Negotiating the Bodies of Falstaff and Moll

Lauren Van Atta
University of Dayton

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses



Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

Van Atta, Lauren, "Ambiguous Pleasure(ers): Negotiating the Bodies of Falstaff and Moll" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 122.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses/122

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

**Ambiguous Pleasure(ers):
Negotiating the Bodies of Falstaff
and Moll**



Honors Thesis

Lauren Van Atta

Department: English

Advisor: Rebecca Potter, Ph.D.

April 2017

Ambiguous Pleasure(ers): Negotiating the Bodies of Falstaff and Moll

Honors Thesis

Lauren Van Atta

Department: English

Advisor: Rebecca Potter, Ph.D.

April 2017

Abstract

The British Early Modern Period was a time of shifting social ideologies where class as well as gender were mapped onto bodies and embedded in the very material conditions of life. But class and gender were not discreet categories with dichotomous definitions like 'male' and 'female', or 'nobility' and 'peasant'. They had many inbetweens, and the theater was perhaps the most glaring inbetween of all. The theater necessarily complicates definitions and ways of viewing bodies as no body is what they seem. And at the heart of these ambiguous identities lay the fat body. It is consumptive, it is transgressive, and it is sterile. It, much like the theater it is reproduced on, contributes nothing to society of cultural or economic value. It produced only pleasure. And the fat body's literary inhabitants are the ones (re)producing anxiety and pleasure. Falstaff of Shakespeare's *Henriad* and Moll Cutpurse of Thomas Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* are the problems their respective plays are trying to flatten out.

Dedication or Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Rebecca Potter for her guidance and encouragement through the various stages and focuses of this paper. I would also like to thank David Fine whose insights were invaluable when reorganizing this for, what appears to be, the final time. And to Ari Friedlander whose initial support is what started this whole thing.



Table of Contents

Abstract	Title Page
Introduction	1
I	3
II	6
III	11
IV	14

Lauren Van Atta

University of Dayton

Ambiguous Pleasure(ers): Negotiating the Bodies of Falstaff and Moll

The Early Modern theater was a self-conscious space reflecting and shaping the culture that enabled it. The stage adapted to its political climates, its dramatists creating fictitious counterparts to real heroes, like Sir John Falstaff for Sir John Oldcastle. As Falstaff can attest, the dramatists were not always so faithful to their sources. Because of its natural fantasy, the theater was a safe way of testing 'stable' sociopolitical boundaries, so long as all political gags were kept vague and light. Any commentary was most successfully hidden under the jest and the pun, which dulled its impact and, more insidiously, kept drama distinct from 'substantive literature' passed down through history. But of course, this is not what happened. 'Low' comedy was kept from the Bodleian Library for a time, but it could not be kept out forever. In fact, as dull and dry tracts against corruption, plays might not have survived as heartily as they did; but as lively comedies, veiled corruptions lived on for any audience curious enough to learn their histories. This regime of censorship may have indeed created the circumstances for the preservation of the scandal that the censors sought to control. If Falstaff had not been so flamboyant and common, if he had not resonated with the crowd, then he would have been outperformed by a cutthroat show cycle that needed to draw customers in¹.

But these sociopolitical discourses² are not the only ones to survive. A nuanced and intersectional discourse on the body (re)begun in the late 1980's and continuing to this day³ cannot be separated from the ways in which Early Modernists viewed their political and social hierarchies wherein the body politic metaphor and humoral theory

placed tangible responsibilities on individual bodies to reproduce the social order within the market place⁴ as citizens who consumed and reproduced these hierarchies responsibly. Falstaff of the *Henriad* and Moll Cutpurse of Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* are the fictional embodiments of the cultural anxiety over what happens when this consumption goes array. Falstaff and Moll are *excessive* consumers and inextricably linked to the market place through their consumption, navigating a complex social body also couched in an intersectional discourse on the body and class. This connection was problematic not only for its sheer volume of consumption, but this volume then produced a fat body with lack of reproductive value attached to it. Modes of reproduction, both economic and biological, were foundational to the emerging capitalist and patriarchal orders as they allowed for the assurance of power secured and continued through generations.

Falstaff and Moll's intentional failures to conform to proper modes of consumption and reproduction threatens that social order. Jonathan Goldberg briefly touches on the Early Modern attempt to recast the wife as a "bourgeoisie domesticated sexual object" who "support[ed] of the production of the sovereign male subject" (164), presumably through the only means accessible to an economically dependent, upper class woman: childbirth. The psychological and physical connotations of "support" require an ideological framework in which sex is naturally structured in a hierarchical manner. It should not be surprising then that the means of control over sexed bodies of reproduction are enacted over the gendered body to ensure men/male and women/female are granted or denied the economic and social access necessary to create proper minds disposed to proper social relations. Both Falstaff and Moll undercut these gendered bodies as

Falstaff's manhood is undone by his femininity and his femininity is undone by his penis, and Moll's very genitalia is in doubt leaving her, and others, a soggy foundation on which to build her gender identity.

Rather than lay within the male/female dichotomy, they occupy an ambiguous gender marked not by sex, but by the necessarily sterile, pleasure seeking body. A body found in and produced at market. The market and their subsequent consumption within it marks them, and therefore the market as a whole, as non-reproductively feminine. The excessiveness of their consumerism creates a body that is fat and, because it is fat, sterile. These were bodies whose very presence produced anxiety because these sterile bodies could not participate in the legitimate trade of the marriage market, instead they operated within an economy of pleasure. In this way, Falstaff and Moll, the bearers of fat bodies, become pleasurable bodies sought out by Mistress Quickly, Doll Tearsheet, and Laxton for sexual gratification. Through their fat bodies and their necessarily sterile and complicated relationship to society, Falstaff and Moll create troublesome, in-between spaces that resist categorization within the merging, gendered discourses of class and production.

I

Fatness was inherently problematic for those in the Early Modern Period as it was thought to signal the excesses of parasitic, aristocratic life and infertility. In her work "To[o] Much Eating Stifles the Child", Sarah Toulalan traces the links between class, fatness, and infertility. The Early Modern period "perpetuated earlier classical ideas about fat bodies that categorized them as inherently, constitutionally, less sexual and reproductively successful" and "humourally out of balance" (Toulalan 67 & 68). In no

easy way could a fat body produce in society; it could only consume. It was understandably then a market body as it might not be able to reproduce a son and heir, but it “portrays drinking as a fertile rather than a barren pleasure” (Bertram 299). This body is marked as consumptive by its conspicuous consumption and can only serve to invite consumption in others, creating a society based on this shared pursuit of pleasure, not inheritance and social hierarchy (Bertram 299).

These fat bodies then are naturally found at market. The market place was not as easily dismissed, as its products and economy were circulating throughout the body politic. Dave Postles locates the market place as a sight of societal and economic ordering, where classed and political ideologies were upheld. He notes that due to the market’s crowded nature, it doubled as a zone for the “private subversion of space”, generating social unrest and necessitating public punishment to deter future crime (Postles 42-43). So as a site of plebian pleasure whose indulgence would corrupt the industrious blood of the upper classes and cause their abandonment of Protestant productivity for bodily gratification (Bertram 303), the market place was a space of disobedience and its patrons labeled as deviant, as subverting the class norms.

Encompassed within this market space was the theatrical. Early Modern women were not permitted on stage; instead boys and men played the female part. But this very act of performance was riddled with anxiety for the Early Modern critic who viewed the world as a set of representations and performances that constituted the sexed body⁵. In her work, *Men in Women’s Clothing*, Laura Levine’s analyses the layers of anxiety surrounding the theatrical performance wherein “there is no masculinity ‘in itself,’ but masculinity only insofar as it is enacted (and re-enacted). This is a world in which action

itself is constitutive, in which the doer becomes what he does and behavior leads to constitutive change”. (55). Men it seemed were men because they enacted masculinity, but once they began enacting the female body on stage, their masculinity was at risk of slipping into the “default” female sex, into the woman within (8-9). And while there certainly existed a belief that bodies can spontaneously change sex⁶, the issue of the theatrical gender went deeper than the act of switching. What was at stake was the definitional boundary of each gender, of male and female. As Levine argues, there was an intense fear that perhaps there was no essential self to be found under the cultural performance, which left a genderless self uncategorized and shuffled into the hierarchy of the world.

The theater itself participated in the (at least temporary) acceptance of the pleasure seeking and pleasure granting body. After all, theater is a participatory, pleasurable and non-reproductive⁷ act and exists as such for those very reasons. In this way the theater produced a pleasure/consumer loop that can be continually consumed as popular plays are determined by the audience attendance and coin and popular plays were performed again and again. Theater attendance was likewise a pleasurable event. To attend was to assume the position of audience who was continually addressed through the fourth wall and who was expected to react⁸. There, product, from women to tobacco to nuts, was sold by women whose ““visibility and vocality...within the walls of the theaters would...have represented a significant performative aspect of the playgoer’s theatrical experience”” (Korda as cited in Wynne-Davies). The presence of women was not limited to sellers only, but as they attained wages they obtained tickets and their presence flooded the audience relations with sexual tension⁹. Women attending the theater invited male

lust, and committed an act of adultery by returning, even momentarily the male gaze (Gosson 48-49), decentralizing the patriarchal ordering the plays might have claimed to reinforce by producing conditions of sin. But, as a non-reproductive sphere, whatever threats the theater made to the external sociopolitical order could be dismissed once the theater was left, making it the paradoxically perfect place to produce pleasure and a dialogue as nuanced as the bodies it showcased.

II

Both texts are bookended with political problems. The *Henriad*'s plot is driven by Hal's need to progress from and revoke the tavern life to embrace and represent the stately office of Heir Apparent. Hal needs to leave the city and its people, its corrupting influences, its Falstaff, behind in order to become a warrior Harry who can defend his title of Prince Henry and later King Henry V. *The Roaring Girl* follows a similar, politically motivated pattern wherein Sebastian Wengrave and Mary Fitzallard's marriage journey opens and ends the plot. They are economically disparate enough that the patriarch Alexander Wengrave will not allow his son to marry the inferior Mary. So Sebastian crafts a plan to foil Mary against one who is even more inferior, against the gender bending "creature" Moll Cutpurse (1.1.100).

In these texts the spectacle of Falstaff and Moll's theatrical bodies *should* act as those foils to Hal and Mary, producing a righted sense of political and social order wherein the Prince is princely and the man ends up with the woman. And they do, the disorderly presence – and perhaps more importantly, Hal and Sebastian's rejection – of Falstaff and Moll facilitate these proper endings. But the spectacle of their bodies cannot be ignored. Falstaff exists outside the *Henriad* in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and in

Henry V when the boy says his lord is sick, even without name we know this lord is Falstaff (2.1.73-79), and even though Falstaff is only mentioned by name in his death (2.3.5) the theatricality of his body is replaced with the Chorus who opens and closes the play and introduces each scene. Likewise, *The Roaring Girl* opens and ends with a theatrical address. Even before the Prologus introduces the play and Moll as inextricably linked to the low comedy, Middleton makes an address to the reader that specifically upholds and defends his and Dekker's theatricality as moderate and appropriate. Then there is the Epilogus in which the character of Moll asks the audience for their help in making the real "Roaring Girl" appear, in making the play real (35-38). Despite the apparent triumph of order through King Henry and Sebastian, this order cannot escape the disordering theater and is ultimately contained within it: it is no more stable category than the bodies it relied on for its representation.

Falstaff's body catalogues class discourses by cataloging by his indulgences, and quite literally encompassing them: they are the measurements of his life. His first introduction establishes him as a threatening consumer wasting the day away in bed. After the King's declaration that he will put off his war abroad to fix the social fissures at home, the audience is directed to view one such fissure as Hal arrives in Falstaff's bedroom. As the Prince, Hal's companionship with the corpulent Falstaff is a dire political matter for the King as it seems to signal Hal's rejection of sociopolitical order for Falstaff's market body¹⁰. But Falstaff has yet to be introduced. Laying on a bed, Falstaff asks Hal the time and the young prince proceeds, with a mock outrage imbued with larger cultural anxieties, to list off all the reasons why such a question from the likes of Falstaff is ridiculous: Falstaff unbuttons his pants immediately after eating; sleeps in

public like a vagrant past noon; and replaces standardized time with activities abundant in his life like drinking, eating, and regularly patronizing theaters and brothels (*I Henry IV* 1.2.2-10). In this scene Falstaff's body can either be displayed on the bed, or hidden by it. If revealed, Hal's accusations fill Falstaff's body and form it as a grotesque site of pleasure before the audience's eyes, telling the audience the tale of how this sight came to be: establishing for the audience how to read Falstaff's body. If hidden, Hal creates a vision of Falstaff's body as grotesque before the audience sees it for themselves, establishing a normative interoperation of Falstaff's fatness that preempts any action and contradictory explanations of fatness. In either situation, Hal constructs Falstaff's body as an ideological and classed space. In doing so, Hal identifies the internal fissures his father is attempting to eradicate and identifies himself outside of them. Whatever his behaviors might be, his canonically thin body forms a sharp contrast with Falstaff's fat one and constructs himself to the audience as Falstaff's opposite, both in body and in function. Falstaff's lack of respect for the basic ordering principle of time, his body's redefinition of it into unacceptable behaviors, threatens the foundations of labour and market operating within the working hours of production and selling. As his production is inactive and only in pursuit of his own bodily gains he is unconstrained by the responsibilities of trade. So by building for the audience a Falstaff that is the example of the problematic consumer, Hal can construct his own body as economically and politically supportive.

The thin body Hal possesses should be a sight of stability and control¹¹, exemplifying the temperance of Protestantism as Hal visually avoids the "pleasure fair" Falstaff embraces, thus avoiding any behavioral taint associated with it (Bertram 298).

While he may be condemned by his father for engaging in the tavern and market economy, his body does not reflect it; unlike Falstaff Hal remains thin, unlike Bardolph Hal remains unmarked by venereal disease. His body is unreflective of his transgressive behavior; instead it signifies his readiness to assume the throne. Once he completes his “redeeming time”, the focal point of the *Henriad* his optics and actions will form a productive King (*IHV* 1.3.195). Yet, if Hal’s redeeming time is so easily interchangeable with the base action of Falstaff, then how distinct can his transformation be? His soliloquy assumes an equity between “holidays” and “work” as activities whose pleasurable-ness is only determined by the amount of time spent performing one or the other.

If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work,
But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents (*IHV* 1.3.183-85).

The actions themselves then exist on an equal footing and are removed from any morality outside of pleasure. If time spent performing an action is the determining factor of its pleasurable-ness, then how can the actions be condemned? Who can decide how much time becomes too much time? Hal still promises to engage in holiday sport, the market and tavern economies he’s leaving behind, but only in a more ‘controlled’ way. After all, fat was still considered “a basic and necessary component of the [humoural] body” (Toulalan 74). So Hal can still promise pleasure.

Hal’s desire to control market drives through the restriction of ‘holiday’ days arises from a necessarily unstable commodity fetishization within the market economy. Falstaff is defined by his pleasures and arranges his life by the best way to obtain and enjoy them, redefining time as a process of drinking, gambling, and fornicating. He even

sacrifices the war effort by allowing conscripts to buy their freedom in order to fund these self-serving pursuits.

“[P]lump Moll” is also a threatening consumer (Middleton & Dekker 2.1.258). In a short but revealing scene, Moll is fitted for a Dutch Slop, a male trouser recently popular and foreign. Following Valerie Forman’s reading of Moll’s fitting for the Dutch Slop, her body becomes a sight of cultural anxiety not merely because it is ambiguously – possibly inter – sexed, but because it necessitates a change of fashion (1546). This change, continuous and aided by influx of domestic and imported goods, underscores a larger cultural apprehension of the growing economic state. Moll is no longer purchasing the standard, male trousers; she is instead commissioning a new good to meet her demand for a trendier product. This trendiness threatens the upper class’ manifestations of difference and power¹², particularly because at this time goods became cheaper and wage labour increased, meaning access to status symbols increased. Moll can afford to not only consume luxury goods, but with her buying power she can control what goods are marketable in this unstable and self consuming cycle of fashion wherein products gain value only in terms of their being ‘new’ and ‘innovative’. But her consumption is threatening on another level. She is consuming as a man and as a woman. Because of her drag she is creating a hybridized style that can exist along either already shifting continuums of ‘male’ and ‘female’ fashion and is then able to combine them on a separate ‘androgynous’ scale.

In a troubling addition, Moll is rather ambiguously classed. She never works, yet her ancestry – her need to never work – is never mentioned, and it is unlikely her sole source of income is from theft as she denies any current activity in that vain, asserting it

was only her youthful indiscretions and current desire to warn her friends off cutpurses that named her “Moll Cutpurse” (Middleton & Dekker 5.1.298-326). Yet she has money enough for anxiety producing trousers, disposable income enough to frequent the shops with her noblemen friends. Like Falstaff, her vocation is as a consumer who produces nothing of social value, only that which “please[s]” herself without regard to others (5.2.333). It is this vocation that threatens the centralizing market regulation Hal wants to implement. This market centralization involved the regulation of the body. As Postal notes, the majority of crimes punished in the market town were crimes of sexual deviance and punishable by bodily humiliation or mutilation. There was a clear attempt to constrain the territory of the body as it was being fleshed out, and a clear attempt by Falstaff and Moll to resist containment.

III

Moll’s size further complicates gendered overconsumption as both her size and consumerism are inextricably linked with the *act* of gender switching. The trouser scene and its excess material need not be read simply as a fitting for a penis, especially as the trousers will “stand *round and full*”, and as the measurement of her thigh would “make any porter’s back ache in England” (Middleton & Dekker 2.2.86-102, emphasis mine). “Round and full” and the thigh are sexually explicit and pun on Moll’s ambiguous genitalia, but in doing so they concentrate on her body itself as excessive. Again, her size is connected back to her sexuality, as she is described as a phallic and “fat eel” (2.1.194-95). And Trapdoor plays on the sexual intimacy of recognizing her by her “wide straddle as if [he] had been in [her] belly” (3.1.188-89). Her straddle could be widened during either sex, or its aftermath: pregnancy. Either implies Trapdoor has known her sexually,

as either a mother or a lover, as “belly” was synonymous with both “womb” and “vagina”. But her straddle could also be wide because of her girth. This confused link between her size and her identity is enough to constitute a full ‘fatness’¹³ in Moll. This fatness is coupled with her drag and produces in her an ambiguous ‘extra’ that would enforce her infertility. It is this sizing that identifies Moll triply as a consumer: as fat and as a consumptive man *and* woman. She is then able to use that identity of ‘consumer’ to fashion a new, destabilized market around that identity, like she does with the Dutch Slop.

If Moll expresses the tangible fear of men and women slipping in out of their categorical boundaries of sex, Falstaff then embodies the possibly more insidious fear of effeminization¹⁴: the fear that it is not just possible to trade masculinity for femininity, but that the masculine itself can change. In his first scene, Falstaff identifies with the feminine in opposition to the masculine. He submits himself to the rule of the Moon Goddess, Diane, while denying any allegiance to the male god Phoebus (*IHV* 1.2.11-13). In *2 Henry*, he compares himself to a “sow” crushing her nursing piglets and stresses the role of his “womb” in his identification (1.2.9-10 & 4.2.16-20). In both instances, he is female and maternally so. But neither the sow or his womb are positively constructed. As a sow, his very body is ironically problematic since she crushes her offspring when she should be nurturing them. While she may have been able to conceive and give birth, her body is so expansive it cannot allow for its nutrients to leave and sustain the life of her offspring¹⁵, yet her murderous size should have prevented any childbirth at all. The sow was not just a naturally fat animal, but one who was made so by an act of sterilization as “[t]he excision of the overaires in a sow caused them to get fat and quenched their sexual

appetite” (Laqueur 31). There is an intentional fattening that occurs, presumably for an upcoming act of slaughter and (human) consumption, one that terminates not only the sow’s reproductive value, but possibly her life. Can this expand onto Falstaff? He is sterilizing himself, to what end? Though he may make the unfavorable comparison between himself and the sow, he does not seem to mind his infertility. Rather it is a visible size he laments; crying out: “My womb, my womb, my womb undoes me”. Despite its bareness, his womb betrays him and puts him (and his consumptive habits) on display. He is necessarily visible. Aside from a bed, there is nothing to conceal him. And this compulsory visibility serves to underscore his lack of productive value; he may have a womb, but unlike the pregnant woman whose enlarged, visible body is busy creating the body of her husband’s son and heir, Falstaff’s enlarged body cannot produce its own successor. His body is in this sense incredibly singular, denying the hereditary family any claim on his property or titles. It is a singularity he cannot help but proclaim, one that ostracizes him from general, respectable society, from Hal.

So his size becomes a marker of his sterility and femininity. The female body should be a sight of (re)production, reproducing heirs and producing the correct docile, domestic environment in which to raise them, but the fat female body lacks these (re)productive qualities. As Falstaff’s mothering metaphors show, his reproductive ability is problematic. Yet he is repeatedly marked as a frequenter of brothels, as a patron of Doll Tearsheet, and as betrothed to Mistress Quickly and Ursula (possibly the same woman). But unlike Poins, he is never suspected of having fathered any children (2 *Henry IV* 2.2.20.1-20.4). Moll also is continually accused of promiscuity and yet is never

accused of bearing bastards, though she at least asserts her virginity to excuse this. It is clear despite their level of perceived sexual vigor, their fertility is in no one's sights. Their sterility, traced onto their ambiguous and oversized bodies, is seductive. Instead of "lacking in sexual appetite", their fat bodies are actively sought out as ideal sexual companions (Toulalan 67). While Mistress Quickly is urging the officers to arrest Falstaff, she slips into notably sapphic language: she has "entered him and all" and she will "ride" him "like the mare" (*2HIV* 2.1.9-10, 69-70). Her speech cannot help but betray her desire. If they are both women, then their sex has no risk of pregnancy for either, it has only pleasurable value. And even if Falstaff is an infertile man, then Mistress Quickly still runs no risk of pregnancy. With Falstaff she can have a purely sexual and non-maternal relationship. Laxton likewise still chases after Moll as a sexual companion even though he could have the more than willing Mistress Gallipot. But Mistress Gallipot is fertile¹⁶. Moll is not. The pursuit of a sexual relationship with either Falstaff or Moll is the pursuit of fatness, but therein lays the appeal. Fatness is safe sex.

IV

As women garnered earning-power and took an active role as "erotic agents"¹⁷ in the market place, the need to secure the patriarchal hierarchy grew and made "[g]ender difference...into a class difference" (Goldberg 165). Work in quick reference to Eve, as male/male relations are supposed to secure intraclass relations. As the gentry is above the working class, the husband should be above the wife; a parallel meant to establish two mutually reinforcing hierarchies in the face of a new capitalistic hierarchy of money. So the upper classes attempted to establish themselves as masculine and the working class as feminine, so that as a feminine force the working class' buying power would become less

threatening. But neither Falstaff nor Moll can navigate the domestic sphere as the fat body lacks reproductive power and is therefore unmarriageable (Toulalan 73). Neither, by virtue of their size alone, is able to become a domesticated sexual object, and, by virtue of their ambiguous gendering, neither is able to secure the male relations Sedgwick's triangle insists upon¹⁸.

And so they make safe, pleasurable partners, exemplifying infertility and consumption.

They find this relief from the Homosocial Triangle and sexual appeal in and through the feminine market place¹⁹. The marketplace is a common stop for 'masterless persons' to beg. These vagrants had no property and floated between public arenas to beg. They had no productive labour value, as the 'product' of their profession is the obtainment of money, money that will produce no goods but instead probably flow back into markets and taverns, making them a threatening force to the proto-industrial society England was becoming²⁰. In the final act, Moll cants with these vagrants, one of whom is her dismissed servant, Trapdoor, and negotiates the return of a Lord's stolen money (Middleton & Dekker 5.1.286-291). Her familiarity with both masterless men and the masters connects her to the unproductive use of money she can use to control her own affairs and her own associations. Because, despite her very tangible role in acting as a female proxy between Sebastian and Sir Alexander²¹, she is able to secure her own position among the economic relations of men that do not involve the sale of her body or property. She is likewise able to secure her own sexual relations. She denies many times that she has played the whore to any man, but makes reference to her own masturbatory desire²². She declares, "I have the head now of myself" (2.2.42-43). In doing so, she declares her own position as "head" of herself and plays on the pun of pun of "head" as

genitalia; she declares that as an unmarried woman, she “takes up whatever erotic or gender position she wishes” (Paul 515). But outside of masturbation, this can also imply non-marital sex. As sexual relations were often enough to marry individuals, her declaration of remaining her own “head” is an assertion of unmarriageable sex.

This link between gender, size and consumption is threatening then in the way that it retroactively genders itself and the position for agency the role of excessive consumer allows for its adherents. Falstaff and Moll can be labeled as ‘excessive’, but their other identifying attributes are more difficult to define. Although Falstaff does not embody an ambiguous gendered and sexed identity as ostentatiously as Moll does, he complicates the reading of his body as male through his self-categorization as a sow in possession of a womb. And the act of producing that womb itself becomes a gendered process in the Early Modern period. The aristocracy’s attempt to create a gendered and classed body politic wherein the labouring and market body was the subservient woman to the aristocratic man established a social ideology of deviant womanhood in the market body Falstaff so aptly possesses. So the feminine Falstaff’s attempted and failed seduction of the masculine Prince Hal to market is troubling to the emerging patriarchal order. Perhaps more troubling still is Moll’s assertion of economic agency. Her outright refusal to adhere to a gender places her outside the acceptable trade of bodies for marriage and generation. But her consumption that produces her as plump further ostracizes her from that trade and instead embeds her more firmly in the market that would allow her freedom from Sedgwick’s triangle even if she presented herself as strictly female. Within the consumptive, female market place both Falstaff and Moll find

autonomy from the socially responsible body politic, instead choosing to pursue the pleasurable self-production of their own, fat bodies.

Works Cited

- Avery, Joshua. "Falstaff's Conscience And Protestant Thought In Shakespeare's Second Henriad." *Renascence*, vol. 65, no. .2, 2013, pp. 79-90,
<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=vah&AN=CPLI0000539347&site=eds-live>. Accessed 12 November 2016.
- Baston, Jane. "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion In The Roaring Girl." *Studies In English Literature*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1997, pp. 317-335,
<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.10.2307.450836&site=eds-live>. Accessed 7 March 2016.
- Bertram, Benjamin. "Falstaff's Body, The Body Politic, And The Body Of Trade." *Exemplaria*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2009, pp. 296-318, doi: 10.1179/175330709X449062.
Accessed 5 September 2016.
- Bray, Alan. "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England." *History Workshop Journal*, issue 29, 1990, pp. 1-19,
<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.4288956&site=eds-live>. Accessed 19 October 2014.
- Craig, Leon Harold. *The Philosopher's English King: Shakespeare's Henriad As Political Philosophy*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015.
- Forman, Valerie. "Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and The Roaring Girl." *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1531-1560,

<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.10.2307.1262161&site=eds-live>. Accessed 5 September 2016.

Green, Juana. "The Sempster's Wares: Merchandising And Marrying In The Fair Maid Of The Exchange (1607)." *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2000, pp. 1084-1118,

<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.10.2307.2901457&site=eds-live>. Accessed 14 October 2016.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will In The World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.

Goldberg, Jonathan. *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities*. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2010.

Gosson, Stephen. *The School of Abuse*. London: The Shakespeare Society, 1841.

Hamilton, Gary D. "Mocking Oldcastle: Notes Toward Exploring A Possible Catholic Presence In Shakespeare's Henriad." *Shakespeare & the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*. Fordham University Press, 2003, pp. 141-158, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2004580191&site=eds-live>. Accessed 12 November 2016.

Harrawood, Michael. "High-Stomached Lords: Imagination, Force and the Body in Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' Plays." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2007, pp. 78-95,

<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40314235&site=eds-live>. Accessed 14 October 2016.

Howard, Jean E. "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1988, pp. 418-440, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.10.2307.2870706&site=eds-live>. Accessed 12 November 2016.

Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990.

Levine, Laura. *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and effeminization 1579-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Middleton, Thomas, and Thomas Dekker. *The Roaring Girl*. Ed. Jennifer Panek. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993.

Paul, Ryan Singh. "The Power Of Ignorance And "The Roaring Girl." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2013, pp. 514-540, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edswah&AN=000324333200005&site=eds-live>. Accessed 14 October 2016.

Postles, Dave. "The Market Place as Space in Early Modern England." *Social History*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2004, pp. 41-58,

<http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.4287045&site=eds-live>. Accessed 2 March 2016.

Roe, John. *Shakespeare And Machiavelli*. Cambridge [England]: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2002.

Rose, Mary Beth. "Women In Men's Clothing: Apparel And Social Stability In The Roaring Girl." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1984, pp. 367-391, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.43447313&site=eds-live>. Accessed 12 November 2016.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Shakespeare, William. "The History of Henry the Fourth." *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*. Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. 1177-1254.

Shakespeare, William. "The Second Part of Henry the Fourth." *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*. Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. 1321-1406.

Stockton, Will. "'I am made an ass': Falstaff and the Scatology of Windsor's Polity." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2007, pp. 340-360, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40755492&site=eds-live>. Accessed 5 September 2016.

- Toulalan, Sarah. "To[O] Much Eating Stifles The Child': Fat Bodies And Reproduction In Early Modern England." *Historical Research: The Bulletin Of The Institute Of Historical Research*, vol. 87, 2014, pp. 65-93, doi: 10.1002/1468-2281.12031. Accessed 5 September 2016.
- Traub, Valerie. "The Renaissance Of Lesbianism In Early Modern England." *GLQ: A Journal Of Lesbian & Gay Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2001, pp. 245-263, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=qth&AN=9332596&site=eds-live>. Accessed 12 November 2016.
- Womersley, David. "Why Is Falstaff Fat?." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 47, no. 185, 1996, pp. 1-22, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.518377&site=eds-live>. Accessed 5 September 2016.
- Woods, Penelope. "Skilful Spectatorship? Doing (Or Being) Audience At Shakespeare's Globe Theatre." *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 43, 2015, pp. 99-113, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2016421855&site=eds-live>. Accessed 7 March 2016.
- Wynne-Davies, Marion. "Orange-Women, Female Spectators, and Roaring Girls: Women and Theater in Early Modern England." *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 22, 2009, pp. 19-26, <http://libproxy.udayton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=44142717&site=eds-live>. Accessed 7 March 2016.

Notes

¹ For the theater's need to engage with audiences see Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will In The World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004., especially 11-12.

² For research focused on the sociopolitical aspects of these texts see Craig, Leon Harold. *The Philosopher's English King: Shakespeare's Henriad As Political Philosophy*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015.; Roe, John. *Shakespeare And Machiavelli*. Cambridge [England]: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2002.; Womersley, David. "Why Is Falstaff Fat?." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 22, 2009, pp. 19-26, which offers a surprisingly sparse accounting of Falstaff's fatness to instead focus on his historical and religious background; Harrawood, Michael. "High-Stomached Lords: Imagination, Force and the Body in Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' Plays." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2007, pp. 78-95, which again, offers little discussion on the fat body; Avery, Joshua. "Falstaff's Conscience And Protestant Thought In Shakespeare's Second Henriad." *Renascence*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2013, pp. 79-90; Hamilton, Gary D. "Mocking Oldcastle: Notes Toward Exploring A Possible Catholic Presence In Shakespeare's Henriad." *Shakespeare & the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*. Fordham University Press, 2003, pp. 141-158.

³ See Toulalan, Sarah. "'To[O] Much Eating Stifles The Child': Fat Bodies And Reproduction In Early Modern England." *Historical Research: The Bulletin Of The Institute Of Historical Research*, vol. 87, 2014, pp. 65-93; Bertram, Benjamin. "Falstaff's Body, The Body Politic, And The Body Of Trade." *Exemplaria*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2009, pp. 296-318; Stockton, Will. "'I am made an ass': Falstaff and the Scatology of Windsor's Polity." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2007, pp. 340-360; Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993. There is still a lack of attention given to Moll's status as fat, with most scholars instead focusing

on her cross-dressing, see Rose, Mary Beth. "Women In Men's Clothing: Apparel And Social Stability In The Roaring Girl." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1984, pp. 367-391; Howard, Jean E. "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1988, pp. 418-440; Baston, Jane. "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion In The Roaring Girl." *Studies In English Literature*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1997, pp. 317-335.

⁴ See Bertram, especially pp. 302.

⁵ Levine, Laura. *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and effeminization 1579-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁶ Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990., especially pp. 7.

⁷ While the money made from the theater could be circulated back into the economy by the dramatists, actors, and directors like Shakespeare who bought land, this kind of commercial success was rare. It is far more likely any profit gained was put back into the acting company to sustain the practice rather than its members, see Greenblatt, especially Ch. 3, p 72-75.

⁸ See Woods, Penelope. "Skilful Spectatorship? Doing (Or Being) Audience At Shakespeare's Globe Theatre." *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 43, 2015, pp. 99-113.

⁹ See Wynne-Davies, Marion. "Orange-Women, Female Spectators, and Roaring Girls: Women and Theater in Early Modern England." *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 22, 2009, pp. 19-26.

¹⁰ A rejection further supported by Hal's prior actions towards the Chief Justice in 2 *Henry IV*.

¹¹ See Goldberg, Jonathan. *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities*. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2010., especially chapter 5.

¹² See Bertram for a discussion of the growing capitalist state, Green for a discussion of the fluid 'classing' of goods like the handkerchief, and *Haec Vir* for anxieties related to classed

forms of dress, specifically its argument that upper class women needed to be in drag to distinguish themselves from the working women who were now dressing like them, an argument that helps to enforce a 'masculine' class.

¹³ See Toulalan for the fluidity of the definitions of size.

¹⁴ What is perhaps truly remarkable about Falstaff's effeminization is not achieved through excessive contact with women, but is self produced.

¹⁵ For a discussion on the self-serving role of nutrients and fat in the humoral body, see Toulalan.

¹⁶ Mistress Galipot has a child off at nursery. She too might be seeking Laxton for his infertility as he presumably lacks a testicle needed to reproduce (Middleton & Dekker, 3.2.93).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ As possessors of infertile bodies, Falstaff and Moll have a curious removal from the Homosocial Triangle appealing to those wanting out of it. Falstaff and Moll cannot be bartered in the game of property and inheritance precisely because their bodies are unfit to secure either.

¹⁹ I have "feminized" the market not simply to follow Goldberg's hierarchical model, but because it increasingly became a space "loosed from the ideological structures that culture attempt[ed] to erect", where women who did not want to be powerless agents could find some degree of independence (Green 1094-95). Here women, and presumably Moll, could earn an income that enabled their independence and ability to navigate the marriage market themselves. Freed from parental contracting, "[p]eddling wares enable[d]...women to act as erotic agents" (Green 1085). None of the shop wives in Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* make reference to an arrangement of their marriages, not even Mistress Gallipot who is unhappily married and unsuccessfully unfaithful. But she never curses her parents for her marriage, or invents any arrangement in her 'previous engagement'. Instead responsibility is placed on her as

the manufacturer of her own problems. In the marketplace, in this class, women found some degree of agency.

²⁰ For a discussion of vagrancy and its spatial connotations see Forman, Valerie. "Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and The Roaring Girl." *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1531-1560.

²¹ Though even her involvement in the Homosocial Triangle is confused here, as she is not only being used between Sebastian and his father, but as a proxy for the 'true' Mary.

²² See Paul, Ryan Singh. "The Power Of Ignorance And "The Roaring Girl." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2013, pp. 514-540.