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Inside out and outside in: The river Thames in William Shakespeare's
The Merry Wives of Windsor

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Inside out and outside in: The river Thames in William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

The revels accounts for November 1604 record a performance of “Merry Wiues of Winsor” on the “Sunday” after “Hallamas Day” by his “Matis Plaiers” in the Banqueting House at Whitehall. This paper asks what *The Merry Wives of Windsor* might have sounded like to an audience at that site. By resituating *Merry Wives* in that cultural moment as part of an “aqueous” Christmas season it is possible to reexamine the *places* “inside” and “outside” of the play as well as the sites “inside” and “outside” of the Banqueting House. This paper offers the first sustained reading of the significance of the Thames for *Merry Wives*. The geographically informed structure of the paper takes the reader on a journey through the site of Whitehall and the working landscape beyond it. It begins by tracing a “thick description” of the palace architecture before exploring performances, journeys, and labour on the river. It puts the play performance in dialogue with the journeys that brought the actors and audience to Whitehall. The paper argues that the increased liquidity of the Folio is especially attuned to the wider geography of this “event” both “inside” and “outside” the palace in 1604. The paper concludes by turning to the threat Falstaff’s wet permeable body poses to the space of the court. Through an examination of the working world of the river it is possible to see how a threatening potentially subversive Thames intruded upon courtly space in 1604.

Keywords: Shakespeare; *Merry Wives of Windsor*; Thames; Whitehall; literary geography; place; labour; work; Christmas season 1604-1605; water.

The revels accounts for November 1604 record a performance of “Merry Wiues of Winsor” on the Sunday after “Hallamas Day” by the King’s “Ma^{tis} Plaiers” in the banqueting house at Whitehall (qtd. in Chambers 4: 171; Astington 238). This record indicates the place of William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the 1604-5 Christmas season at court.¹ Whilst we can certainly say that this was not the first

performance of this play, what the revels accounts do offer is a tantalising opportunity to consider the relationship between a performance of *Merry Wives*, a specific site, and a particular cultural moment. Considering the place of the play during this “event” allows us to ask what *Merry Wives* might have sounded like to an audience gathered on that occasion in that location in that year.

This record of a performance during the Christmas season 1604-5 provokes a number of fresh questions for *Merry Wives*. What would the play have sounded like to a courtly audience gathered in the Banqueting House? Would certain aspects of the play have gained a heightened significance within the environment of Whitehall?² Would the sensory experience of the site itself have shaped the way in which landscapes encountered within the play were experienced by audience members? By 1604 the King’s Men were situated at the Globe on the south bank of the river. Would the experience the King’s Men gained working at the Globe and the journey of the players over the Thames to Whitehall have informed the riverine geographies encountered within the play?

The river Thames is insistently present in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The social world of the play is embedded in water as the character names Ford, Brooke, and Shallow indicate. Falstaff’s amorphous form repeatedly reinforces his affinity with aquatic monstrosity. In the Quarto of 1602 Mistress Page asks how the wives might be revenged on this “bladder of iniquitie” (B4v). In the Folio this speech is transferred to Mistress Ford who deploys a much more startling image to describe the intrusion of this would-be seducer into their domestic space:

What Tempest (I troa) threw this whale, (with so many tuns of oyle in his belly)
a’ shoare here at Windsor? How shall I be revenged upon him? I think the best way

is to entertaine him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust hath melted him in his owne greace (608-612).

The metaphor of the beaching of a whale prefigures the dousing in the Thames that Falstaff receives later in the play. Mirroring the whale flopping onto the Thames shore, Falstaff is tipped back into the water. This physical displacing of Falstaff from the community is an act of restoring him to his native element. Whilst the physical act of his immersion is reported in both texts, the Folio's displaced "whale" (608) which replaces the Quarto's "bladder" (B4^v) is, I suggest, part of a significant shift in the Folio's linguistic landscape which has evaded critical investigation. The incongruous arrival of the salt water Whale to the shore at Windsor is part of a larger pattern both of general water ingress into the fabric of the Folio and more specific moments of intrusion in which threatening salt water imagery emerge alongside or in contrast to fresh water references.

Richard Dutton has speculated that the Whitehall performance in November 1604 deployed the Folio or "something very like it" (Dutton 11; See Ioppolo 119). The aim of this paper is not to differentiate between "bad" and "good" texts or between imperfect and "complete" versions of a play but instead to consider more recent assertions that this is "one fluid text capable of being transformed for differing occasions, differing audiences, and differing authorial forms and meanings" (Ioppolo 120; See Ostovich 97). Neither Quarto or Folio can be thought of as fully "autonomous" (Freedman 191) nor can a single text be assumed to present a blueprint of a single performance. Yet the question remains why might the 1623 Folio be consistently more aqueous than the 1602 Quarto? Is it simply because the Folio is longer or might the Folio text gain particular significance in the performance environment of Whitehall in 1604? Taking this difference as my starting point I want to explore the impact that the

increasing liquidity of the Folio might have achieved in that location in that cultural moment. It seems to be especially attuned to that site and, as this paper will suggest, in its printed form in 1623 the Folio seems in places to bear the impression of the “event” of that performance. This paper uses the play to read the site as much as it uses the site to reconsider the Folio. Falstaff’s aqueous body is not incidental to this argument. Instead I suggest his displaced body is integral to a sited reading of this play.

Despite the importance of the Thames within *Merry Wives* no sustained reading of the river’s significance for this play has been attempted. By contrast the “exceedingly corporeal” (Traub 461) imagery associated with Falstaff in *Merry Wives*, *1 Henry IV*, and *2 Henry IV* has received a great deal of critical commentary. Falstaff’s belly is the focal point both for the insults of characters and the critical scholarship that surrounds them (See Bach 171–183). Attempts to unpack his bodily excess, including sweat and oil, draw attention to the permeable barriers of the “grotesque body” that is “never closed off from its social or ecosystemic context” (Stallybrass and White 9; 2 qtd. in Traub 462). Valerie Traub puts both Bakhtin’s paradigm and the influence of Rabelaisian carnivalesque in dialogue with psychoanalysis in order to rethink the implications of Falstaff’s association with maternal imagery. Whilst Traub considers the role of “ritual purgation” (464) in the context of such metaphors; Patricia Parker has interpreted Falstaff’s immersion as a “mock baptism” (125). For both critics Falstaff’s body becomes a gendered site of contest. In these critical readings the role the river plays in facilitating this process is as a general rather than a unique location of punishment.

Whilst the river site in the play has been neglected the relationship between Falstaff’s body and other locations has featured more prominently on the critical agenda. Seminal work by Wendy Wall and Natasha Korda places contest over Falstaff’s

gendered body in dialogue with the material culture of the household. For these critics female labour of the kitchen or the laundry provide new ways to confront the *oeconomia* of domestic management (Wall 94–124; Korda 115). His body reframes the dispute between Falstaff and the local community by pinpointing tension between the middling sort and those labouring for them. Recent work in the field of Ecocriticism has also sought to connect the vocabulary of domestic management associated with Falstaff's body to the sites of his punishment. Vin Nardizzi considers Falstaff's "wooden body" and links the landscape localized within his "finger end" with his final punishment in the Park. He uses Falstaff to reframe an "environmental discourse of forest management" (59-60). The framework of *terra firma* is used by Todd A. Borlik to recalibrate Falstaff's crimes as a "violation of the collective land ethic" (127). Adam Zucker and Jeffrey Theis turn to the park to trace the interrelated social practices of Windsor forest swanimote courts and the social stratification of poaching within the local politics of "place" in the play.³ Theis, Zucker, and Nardizzi incorporate Shakespeare's "green materials" (Zucker 23-53) to describe attempts to control Falstaff's body and the fraught question of managing crown resources as interrelated frames of reference.

The class tensions Borlik, Zuker, Theis, and Nardizzi identify with the forest can be traced in the aqueous imagery surrounding Falstaff's body. Though his discussion does not primarily focus on *Merry Wives*, Dan Brayton notes that in *2 Henry IV* Prince Hal is described as a "royal fish" linking the prince's body to "royal salvage" (110). Brayton distinguishes the body of a beached whale as a possible location for a clash between crown and community. A beached whale would have been a tempting resource-rich prize to thrifty locals and landlords alike. However, in home waters, "Tudor jurists argued that whales stranded on the coast by right belonged to the

monarch” (110). The whale is a symbol of marine mobility and connection as well as a focal point for potential clashes over rights and resources, which might pit inhabitants against the crown. Building on Brayton’s work it is possible to see how the description of Falstaff’s body in *Merry Wives* brings these competing demands into focus. Nevertheless, the fact that this description only occurs in the Folio requires further interrogation. Furthermore, whilst critics participating in the “Blue Cultural” turn in early modern studies have asked us to turn our eyes to the ocean (Mentz; Klein; Duckert); the significance of the Thameside location of Falstaff’s whale and his place in the much more varied and contentious waters of the Folio requires closer scrutiny.

As this opening discussion has illustrated, critics have increasingly sought to connect Falstaff’s body to places encountered within the play. However, whilst they have turned to the sites of punishment in order to unpack the politics of Falstaff’s body, the river has evaded sustained critical comment.⁴ In what follows I suggest that the conflicting demands of crown and community can be traced in the aquatic language of the play. Building on the conflict between crown and local community identified by Brayton it is possible to show how the wider significance of the Thames informs these tensions and frames the threat Falstaff poses to both the local community and the space of the court. Whilst most critics have focused on one setting, turning their back on either the household or the park, I suggest this play resists such exclusivity. *Merry Wives* continually puts pressure on the courtly, the middling, and the laboring waterscape in turn. I suggest that by paying attention to the entangled relationship between internal domestic spaces, the riverine landscape, and Falstaff’s body a new reading of the play’s geography becomes possible. In *Merry Wives* the courtly river and the working world of the river are brought into uncomfortable contact with one another. I am interested in how an audience member attending *Merry Wives* might experience these moments of

contact and what might inform their interpretation of what they saw, heard, and felt during a performance.

I. Thinking geographically

How might a geographically informed methodology help us to explore this performance “event” in new ways? A discussion of the waterscape of *Merry Wives* might be expected to consider Falstaff’s body in the context of water politics at Windsor or the marshy Bankside location of the Globe theatre.⁵ Instead this paper explores the “event” of the play’s performance in a specific place, Whitehall, in November 1604. I do so in order to expand the significance of site-specific readings to understand more firmly how they relate to playing in different spaces with different audiences. According to geographer Tim Cresswell “place” itself:

becomes an event rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic. Place as an event is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence. This significantly alters the value put on place as it is constructed from the outside rather than the inside (Cresswell 40).

This paper asks what new readings of Falstaff’s body might be produced by paying attention to the riverine location within the play and the Thameside location of a performance at Whitehall. What might Falstaff’s body and its immersion in the river signify to an audience in 1604 and how might the “event” of his submersion and the “event” of the performance be related?

By resituating *Merry Wives* in a localised cultural moment it is possible to reexamine the *places* “inside” and “outside” of the play texts as well as the sites “inside” and “outside” of the Banqueting House. Whilst Cresswell suggests place is constructed from the “outside” this paper explores the multidirectional travel between multiple forms of “inside” and “outside” ranging from a site to a body. I will interrogate the courtly and

non-courtly riverine geographies that informed the contemporary cultural imagination and the landscape of the play. Through an examination of the Thames, I will show how the working world of the river intrudes upon the courtly space of performance in 1604.

In order to investigate this “event” my geographically informed methodology suggests that we need to look at the site itself, what lies beyond it and the interaction between the two. The paper is structured to incorporate these inward and outward movements to and from Whitehall by martialing a variety of material into these inward and outward trajectories. Firstly, I examine the composition of the site at Whitehall and the self-conscious manner in which the palace increasingly brought the outside inside through the architectural development of the site and significant performance choices during the Christmas season 1604-5. After that we turn to the Folio and trace the ingress of water into the text and the way in which an audience member might connect its imagery to performances outside the palace on the river and the streets in 1604. Next we turn to two types of journey, the journeys the court took throughout the year and the journeys the actors and props would have taken to Whitehall for the performance of *Merry Wives*. Finally, we examine the immersion of Falstaff in the Thames and how that contact with the working world of the river might be read by a courtly audience in 1604. We end then by considering contact with water which threatens to enter the body. By considering the “event” of the performance as part of this wider set of movements between Whitehall and other sites this paper argues that the text and its texture were altered by that wider performance context. Before turning to the journeys to and from the palace that brought actors and audience to court in 1604, the next section begins by tracing the palace architecture. It delineates the possible continuities between descriptions of Falstaff’s body and the bodily experience of attending the play at that site.

II. Outside inside at Whitehall palace

Merry Wives at Whitehall in 1604 transformed the play but the performance also refigured Whitehall itself. Recent work on site-specific drama by Susan Bennett and Mary Polito indicates the rich potential of “Thinking site”, in other words, paying attention to “the meaning already associated with the places of [...] production” (11). Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks have suggested that “other occupations – their material traces and histories – are still apparent” in the locations of performance. Such performances are not just “inseparable from their sites” instead they “recontextualis[e]” (23) the site. A consideration of the performance in 1604 therefore necessitates an examination of Whitehall itself and how its architecture, traces, and histories might shape the experience of the audience. Such a reading would provide a “thick description”⁶ of this place and event of performance.

Scott A Trundell notes that sites of early modern theatre often had “evocative surroundings, with lingering sounds, sights, and [...] smells” (230). In her work on Ben Jonson, Holly Dugan explores the consecutive performances of *Bartholomew Fair* in 1614 at the Hope and at Whitehall. Dugan contrasts the olfactory experience of watching the play at the Hope with the privileged space of performance at Whitehall. At stake in Dugan’s reading is the value of a phenomenological approach to the relationship between site and performance. James’ interest in regulating the city and his infamously sensitive nose suggest that the experience at Whitehall might be different (Dugan 195-213). Nevertheless, there is a danger in suggesting Whitehall was a detached space that provided an environment unlike the sensory overload of the public playhouses. In what follows I pay close attention to the occasion of this particular performance by exploring the built environment of the palace. It is often acknowledged that a stark divide between public and private space at court is anachronistic (See

Barton, 115-28; Crawford, Dustagheer and Young 60-1). In the “thick description” of the performance of *Merry Wives* provided here I take this argument a stage further and suggest Whitehall’s internal chambers and its external landscapes were inter-animating.

The built environment at Whitehall was an essential part of the performance of power displayed to visitors. The heightened self-conscious space of the court found expression in a number of significant water features incorporated into its architecture. Whitehall functioned as a place of pause in a set of journeys within England. On 5 July 1600 a Czech traveller, Baron Waldstein, visited and his account indicates a set of trajectories through the fantasy on offer at the palace.

[W]e then went on into the nearby palace, the royal residence known as Whitehall [...] It is truly majestic, bounded on the one side by a park [...] and on the other side by the Thames. [...] The Queen’s bed-chamber has rich tapestries all round: The adjoining room is reserved for the Queen’s bath: the water pours from oyster shells and different kinds of rock. [...] There is a view from the window here of a most lovely garden: [...] in the centre is a fountain, and water from it squirts up through concealed pipes, soaks people standing near. Beyond the grounds of this royal residence there is another palace; it contains a rib bone from a most enormous whale which is well worth seeing. (*Diary* 37-58)

Whitehall presents a realm in which water, oyster-shells, and whalebones are reconfigured to astound and delight the viewer. Furthermore, the account indicates a set of marine-themed palace landmarks, which appear to make playful reference to the proximity of water. The Jacobean period saw the retention and extension of this artificially engineered contact zone (see Thurley 65-67; 75-76).⁷ A fountain in the privy gallery creating the sound of running water inside was one of the “key notes” within the “soundscape” (Smith 91) of the palace. A performance of *Merry Wives* in 1604 could capitalise on this aqueous aesthetic, which also heralded an increasing interest and

investment in waterscaping at this site. In 1623-4 James had a “bottle house” built underneath the latest Banqueting House. Remains of drinking vessels found during the excavation in 1964 and a poem, a “dedication of the Kings new cellar” by Ben Jonson, indicate this was a space for drinking and revelry. Isaac de Caus was paid “for making a ‘rocke’ or grotto at an agreed price of £20, adding ‘shell worke’ to this in 1625-6 at a further cost of £10” potentially with additional fountains (Colvin 4.2: 33; Thurley 88). Inspired by the artificial habitat within the Elizabethan bathroom the drinking den was engineered to echo riverine, estuarine, and “liquid landscapes” beyond the palace walls.⁸ It is clear that in the years following the Whitehall performance of *Merry Wives* preoccupation with aqueous materials intensified.

The water features inside and outside the palace mimic continental models with water jokes and trickery to delight and amuse spectators (See Sawday 42-49; 189-192). At Whitehall the aesthetic of water was utilised to re-scape the inside of the palace. The 1581 Banqueting House in its temporary incarnation was “elaborately decorated” (Astington 51). Holinshed’s account of the construction of the Banqueting House indicates that it was constructed out of “great masts” and the “walles of this Howse was closed canvas, [...] painted [...] most artificiallie with a worke called rustike, much like to stone” (Holinshed 1315; See Colvin, 320; Thurley, 68; Astington, 133–4). Decorated with hanging branches of candles, fruits, and birds providing birdsong, the inside mimicked the outside providing an evocative setting for Evan’s song in *Merry Wives* with its refrain “To shallow rivers, to whose falls/ Melodious birds sings madrigals” (1174-1175). Plates of metal were needed to protect the roof and to prevent tallow from the candles dripping onto either the performers or the audience. The continual risk of falling tallow, the olfactory trace in the air, and the contrasting smell of a few beeswax candles closest to the king, would all draw the audience’s attention to the

role of candles, wax, and light within the performance environment (Graves 160–165; 14–15). With such a heightened sensory zone within Whitehall more broadly, and the Banqueting House in particular, an evocative space was created for performing tactile encounters of the kind we find in *Merry Wives*.

The interrelated fields of body, household, and landscape are brought into focus in the imagery surrounding Falstaff's immersion. In the Quarto, whilst describing the experience of coming into contact with the river, Falstaff exclaims:

Well, and the fine wits of the Court hear this, Thayle so whip me with their
keene Iests, that theyle melt me out like tallow, Drop by drop out of my grease.
Boyes! (G3v)

In the Folio he describes his bodily distortion in different terms:

if it should come to the eare of the Court how I have beene transformed; and
how my transformation hath been washd and cudgeld, they would melt mee out
of my fat drop by drop, and liquor Fishermens-boots with me (2310-2314).

Through the description of Falstaff's immersion with its dripping tallow and smearing grease the highly charged site of performance would intrude into the play-world. At this moment in both the Quarto and the Folio the text and performance context can be seen to work symbiotically. For audience members and actors the outside is brought inside the play-world. Whilst both Quarto and Folio appear to heighten this sensory dimension of the site, the linguistic shift in the description in the Folio draws on a local riverine economy in a way that the Quarto does not. The simile of cheap candles made from mutton fat is recalibrated into a process associating an aqueous body with both the littoral community and a single drop of grease. This in turn becomes the site of potential contest between court and community as the transformation brings elite and laboring communities into contact.

Like Falstaff's whale, this Folio description renders his body more aqueous; but why is this 'transformation' reimagined yet again as an aquatic translation? What further connections might an audience member in 1604 have made between the linguistic landscape of the play and the place of its performance in the Christmas season? The distinctly littoral "translation" enacted on Falstaff's body in the Folio would be keyed into the texture of the performance environment. The "rustic" rockwork on the walls of the Banqueting House resembled organic underwater spaces echoing architectural spaces within the palace and the riverine environment just beyond the privy stairs. By indicating that immersion in the Thames has the capacity to physically refigure Falstaff's body this aqueous inflected Folio description indicates the cultural currency of contact with water. His body is reframed and materially threatened by competing definitions of riverine value. This shift in the landscape within the Folio description is more significant than it might at first appear. The threat to Falstaff's body and reputation at court is posed exclusively as a challenge from the domain of the laboring riverscape. In the concluding section of this paper I will turn again to these fishermen and whitsters in order to consider the impact of water on the body in 1604.

In the intertheatrical context of the Christmas season the riverine and estuarine transformations of *Merry Wives* would be heightened. In his essay on "Masques and Triumphs" (1625) Francis Bacon suggests that the colours that "shew best" at court under candlelight are "white, carnation, and a kind of sea-water-green" (Bacon 416). There was clearly an interest in translating the Banqueting House into a "sea-water-green" space in the 1604-5 Christmas season. On 6 January 1605 the interior of the Banqueting House was transformed into a landscape of liquidity for Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*. A landscape was created showing a wood filled with scenes of hunting. Elaborate masque machinery was used to create an artificial sea with moving

waves facilitating masquers entering on a mother of pearl shell. The masquers carried torches “burning out of whelks, or murex shells” (l. 43) and were accompanied by hybrid marine figures including “six huge sea monsters” (l. 40) and Oceanus in “flesh blue” with a “robe of sea-green” and “garlanded with alga, or sea-grass” (ll. 28-30). Inigo Jones experimented with coloured water, “moving, indirect, and coloured illumination” through oiled paper, and light “refracted from polished metal” to find different ways to illuminate the space with interior water effects (Ravelhofer 162).

This oceanic investment was not limited to the masque culture of the 1604-5 Christmas season. The plays performed at the festivities that year included several preoccupied with storms and shipwreck: Shakespeare’s *Othello*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *The Merchant of Venice* (which was performed twice). These liquid landscapes were complemented by the urban and bodily liquidity of Jonson’s *Every Man Out of his Humour* and *Every Man In his Humour*. The only seemingly “dry” plays that season were Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. However, performed before the King in January 1605 even *Love’s Labour’s Lost* incorporated a discussion of a lady’s “sea-water-green” (1.2.80) “complexion” (1.2.79). This season, then, took a distinctly oceanic turn as the King’s men performed plays preoccupied with different degrees or different modes liquidity.

The aquatic interior of Whitehall, both its permanent structures and temporary spectacular mechanical devices, mirror the river outside and the history of the site itself. In May 1596 Stow records flooding at Stratford and Lambeth. The flooding caused by heavy rains allowed the river to break over the highway. Several drowned in Lambeth during the river’s floods and Stowe records that those who were “not on horseback were borne on men’s backs, and rowed in wherries” (*Summarie* 406). For those who were not new to the court a performance might have brought back memories, sights, and sounds

visible on the opposite side of the river. Built on reclaimed land, Whitehall and Westminster remained vulnerable to the river.⁹

I dwell on this exploration of Whitehall's internal configuration because it is essential to the site-specific nature of *Merry Wives* in 1604. The re-working of interior spaces and surfaces had the capacity to refigure performance. Julie Sanders has urged us to consider landscape "not as a static text to be 'read' but as dynamic sites of enactment, re-enactment, and performance" (*Geography* 10). The engineered features of Whitehall were designed to make the performative capacity of landscape part of the sensory experience of visitors and inhabitants. They simultaneously offered and threatened potential contact with water. In its on-going re-enactment, the oceanic landscape was part of the fabric of the built environment. The rich set of water referents created a complex ecology within which the play's verbal economy works in new ways. This includes the oysters for the interior design of the Queen's bath, the whalebone in the palace grounds, the sound of running water, and the rustic of the Banqueting House itself. As the next section will demonstrate, *Merry Wives* is a play alive to the vocabularies and trajectories of water commodities. The heightened liquidity of the Folio seems to bear the architectural traces of a performance shaped by the sensory geography of the palace. However, the environment did not just shape the text. It is important to emphasise the active role of the play in a two-way encounter between text and site within Whitehall. In the next section of this paper I will first travel inwards and trace the altered liquid landscape of the Folio before showing how we can extend our frame of reference beyond the walls of the palace to consider how the movements of the court in 1604 would inform their experience of a performance in that year. *Merry Wives* would have sounded different to an audience in that cultural moment, I argue, as a result of a combination of these movements and journeys on the river itself.

III. Fluid text and riverine performance

Before turning to the waterscapes outside of the palace it is necessary to situate the performance in 1604 in relation to the liquid landscape of the play texts themselves. As I have already suggested, I am concerned here with the features of the text that made it especially “fluid” to different occasions. In this section I will explore how the increasing liquidity of the Folio might enable audience members to connect riverine performance in the play to performances on the river and the streets in 1604.

Merry Wives is a play that abounds in water related imagery and repeatedly suggests contact or potential contact with water through verbal threats between characters. *Merry Wives* moves between fresh and salty frames of maritime reference. The play opens with a discussion of “fresh fish” (24) and “salt fish” (24) where Shallow appears to differentiate both between the freshly caught “luce” (19) and the dried fish preserved through salting. This is a comparison that also functions as one between the fresh water “luce” and the salt water cod.¹⁰ This opening scene indicates a broader interest in water seen throughout and, crucially, this is dialogue that is not present in Q1. In fact the play appears to accrete references to water including the “froth and scum” (151-152) of verbal threats between characters. These features of the Folio would have amplified the awareness of the sensory impact of the language of liquidity.

Merry Wives appears to move from the deep to the shallows and back again and by 1.3 Nim indicates “[t]he anchor is deep” (344).¹¹ It is here that we encounter the language through which Falstaff’s pursuit of the Windsor wives is described:

She is a Region in Guiana: all gold, and bountie: I will be Cheaters to them both, and they shall be Exchequers to mee: they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both (359-363)

In many ways Falstaff's comparison is conventional; the reference to Exchequer officials in charge of "supervising estates forfeited to the Crown (escheats)" (*Arden* 150n) indicates Sir Walter Raleigh. As Lord Warden he was charged with "the Duchy management" in 1585 but by 1595, as a result of an oversight on his part, the crown lands in Cornwall were lost (Haslam 92; 110). The description of Falstaff's projected acquisition of the wives is therefore articulated through Raleigh's moment of failure. It is a transaction administered through a failure in governance. Falstaff's description of the wives as "Excheckers" and "cheaters" is present in Q1 and this is accompanied by the command to "Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores" (378). In fact this is the first set of water related images in the Quarto. By adding the reference to "Guiana" the Folio strengthens the connection to Raleigh. His voyage to South America in 1595, published in 1596, appears to be the topical focus of these tropes (See Raleigh). Falstaff conflates Guiana with Cornwall and reframes both through the international trade that passed along the Thames. As I will go on to argue, accretion of water imagery in the Folio shifts the emphasis of these conventional tropes, mobilised by Falstaff in 1.3, and anchors them more firmly within the specific "liquid landscape" of mercantile exchange centred around the Thames.

Just as Falstaff sent his letters off via his "pinnace" they are received and rebutted by the wives in 2.1 of the Folio using the same language:

Mistress Page: [...] hee would have boorded me in this furie.

Mistress Ford: Boording, call you it? Ile bee sure to keepe him aboue decke.

Mistress Page: So will I: if hee come vnder my hatches, Ile neuer to Sea againe (631-636)

The linguistic landscape of the Folio is crossed and re-crossed by waterborne communication which, if only metaphorically, connects the households in the play. By

2.2 Pistol has picked up this language, exclaiming:

This Punke is one of Cupids Carriers,

Clap on more sailes, pursue: vp with your fights:

Give fire: she is my prize, or Ocean whelme them all. (897-899)

The Folio intensifies oceanic connection found in Q1. My point is not simply to underscore that these differences are informed by Whitehall's waterscape but to push that further and assert that the Folio reworks the wider performance culture of 1604 and, more specifically, the deployment of the river in the performance of monarchical authority.

Julie Sanders has considered the theatrical capacity of the quotidian life of river (*Geography* 18-64). The Folio seems more preoccupied with the ocean, maritime traffic and estuarine communities. Yet performances on the river illustrate how these might be intertwined and thereby connected in the cultural imagination of audience members in 1604. An exchange similar to the one that Pistol describes in jest was depicted on the water of the Thames in 1604. This water-work was organised in honour of the king as he processed from the Tower to Westminster. It was financed by the Cinque ports and, according to Gilbert Dugdale, it was erected on the water near the Tower and included an island with a castle and a fortress. The island was supported on two barges whilst two pinnaces "rig'd and armed" began "to assault the castle" and then presented "the taking of it". These actions took place on the Thames during the "Royal Progresse from the Towre of London through the Cittie to his Highnes' Mannor of Whitehall". The Tower was emptied of its prisoners, including Raleigh, and they were relocated to the Fleet (Dugdale B2v; Nichols 1: 415). This entertainment in honour of the king

translated working boats into a courtly display of power, it also brought a scene of coastal defense to the waters of the river adjacent to the city. On 15 March 1604, at Fenchurch Street “Tamesis” was presented in a “skin-coate made like flesh, naked and blue” with a “mantle of sea-green” leaning “his arm upon an earthen pot, out of which water with live fishes” was “seen to run forth and play about him.” Within the entertainment itself the “Genius of the Place” berates the “sluggish waters” which “seem to creep”, commanding Tamesis to “rise and swell [...] above thy banks” and “from thy liquid limbs this slumber shake” (Dekker 237; Nichols 1: 385). This Tamesis in the streets was simultaneously conventional and striking, with real river fish redeployed for the display.

The piscine body of sluggish Falstaff, who is repeatedly aligned with liquidity, might seem to invoke these recent and conventional depictions of riverine and oceanic bodies in the entertainments on both the Thames itself and in the streets. Sanders highlights the centrality of whales in the local cultural imaginary evident in the Lord Mayor’s show. Whales and dolphins could be represented through “pasteboard props” (*Geography* 60; See ‘Staging’ 33-35) upon the Thames itself. The result was the transformation of the space of the Thames into an oceanic space of liquid connection. In 1609 Anthony Munday staged a whale “casting water out of his ffynnes, and fyer out of his mouth” accompanied by a male mermaid “combing his tresses”, and a “lady Thamesis” seated on its fins (Robertson and Gordon *Calendar* 75). The imagery associated with Falstaff appears to re-inflect royal and civic presentations of the Thames rendering him as a grotesque personification of these aquatic figures. Meanwhile the presentation of a Thames, who could be either male or female, reinforces Falstaff’s own unstable gender identified by Traub and Parker. For the courtly audience in 1604 the riverine imagery within the play would be evocative of royal and indeed civic

performance of authority on the river itself. The descriptions of Falstaff's fluid gender and the language he deploys are part of the broader performance culture of the river. Framed by these other journeys and performances, Falstaff's body could be understood by a contemporary audience as a reworking of these modes of display. In so doing, its performance appears to destabilise some of the claims to courtly or civic authority that such devices seek to mobilise.

The river was not simply a site of performance for imagined oceanic invasion. According to Stow, in 1574 a "monstrous fish of the sea did shoot himself on shore, where for want of water beating himself on the sands he died" (*Abridgement* 314) at the Isle of Thanet. In 1606 a porpoise was caught in the waters of the Thames near Westham and "a few dayes after, a very great whale came up within 8 mile of Lon[don] [...] and when she tasted the fresh water and scented the land she returned into the sea" (Stow *Annales* 880). Whales and porpoise were considered portentous of political events, the beached whale before the execution of Charles I for example, or water events such as an approaching flood (See Ward 56; Brayton 127; 131). Falstaff as a whale in the Folio, therefore, appears to remind the audience of this contemporary cultural association. As a beached whale he pre-emptes the imminent approach of Thames waters as the play progresses.

Falstaff's belly full of oil highlights other marine products in the visual and verbal textures of the play. *Merry Wives* may have been performed as early as 1597, just a year after Spitsbergen was discovered by the Dutch. In 1607 Henry Hudson ventured to Spitsbergen. The London Muscovy Company imported whale oil, "fines" and whalebone (Sanders *Geography* 56). The whalebone at Whitehall described by Waldstein, whether from Spitsbergen or royal salvage from the Thames, indicates that

these materials might become part of a set of water related landmarks reflected in the verbal and visual economies of the stage.

The play might set up a complex network of riverine associations for an audience in 1604. *Merry Wives* is not only preoccupied with ocean-bound and returning vessels, the Folio indicates a number of trades which relied on river transportation. This includes the links to Tyneside and the sea-coal carried to London via the Thames and a network of coastal trade. The promise of a posset “at the latter end of a sea-coal fire” (406-407) hints at this broader set of trajectories of trade and consumption through which local and regional commodities were brought to the city. At Westminster the Kinges Bridge was so busy as a common landing for the unloading of timber, wood, sea-coal, and other provisions that it required repair in 1613. The play signals an awareness of this commotion close by, and products that were transported on the river function as part of its visual and verbal economy. Another set of products in the play include its “mussel-shell[s]” (2246) and “herring” (1077).¹² In 2.2 Pistol exclaims “why then the world’s mine Oyster, which I, with sword will open” (774-775). Collectively these products contribute to the series of movements and processes that connect the internal space of the households to the external riverscape. They form one of a set of textual coordinates that map the play onto the site of the royal household. Like the narrative movement of this section out from Whitehall to performances on the river and the streets, this play seems to delight in the trajectories in and out of the Thames turning the inside out and the outside in. The space of the Banqueting House is remapped with the trade and traffic of the river in a manner that potentially challenges the ability to separate royal and mercantile river, turning the internal courtly space into an external working terrain.

IV. Journeys to and from Whitehall

As the last section began to indicate, an attendee at a performance in 1604 might perceive in the linguistic landscape of the play certain connections between the courtly space at Whitehall and the trajectories of pageantry and trade which stretched out beyond its walls to the river. The play figures this economic activity and the Folio in particular generates cultural capital out of riverine economies. Social value is communicated and contested through imagery associated with the cultural life of the river. To fully understand the experience of audience members at a performance of *Merry Wives* at Whitehall in 1604 it is necessary to consider another set of journeys which would have shaped its significance for that collective community. This section of the paper follows the journeys of people and objects to and from the Whitehall in 1604.

The Banqueting House was described by John Stow as an “old rotten, sleight builded banqueting house” (Astington 112). In 1604-5 a survey was undertaken and presented to Robert Stickells, a naval architect, who undertook the work of demolishing it in 1606 and building a replacement structure. The timber for the structure was transported from Pamber Forest by river past Windsor and on to London. The archives of the Royal Works show descriptions of pits similar to those encountered in Falstaff’s final punishment in the park (See Nardizzi 77). A performance of *Merry Wives* in 1604 appears to pre-empt the journey of the materials for the new Banqueting House in 1606.

In 1604 *Merry Wives* returned the courtly audience to locations they had repeatedly visited as part of their progress. The King’s Men temporarily remapped Whitehall as Windsor as they traversed between the Ford family dwelling, Windsor forest and, in the Folio, Datchet Mead with its “muddie ditch, close by the Thames side” (1364-1365).¹³ The performed geography of *Merry Wives* would have been familiar to

the court as 1604 was marked by four visits to Windsor in July, September, and October. The summer progress of 1604 took place between 24 July and 14 August. At this point it was interrupted by the Spanish embassy, which necessitated the swift return of the King to London (Chambers 118-121). During the Spanish visit, the guests were lodged in Somerset House and members of the King's Men were ordered to be in attendance "throughout their stay". As grooms of the chamber the company sharers wore scarlet cloaks as they had during the king's entry (Gurr 51). Before leaving for the summer progress the court was situated at Whitehall and it returned to Whitehall on 19 August so the peace treaty could be signed. The treaty itself was sworn on 29 August in the chapel at Whitehall (Dillon 83). After the Spanish visit the progress was resumed until 6 September. This stretch of the progress concluded with a visit to Windsor for nine days. By the 16 October the court returned to Whitehall. The performance of *Merry Wives* by the King's Men within the Banqueting House can therefore be located within this wider set of interweaving journeys between Whitehall and Windsor. The frequency of these movements between Windsor and Whitehall is notable as the court was only at Windsor once in 1605 and twice in 1606 (Chambers 118-121).

Leah Marcus notes that in the Folio *Mistress Quickly* remembers "when the court lay at Windsor" (831) whilst "Doctor Caius describes the court as nearby" (Marcus 85). Marcus resolves this textual discrepancy within the Folio by suggesting it refers both to a "previous period of residency" and a recent return to Windsor (85). *Quickly* fondly recalls "coache after coache", and the numerous "letter[s]", "gift[s]", "sweet smells", "silk", "gold", "wine", and "sugar" brought by the procession of visitors (834-838). The summer progress of James in 1604 allowed the social nexus of the court to be transposed and this "portable" community could range in number from 30 for short trips to "350 for a major journey" (Cole 42). Just as the court was

transportable, the country estates visited along the route could also be landscaped for the pleasure of the monarch.¹⁴ In May 1603 James visited Sir Francis Carew and his gardens at Beddington (Chambers 116). Within the garden, originally built for Elizabeth, a miniature landscape was engineered to include a stream with:

two little corn mills, [...] driven by water. There are also small boats and a little naval vessel lying at anchor on the water. Further up there is a beautiful pleasure house, artificially built with all kinds of shells. Inside an animal with many heads with jets of water issuing forth. Nearby runs a very clear clean water with very many trout therein. (Strong 234-5)

The garden emulates the Italian gardens of the 1590s and appears to be inspired by the European craftsmanship of Bernard Palissy or of Salomon de Caus at Hatfield (Strong 234).¹⁵ Such gardens have been shown to be “closely related” (Dillon 54) to theatres and echo the internal and external landscaping undertaken at Whitehall. Carew’s garden mimics the actual location of Beddington on the river Wandle, a tributary of the Thames, replicating it in miniature. Its status as a “celebrated” trout stream is reflected in accounts of payments for carrying real trout in water from the river to the miniature replica (Giueppi 174 qtd. in Strong 236).¹⁶ Carew’s garden mimicked the place of Beddington in miniature through its replication of the estate’s resources and landmarks. A community of labour was shaped around what the Wandle’s waters provided and in its reimagining of those resources, the garden created an aesthetic of labour. This mode of mirroring external landscapes internally through labour is central to this discussion of *Merry Wives* in performance at Whitehall in 1604.

Merry Wives performs place “as an event,” (Cresswell 40) and through that process a liquid landscape was created for the monarch’s viewing pleasure. For a performance at Whitehall the costumes, properties, and the players themselves were

transported by barge to the palace. Material supplied by the revels office had to be transported by boat to riverside palaces for court performances. Properties were wheeled by wagon through the streets and loaded at adjacent wharfs before being returned by boat after a performance (Astington 12). Even materials brought by the companies themselves were usually brought by boat. John H. Astington notes that the bed required for the performance of *Othello*, itself an oceanic play, on 1 November 1604 may have “made the trip by boat from Bankside to Whitehall stairs” (Astington 200). Along with delivery of beer and other commodities for the festivities of the aqueous season, the buck-basket would also have made the voyage across the Thames from the Globe. Korda points out the parallel life that the buck-basket prop had because “Dutch and Flemish laundresses, whisters, and starchwomen in the environs of the commercial theaters” might have received costumes from the King’s Men in the very same basket used onstage for Falstaff (Korda *Labour* 116-117). Within the labourscape south of the river, Korda suggests that the buckbasket would “recall” (*Domestic* 210) the “labour” (*Domestic* 218) that was often, though not always, female in nature.

The stage property connects performance site and landscape because whiting or bleaching grounds were located in Paris garden (‘Paris Garden Manor’ 98-99). As Korda and Eleanor Lowe have shown, laundresses worked outside near water sources, using portable and collapsible structures to create work surfaces, and then hung clothing on hedges to dry (Korda and Lowe 306-321).¹⁷ As this furniture was erected outdoors, these places of work illustrate the trajectories of labour linking “inside” and “outside” on the adjacent riverbank. In *Merry Wives* local labour is brought to the significant liminal space just off stage as John and Robert are instructed in the Folio to:

be ready here hard-by the Brew-house, [...] trudge with it in hast, and

carry it among the Whitsters in Dotchet Mead, and there empty it in the muddie ditch,
close by the Thames side. (1359-1365)

At Whitehall the outside is brought into close, and importantly disruptive, proximity with the audience. The courtly display on the Thames which appears to be played out in the courtship of the wives stands in stark contrast with the location of his punishment. Through the mischief of these middling women the working world of the river with its “foul smocks” and trudging labourers is brought into contact with the court. For the mobile court and the equally mobile players a performance at Whitehall in 1604 was part of a set of journeys linking the performance site both to Windsor and to the theatres south of the river. The play itself brings those other locations tangibly close in the space just off stage.

V. Working world of the river

The submerging of Falstaff in the Thames is an “event” which is recounted numerous times with different effects. This repetition re-constructs the place of the river in various ways. Falstaff suggests that “water swelles a man” (1693). Falstaff’s stomach in particular is “swell’d” (1695) with Thames water so that his belly becomes synecdochal of the riverscape itself. Playing on the water-based character names Falstaff protests “Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford” (1711).

Each time Falstaff’s dousing is reiterated, his “bell[ie]” (1699) is recast as riverspace incorporating different domestic and commercial uses of Thames-water. In the Quarto Falstaff compares himself to a “barrow of butcher’s offal[...] thrown in the Thames” (1683) and his cramped position in the buck basket is rendered intolerable in the Folio by being “stopt in like a strong distillation,” (1779). The “strong distillation”

will eradicate the bodily grease contained in the buck basket, and is presumably a “boiling alkaline lye” solution.¹⁸ Korda glosses the “strong distillation” as “bleach” used by a whitster (or bleacher) in the whiting process (‘Labour’ 115). The scene repeatedly produces multiple metaphors for cramming and filling, and to the offal and “Launderers” of the Quarto the Folio adds this additional labour.

Korda and Lowe note that the transport of clothes and bedding which might be infected was prohibited during periods of plague. In particular they cite a royal proclamation from 1603 against the carrying of such items. If these items could not be burned they should be “bucked and washed in lie” (310) before being exposed to the elements. Falstaff, who is referred to as an “vnwholesome humidity” (1384-1385) in the Folio appears to be increasingly associated with plague and infection. As Korda and Lowe suggest the act of carrying and bucking clothes in “lie” further aligns him with contagion (317). However, what they do not note is the pertinent relevance for a performance in 1604. The proclamation indicates that, for an audience in 1604, this language and these practices and journeys would have a fraught significance. They would have especial resonance in 1604 given 25,000 deaths from plague in London alone in 1603 and James’ own retreat to Windsor (Totaro 5). The performance at Whitehall appears to rework contemporary anxieties and memories of labouring landscapes surrounding the working theatres, bringing them dangerously close to the ears and noses of the court. A performance in 1604 would therefore be charged with this additional significance as the bodies of the actors entered the courtly environment, they carried with them a memory of recent events and the charge of potential future threat. Falstaff’s body does this more so than any other. A wet body gestures to multiple temporal moments at once.

It is at this point that I want to return to the specifically aqueous Folio description of the distortion produced on Falstaff's body.

[I]f it should come to the eare of the Court how I have beene transformed; and how my transformation hath been washd and cudgeld, they would melt mee out of my fat drop by drop, and liquor Fishermens-boots with me (2310-2314)

Falstaff's body is the focus of past, present, and future transformations. Intriguingly, this peculiar form of imagery which is so different from his description in the Quarto is not unique to Shakespeare. A similar description can be found in Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho!*. This city play was "first produced [...] during the king's Greenwich sojourn, mid-March to mid-June 1605" (Petter xxiii) and performed at Blackfriars. In *Eastward Ho!* Quicksilver comments on another character's "old userer's flesh" (2.2.162) saying that Security's "skin is too thick to make parchment, 'twould make good boots for a peterman to catch salmon in" (2.2.163-164). In both *Merry Wives* and *Eastward Ho!* attention is drawn to the water-wear of river workers. The material used to make these boots was called "waterline" and "currying" was necessary which was the "action of dressing tanned hides by soaking, scraping, beating and colouring". Additional work would involve "greasing" of the boots with what was most likely "rendered or melted animal fat" (Wright 133; 130; 131). This appears to be the action captured in *Merry Wives* and signals local labour within the waters of the Thames. There is a collective concern in both plays for the impact contact with water might have on the body: How it might reshape, affect, and transform the body, rendering it vulnerable in ways which, in 1604-5, would have been uncomfortably close.

In the Folio the "wits" (G3v) of the court are replaced by the "ear of the court" (55) – indicating the auditory environment within Whitehall. A paper which asks how

the play might have sounded to such an audience is appropriate given the Folio's substitution of the "ear of the court". As this paper has shown, the Folio displays sensitivity to a broader set of water vocabularies and economies and this new explicitly aquatic frame of reference shifts the parameters of Falstaff's punishment from the candle-making activities indoors to littoral communities outdoors. As Wall suggests, Falstaff's "transformation" (2312) recasts "him into manageable domestic goods" (116-7).¹⁹ This melting process also transforms Falstaff's body into serviceable ware for the waterside community in their external labours. His inside is made the outer coating of their protective clothing and his delinquency facilitates the fishermen's collective labour. He is turned inside out and outside in by local labour and local politics.

VI. Conclusion

By 1604 the King's Men were performing at the Globe, their reconstructed riverside theatre. A river whose sights, sounds, smells and, during a spring tide, waters intruded on their day to day labours. The actors worked with imagery garnered from their own work and working sites. As well as lending a tangible materiality to the play, the products, processes, and trades that fed off riverine resources or formed mobile networks upon its waters present a community in miniature. The Folio depicts a community which has transposed its spatial and temporal coordinates into the Banqueting House at Whitehall.²⁰ In fact it intertwines three communities who arrive at Whitehall: the Windsor community of the play-world; the King's Men who perform them, and their courtly audience.

As I have suggested in this paper, the texture of the water as movement, labour, and sensory experience is an essential component of *Merry Wives* and it is in this respect that the play appears to respond to a local riverine environment as well as the

courtly engineered landscape of performance at Whitehall during the aqueous Christmas season. In 1617-18 the Venetian diplomat Horatio Busino observed that the water of the Thames was “so hard, turbid and stinking that the odour remains even in clean linen” (Hinds *State Papers* 90-103).²¹ Complaints of this kind suggest an object such as linen could retain the trace of the river far beyond its borders. If Busino’s comments are taken at face value, this suggests that early modern clothing had the capacity to carry the olfactory traces of the river via the bodies of London’s citizens into their domestic homes, into theatrical audiences and potentially out onto the city’s stages.

We now recognise that London’s waters would have provided a varied “soundscape” (Smith 57; 63; 71) for inhabitants and these comments indicate that local waters may have been equally distinctive to the noses of the early modern inhabitants and visitors. In an environment of fear over contagion, where bathing was increasingly prohibited (Korda and Lowe 308), the threat of a “wet” character onstage might pose an interesting theatrical and social predicament for its audience.²² The proximity of the performing body imagined or presented becomes both threatening and monstrous. Whitehall’s elite soundscape is made vulnerable by the intrusion of the play’s work inflected linguistic environment and crucially its smellscape. The Christmas season of 1604-5 saw the arrival of the King’s Men and this play in this context seems especially attuned to and even self-conscious of that act of invasion. The actors bring with them their river and they remap a space of courtly aqueous display with a much more varied and contentious aqueous terrain. The trade inflected liquid body of Falstaff seems to prefigure and reframe the aqueous monsters of the *Masque of Blackness* later in the same Christmas season. His punishment seems to pose a potential victory for those in water wear.

In *Merry Wives* we find a community constructed around water: its whitsters, fishermen, brew-houses and waste materials. By considering the play in the temporal moment of performance in 1604 we see a community bringing the outside inside the Banqueting House at Whitehall in ways which simultaneously reinforce courtly authority and yet unsettle it. The river is performed through a combination of its communities and the sensory experience of encounters with it. Furthermore, as I have suggested, the Folio is a text that seems to remember and prefigure the architectural capacity of Whitehall to mimic riverine spaces within its sensory geography. We might even go as far as to suggest that in places it bears the marks of a “reworking” for and perhaps by that performance environment. I place emphasis on reworking specifically because the Folio seems to respond to contact with water in that particular location and in the cultural moment of 1604. It does not simply belong to or originate in that moment but a site-specific reading of that performance enables us to trace the complex set of connections an audience member might make whilst watching this play. It allows us to reconsider the densely layered significance of the performed river. Exploring the “event” of this performance draws attention to the heightened sensitivity to water produced by the performance site, the aqueous season, and the Folio text. The Thames like the household and the park is entangled in the class tensions of this play. *Merry Wives* does more than bring an aesthetic of labour into the court, it brings the challenging, potentially subversive riverine world into the courtly space right under the nose and right up to the ear of its presiding authority. It presents a character who is wet and the Folio takes every opportunity to remind its audience of that fact. Shakespeare’s play and its “fluid” text had the capacity to work a transformation upon its audience in 1604 and it takes delight in the threat that it poses. It is a play preoccupied with bringing the outside inside and turning Falstaff inside out and outside in.

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1. The early performance history of the play has remained contentious. In 1994 Barbara Freedman asked:

[H]ow could this most topical of comedies have led our most reliable scholars to date the play as early as 1592 and as late as 1602 and have led current editors of the play to bicker between the date of composition as early as 1597 and as late as 1601? (Freedman 191).

Definitive proof of the location or date of the first performance has proved evasive. Leslie Hotson argued in 1931 that the play was composed for an early court performance; whilst Freedman in 1994 countered that it might instead have been intended for a public performance on one of the city's stages (Hutson 111–22; Freedman 191). More recently Tom Rutter indicated in 2017 that it might well be a product of the “transfer” between court and the commercial stage (Rutter 147).

2. For an examination of Whitehall and Westminster in connection to Richard II see Crawforth, Dustagheer, and Young (47–72).
3. In one of the most insightful readings of the play Jeffrey Theis considers the complex social stratification of poaching and the set of practices which might pit “peers and gentry” against each other as well as against the local community. Theis considers Falstaff as a poacher and delineates the set of “bodily activities” through which poaching could form a mode of agrarian protest or serve the “same social” and symbolic “function as the [...] skimmington” (Theis 50).

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4. Two recent studies note early modern washing practices in rivers: Ostevich 96–106; Korda and Lowe 306–321; The first detailed examination of the play in its riverine context can be found in my unpublished Masters dissertation: Jemima Matthews, *(En)gendering*; This reading was later developed in an unpublished PhD dissertation which produces a literary geography of the river: Jemima Matthews, *Use and Abuse*; At the Shakespeare Association of America Conference in Boston in 2012 Sarah Crover and Jemima Matthews both examined *Merry Wives* in the context of the muddy setting of London's theatres: Sarah Crover, "Falling"; Jemima Matthews, "(Dis)placing the Thames".
 5. I discuss both the waterlogged location of the Globe and the water politics of the river at Windsor: Jemima Matthews, *Habitat and Habitation: The River Thames 1550-1650* (forthcoming).
 6. This is a term used by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (3–30); For a detailed discussion of its application see: Sanders 'Neighbourhoods' (202).
 7. The Jacobean palace retained a number of these features from Elizabeth's reign.
 8. 'Liquid Landscape' is a term used by Julie Sanders (*Geography* 18–64); Smygol described a 'marine idiom' associated with grotto spaces in her conference paper at the Shakespeare Association of America Conference in Boston in 2012: "Sea-Changes".
 9. For a discussion of medieval flooding at Whitehall see Crawforth, Dustagheer and Young (61).
 10. Editors have argued that 'coat' is a mispronunciation of 'cod' and the product of Shallow's frustration with Evans: *Arden* (126n). This dialogue only appears in F.
 11. This is also absent from Q1.
 12. Only mussel shell occurs in Q1.
 13. The Folio is more topographically specific than the Quarto. Arthur F. Kinney describes the 'geography' of the Quarto as 'unlocated' and suggests that '[a]t some date later than 1602 it became possible, and fun, to restore *The Merry Wives* to the town of Windsor where it had been meant to be set all along.' (Kinney 228); However, Leah Marcus argues that the Quarto, 'has an urban setting strongly suggesting London or some provincial city'. By contrast, the Folio "comes close to mapping Windsor and its surrounding villages through many topographical references": Marcus (84).
 14. For a detailed discussion of this process see: Dillon 49–75; For a variety of court settings and performances see: Bennett and Polito 36–56; 79–100; 180–201; 201–222.
 15. Smygol discussed Bernard Palissy in her paper "Sea Changes" (2012).
 16. Strong, 'Sir Francis', 236 cites Montague S. Giueppi, "The River Wandle in 1610", Surrey Archeological Collections, xxi, 1908, 170–91; On 26 December 1604 Pompey in *Measure*

for Measure makes the bawdy suggestion that a character's offence is that he has "groped for trouts in a peculiar river" (180). Pompey's remark appears to recall both Falstaff's piscine Thames performed a month earlier and the construction at Beddington.

17. This point was also made in an earlier unpublished paper by Eleanor Lowe: "Cleane Linnen"; In her chapter on "bucking" Ostovich points to the sexualised nature of the vigorous labour undertaken in streams by laundresses. She differentiates between the non-gender specific Quarto reference to "launderer" and the Folio "laundress": Ostovich (99; 101).
18. Richard Helgerson discusses how Falstaff is "redefined as filth in need of harsh cleansing" and makes reference to the "boiling alkaline lye" of a buck wash: Helgerson (169–170).
19. Patricia A. Parker considers the word "translation" in *Merry Wives*: (116).
20. The anthropologist Tim Ingold's theory of 'dwelling' and his discussion of "task-scapes" is used here. "Dwelling" and "task-scapes" facilitate exploration of the connection between different riverine communities, patterns of labour, and the landscape: Ingold (154; 190; 194-200).
21. Korda and Lowe consider the place of linen in the cultural imagination: (306–321).
22. For a general discussion of wet bodies on stage see: Duckert 1-45.

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