

Is Falstaff a Portrait of the Historical Henry VIII?

by Richard Waugaman, M.D.

In her 2019 book *This Is Shakespeare*, Emma Smith offers us a wonderful portrayal of Falstaff and his trademark morbid obesity. As she observes, “Falstaff’s fatness is the most thoroughgoing physical designation we ever get in Shakespeare” (117). Smith asks, “What made Falstaff so compelling?” (115). Smith does not have a satisfactory answer to her question.¹ In this article, I suggest one plausible solution.²

My thesis is that Queen Elizabeth was always the most salient member of Edward de Vere’s audience, and that the 17th Earl of Oxford always wrote with her in mind. As context for my conjecture that he intended Falstaff to remind her and her courtiers of aspects of her father, King Henry VIII (1491–1547), note that the recently exhumed skeleton of the historical King Richard III showed he had mild scoliosis (sideways curvature of the spine) that was not severe enough to limit his fighting ability as a soldier. The prominent hunchback displayed by Oxford’s Richard III, by contrast, encouraged Elizabethan audiences to think of Robert Cecil, Oxford’s powerful brother-in-law who served as a member of the Privy Council from 1591 and also as Secretary of State from 1596.

As M.G. Aune describes this particular political allusion:

Richard’s crooked back indicates a moral crookedness, his withered arm the perversion of his actions. The toad metaphors suggest...a lower, toxic form of life. The moral deformity that the crooked back symbolized in Cecil and Richard was ruthless ambition. That ambition drove Richard to murder and betrayal and it brought wealth and power, as well as opprobrium and animosity, to Robert Cecil.... (26–7)

Setting the Stage

We need to examine the severe deterioration of Henry VIII's personality after a brain injury since it coincided with his massive, Falstaffian weight gain. The role of Henry VIII's 1536 traumatic brain injury (TBI) in the gradual deterioration of his personality has received some scholarly attention. But, to my knowledge, it has not yet been connected with his morbid (that is, severe) obesity. Yet severe hyperphagia, or uncontrollably compulsive over-eating, is a possible consequence of severe head injuries. Some 27% of patients with severe head injuries have eating disturbances; perhaps 3% have persistent, severe overeating, presumably due to damage to the frontal lobes of the brain (Das et al.).

A 2010 study concluded that, rarely, “Morbid hunger or persistent *hyperphagia* (overeating) is a relatively rare but potentially life-threatening complication of acquired brain injury.... [It leads to] potentially life-threatening health risks to the patient, primarily around weight control and fluid balance, and risks of *aggression* toward professional and family carers” (Rowell et al., 1044; emphasis added). In these days of widespread severe obesity in the United States, we may not realize how unusual it was during the Tudor period. Despite the advice of his physicians, the older Henry VIII could not curb his overeating.

In 1527, the king injured a foot playing court tennis, receiving a wound in his leg, possibly the first occurrence of the skin ulcers that were to plague him off and on for years. He was reportedly six feet two inches in height. His successive suits of armor suggest that, in his 20s, his waist was only 32 inches and he weighed about 210 pounds. By 44, though, he needed a hoist to mount his horse. Late in life, his waist increased to 52 inches and his weight nearly doubled, to as much as 390 pounds. Obesity commonly has many interacting causes. Forced inactivity due to his injuries that never



Field armor of Henry VIII, 1544, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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fully healed was clearly a factor for Henry VIII. Eating as a source of pleasure and lack of self-restraint were presumably additional causes.

Henry was knocked off his horse while jousting in January of 1536 (when the future Queen Elizabeth [1533–1603] was about 28 months old). His fully armored horse fell on top of him, knocking him unconscious for some two hours. The longer the period of unconsciousness after a concussion, the greater and more lasting the brain injury tends to be. His legs may have been broken in the fall, as well. Five days later, his wife Anne Boleyn (1500–1536) miscarried a male child, a mishap she blamed on having been afraid for the king’s life. The king, however, interpreted her miscarriage as a sign that God did not intend for him to have a male heir, as though all his feelings of guilt were activated by this sequence of events. He suffered from frequent migraine headaches afterwards (Hutchinson), and became “increasingly unpredictable, irascible and cruel” (Chalmers et al, 515). In fact, four months after his jousting accident, he ordered his wife Anne Boleyn to be beheaded. She was the first of his wives to be executed. Two months later, in July 1536, Elizabeth was declared illegitimate. She is said to have noticed the change in how she was then treated, remarking precociously, “how hap it yesterday Lady Princess and today but Lady Elizabeth?” (ODNB entry on Henry VIII).

Queen Elizabeth would have had many reasons for imagining that her father was a better man when he was younger, in the years before her birth. Sigmund Freud’s theory of the “family romance” posits that we commonly imagine as children that we were adopted, so we can believe our real parents were much better and more prominent people, such as royalty. Queen Elizabeth’s actual father was a king, of course, but she would have heard stories about what he was like when he was young and not brain injured.

Enter Kate the Shrew

Next, I will elaborate on possible connections between the fictional character of Kate at the end of *Taming of the Shrew* and another story involving Henry VIII, a near-death experience that Queen Elizabeth’s stepmother Katherine Parr (1512–1548) shrewdly survived. My goal is to build on the connection I mentioned earlier between Oxford’s Richard III and Robert Cecil, helping us read Oxford’s plays for topical allusions to Tudor court history.

As Katherine’s husband Henry VIII was nearing the end of his life, conservative courtiers feared that the more religiously reformist, evangelical Katherine would undermine their power following the king’s death. So, they plotted to have her executed as a heretic. King Henry, increasingly irritated by his wife’s assertiveness, especially about religious matters, agreed with their plan to have him bring up a controversial theological issue with his wife. Since she always disagreed with him about such questions, soldiers would be nearby,

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prepared to arrest Parr on grounds of treason when she disagreed with the King. According to John Foxe, and fortunately for Parr, a royal physician warned her of the plan, and advised that, whatever her husband said the next day, she should agree with him. When she did so, the King was puzzled, and reminded her that she had always argued with him about such debates in the past. She explained that she had done so in the past only because he was in nearly constant pain, and she thought a good argument would distract him from his pain. She added that, just as God created Eve to obey Adam, so should all wives obey their husbands. King Henry turned his anger on his concealed soldiers, ordering them to leave. And so, Katherine kept her head.

This story is described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Katherine Parr by Susan E. James. She speculates that this may be the meaning of Kate's puzzling turnabout at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, when she inexplicably acts like a docile, submissive wife. James believes that Shakespeare may have had Kate deliberately echo Parr's words to King Henry VIII when Parr "submitted all her spiritual and worldly wisdom to her husband's guidance" to avoid entrapment and the charge of treason (ODNB 904).

According to James, Shakespeare decided to use this scene in one of his plays to speak directly to Queen Elizabeth, and to courtiers who knew this story. James thus helps shape a new paradigm for thinking about Oxford's creative process. Oxford made the Queen feel understood by reminding her of a pivotal event from her childhood (she was thirteen at the time), when her beloved stepmother nearly suffered the same fate as her mother, Anne Boleyn, ten years earlier. Given Oxford's creative genius, it is likely that some other matter that was current when the play was written was also being alluded to, such as warning the Queen to avoid bad advice from her courtiers.

Part of Oxford's methodology was his unsurpassed skill in creating multiple layers of conscious and unconscious associations, which enhance our pleasure as we experience and learn to tolerate complexity. He may have heard of Dante's four-fold method of literary interpretation in his letter to Can Grande della Scala: literal; allegorical; moral; and anagogical (that is, predictions of the future). Medieval biblical scholarship also emphasized four co-existing categories of interpretation: literal or historical; typological, connecting the New Testament with Old Testament prophecies; moral; and anagogical. Given Oxford's deep interest in and multiple annotations of his Geneva Bible, it is likely that this traditional acknowledgment of complexity of meaning in the Bible influenced the complex design of his dramatic works.

James' theory does not supplant but merely supplements other explanations for Kate's apparent character change. In fact, the existence of alternate meanings would have helped Oxford conceal the connection with Katherine Parr from the general public who were attending his plays at the Globe. For

Oxford to effectively conceal his authorship, he needed the cover of deniability for any of his topical allusions to court politics. An excellent example is the Gads Hill robbery of Treasury agents by Prince Hal and Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, and its parallel with an actual Gads Hill robbery committed by Oxford's servants in 1573, also of Treasury agents. A court audience would have grasped this allusion, while commoners would probably have overlooked it, as do most modern audiences.

How Fat was Falstaff?

Let us return to Falstaff and his infamous corpulence.³ Could it possibly allude to the notoriously corpulent king?⁴ True, we know that Sir John Oldcastle and Sir John Fastolf have been proposed as the real-life models for Falstaff, and that Falstaff also resembles Chaucer's Wife of Bath in some respects. But a single fictional character can easily allude to more than one actual person. The need to have some cover story for Falstaff's character is understandable if Oxford was creating a complex caricature of the Queen's rotund father.

Queen Elizabeth had watched her father become more and more obese during her childhood and early adolescence. She may have sometimes been the target of his worsening temper during her childhood (he died when she was thirteen). We would expect her to have felt keen ambivalence toward the father who was God's anointed king, but who also had her mother executed. There is a tradition that the Queen especially liked Falstaff, among Oxford's dramatic characters.⁵ Falstaff is a charismatic character, for many reasons. But, like Falstaff's belly, the fat jokes about him overflow.

Falstaff tells Pistol in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "I am in the waist two yards about" (I.iii.46), even greater than Henry VIII's 52-inch waist. By 1547, one informant said "the king was much grown of his body and...he could not go up and down stairs and was let up and down by a device."⁶ "Trams" were built to help him get about (Chamberlin 210). If he was too obese and lame to walk, it is unlikely he could get up from a supine or seated position without assistance. Perhaps as a subtle allusion to the king's disability, the only time the word 'lever' occurs in Shakespeare is when Falstaff is told to lie on the ground just before the Gads Hill robbery, and he memorably retorts, "Have you any levers to lift me up again, being down?" (*1 Henry IV* II.ii.34)⁷



Falstaff, engraved by Hogarth, 1799.

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How do we know that Falstaff was fat? Because Oxford tells us so repeatedly: “fat Falstaff”; “fat knight” (repeated three times); “this same fat rogue”; “the fat villain”; “an old fat man”; “a gross fat man”; “this fat man”; “ye fat paunch”; “that fat belly”; “ye fat guts”; “so fat a deer”; etc. Falstaff was also called “wool sack”; “you whoreson round man”; “gross as a mountain”; “thou whoreson, obscene, greasy tallow-catch”; “this huge hill of flesh”; “my sweet creature of bombast”; “a tun [barrel] of a man”; and “that stuff’d cloak-bag of guts.” While playing Prince Hal’s father, Falstaff speaks of himself as “corpulent,” the only time that word appears in Shakespeare’s works; so Falstaff ‘owns’ the word. Falstaff also refers to his “round belly.”⁸ Oxford ensures that we cannot think of Falstaff without picturing him as obese.

Yet, like Henry VIII, Falstaff was not always fat. He explains to Prince Hal in *1 Henry IV*, “when I was about thy years, Hal, I was not an eagle’s talon in the waist” (II.iv.1315). He blames his later obesity on “sighing and grief” (ibid.).

Queen Elizabeth was born after her father’s health began to fail, and she would have consciously remembered him after his head injury led to his morbid obesity. Oxford had the empathic genius to perceive the many strands of her mixed feelings about her father, and to activate them all in a way that made her feel understood. The implicit connections between Falstaff and the Queen’s father may have allowed her to vent some of her once dangerous anger toward her father through humor. Similarly, the healing power of psychoanalysis owes much to creating a safe environment for the patient to voice feelings that were once dangerous to express.

A Psychological Analysis

Psychoanalysts regularly observe that people are confounded by unresolved internal conflicts. Ambivalence toward a parent that is both dearly loved but also sometimes loathed is a frequent source of neurotic conflicts and symptoms. In fact, Freud’s description of the Oedipus Complex is more subtle in crucial ways than it is commonly portrayed. The young girl may want to replace her mother and have her father all to herself, but the neurotic conflict that ensues is precisely because the girl loves her mother more than any other woman. By the same token, the young Elizabeth may have loved and admired her father before all other men, but also hated him for killing her mother: this may have led to lifelong, unresolved internal conflicts, which Oxford hoped to help heal through some degree of catharsis.

The psychoanalyst Philip Bromberg (57; also Waugaman and Korn, 2014) has perceptively commented that the most emotionally intense moments for readers of literature or play audiences come when the author succeeds in bringing together two intense emotions that are usually kept far apart.

Profound sadness and hilarious humor exemplify such a juxtaposition. Bromberg believes this can be “therapeutic” because it helps reconcile two warring feelings.

What other similarities might Falstaff share with Henry VIII? Both are larger than life, literally and figuratively. With his typical hyperbole, Harold Bloom claims Falstaff is “the most intelligent person in all of literature” (quoted in Smith 119). C.L. Barber also writes of Falstaff that “an intelligence of the highest order is expressed...it is not always clear whether the intelligence is Falstaff’s or the dramatist’s” (quoted in Hamlin 270). So, it would be a mistake to regard Falstaff simply as a buffoon.

More Historical Evidence

Comments by Thomas More and Erasmus suggest that King Henry VIII was nourished on philosophy and the Nine Muses (*ODNB* entry on Henry VIII⁹). He spoke French and Latin fluently; was well read; and was fascinated with scientific instruments, maps, and astronomy. His library eventually included some 1,500 books and manuscripts, many of which were annotated.

“He could dominate any gathering and was extrovert, affable, and charming” (*ODNB* entry on Henry). Such a description also matches Falstaff. Smith adds that “one reading of the play sees him as an alternative father figure [for Prince Hal] providing the human affection so lacking from the cold, troubled king [i.e., Henry IV]” (119). As Smith observes, Falstaff makes a strikingly grandiose claim when he claims to represent “all the world”: “Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world” (*1 Henry IV*, II.v.485).

Another probable parallel with Queen Elizabeth’s father is the developmental trajectory of each man. The older Henry VIII deteriorated physically and psychologically from the man he once was. In 1536, the very year of the king’s head injury, the largest peacetime revolt in English history took place. In that context, Reginald Pole wrote to Henry VIII:

You have squandered a huge treasure [Henry was to die in debt]; you have made a laughing-stock of the nobility; you have never loved the people; you have pestered and robbed the clergy in every possible way; and lately you have destroyed the best men in your kingdom [Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More], not like a human being, but like a wild beast [*ODNB*].

The king’s “Egoism was compounded by falsity and deceit...Henry was very much the *faux bonhomme*” (*ODNB* entry on Henry). Henry “executed more English notables than any other monarch before or since.... Linked to this was the king’s ability to deny reality, an obstinate conviction that facts

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were as he understood or wanted to understand them and not as they were” (ODNB). Falstaff famously ignores reality when convenient. For example, he hilariously lies about what took place during the Gads Hill robbery.

The historian Eric Ives reports that recent scholarship has mostly been critical of Henry, as a man with “monumental selfishness...disguised by highly effective propaganda” (ODNB entry on Henry VIII). His religious “reform” was “driven by lust and greed.” We can certainly say that Falstaff is “driven by lust and greed” as well.

In Oxford’s plays, we see Falstaff only after he has sunk to the bottom of a long decline. Given his rank and the loyalty of Prince Hal and his other friends, one assumes Falstaff was once a less degenerate character, at least more outwardly valiant in war rather than a comic coward; more honest and less criminal. Falstaff’s own “monumental selfishness” is often in evidence, as when he cynically drafts as soldiers men who are likely to die on the battlefield for his personal enrichment. He later admits that “not three of my hundred and fifty [soldiers] left alive” (1 *Henry IV*, V.iii.38).

Is Falstaff learned, as was Henry VIII? He cites a Latin phrase (“*ecce signum*”) meaning “behold the truth”; and another (“*memento mori*”) meaning “a reminder of death.” He refers to King Cambyses, possibly alluding to an earlier play by Thomas Preston. He claims to have read Galen (2 *Henry IV*, I.ii). He makes repeated biblical allusions, which Hannibal Hamlin has studied in some detail, saying that “Falstaff’s language is peppered with biblicisms” (242, especially 234–70). Naseem Shaheen states that Falstaff provides nearly half of the 55 biblical allusions in 1 *Henry IV* (Hamlin 237). Hamlin notes the “obvious indebtedness of Falstaff’s biblical style to the style...in the Marprelate tracts” (242). In 2 *Henry IV*, Falstaff uses a hendiadys that Hamlin points out is from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians (and also occurs in Philippians): “rouse up *fear and trembling*” (261).

Is Falstaff deceitful? Falstaff would come across as a repulsively pathological liar were it not for his self-awareness and humor. He speaks euphemistically of his many flaws, but in an appealingly transparent sort of way. As in I.ii.33 (1 *Henry IV*), when he asked not to be called thief, but rather “Diana’s foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon...under whose countenance we steal.” Or later in that scene when he claims that robbery is his “vocation, Hal; ‘tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation” (117) [playing on the religious connotation of ‘vocation’].

Is Falstaff, like Henry VIII, financially irresponsible? “I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient,” he says (2 *Henry IV*, I.ii.144). Page alludes to this line when he asks of Falstaff in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, “And as poor as Job?” (V.v.164).¹⁰ We hear repeatedly that Falstaff does not repay his debts,

but instead makes deceitful excuses, such as falsely claiming that he was robbed at an Eastcheap tavern. He is painfully disappointed in his hopes that, once crowned, Prince Hal will reward him with a lucrative position at court.

A moment that may have especially stirred Queen Elizabeth's memories of her father is when Falstaff impersonates a king—Henry IV. Four times in that play, Falstaff says to Prince Hal, “When thou art king.” That may have reminded the Queen of wondering as a child if she would later replace her father on the throne. She may have identified with Prince Hal, as he submits to his ersatz “father.” To the extent that the madcap Prince Hal also represents the temperamental Oxford, such an identification might implicitly have made her more sympathetic with this appealing but troublesome earl. Moreover, the Queen would have been reminded of the 1,000 pound annuity she granted Oxford (from 1586 to 1603) for each of the six times “a thousand pound[s]” is mentioned in this play. (The character of an earlier Earl of Oxford in *Richard III* says “Every man’s conscience is a *thousand* swords” [V.ii.17]).

Smith makes the intriguingly evocative point that, “It is almost as if [Falstaff] operates in a different world from the other characters” (127). Although Smith says “he is not really a historical figure” (127), Falstaff’s mystique may instead arise from precisely the opposite—that he evokes for Elizabeth and courtiers the essential traits of the older Henry VIII.

One possible parallel with Henry VIII is bathetic. Due to the older king’s infirmities, numerous medical personnel took charge of his medical treatment. “The physicians’ role was to monitor Henry’s health, *measuring his urine* against his fluid intake and examining his stools” (Weir, 475; emphasis added). Recall that Falstaff, in something of a non sequitur, asks his page, “what says the doctor to my water [urine]?” (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.1).

I wonder if Oxford hints at a connection between Falstaff and Henry VIII when he memorably banishes Falstaff after Henry V is crowned—

I know thee not, old man...
I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,¹¹
 So surfeit-swell’d, so old, and so profane;
 But being awak’d, I do despise my dream.
 (*2 Henry IV*, V.v.49; emphasis added)

Yes, we could take these words as alluding solely to Prince Hal’s relationship with Falstaff. However, “I have long dreamt” induces a dreamy sort of mental state in the audience, allowing us to receive a subliminal message about another “such a kind of man” who is obese, old, profane, and despised—the Queen’s late father.

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We can assume that Oxford had access to personal details about Henry VIII since many courtiers from his reign were still alive to pass along such knowledge. We need only recall that Oxford's father, the 16th Earl, could easily have imparted such knowledge to his son before he became a royal ward at the age of 12. Or William Cecil, who served in Parliament under Henry VIII and was the son of a minor courtier to Henry—and became Oxford's guardian when he was orphaned at 12.

Finally, how would Oxford possibly dare to remind Queen Elizabeth of unsavory aspects of her father in the displaced character of Falstaff? Freud and many subsequent psychoanalysts have acknowledged Shakespeare's unparalleled insights into human psychology. Every person who watches or reads a Shakespeare play has an opportunity to experience this. Every courtier craved the Queen's favor; Oxford was no exception. Indeed, he was described as one of her favorites when he was in his 20s. Oxford understood psychology well enough to grasp how deeply every person longs to be understood, especially in areas of their own most severe and partly unconscious psychological conflicts.¹²

As a psychoanalyst, this is something I take for granted. It is a daily experience for me to observe that patients seek psychological treatment, and continue pursuing it, because they crave to feel understood by someone who is non-judgmental toward them. The more troubling and conflicted their life experiences, the more it means to have such experiences known and understood by someone who wants to render assistance. So, I would posit that Oxford knew the Queen well enough to discern her sharply conflicted feelings about her father. Such conflicts are life-long in many people, often becoming even more troublesome after the death of such a parent. In addition, being monarch meant taking her father's place, leading to conflictual identifications with him. Psychoanalysts define psychological health as attaining more adaptive "compromise formations" that reconcile both sides of a person's conflicts,



Falstaff, *oil painting by Eduard von Grützner, 1904.*

including one's loving and hateful feelings toward someone else. I contend that this is just what Oxford did in creating the character of Falstaff. In addition, the Queen may have found it cathartic that everyone who encountered the character Falstaff received a taste of the legendary king who was her father.

What of Falstaff's banishment from court once Henry V is crowned? If I am correct that Falstaff was created partly to remind the Queen of her father, would she have felt this was too insulting to her father's memory? It is complex—as with Malvolio's mistreatment in *Twelfth Night*, Oxford leads the audience to feel more sympathy for Falstaff precisely when he is publicly humiliated. Whatever Falstaff's faults—and he has many—he is a character who invites affection.

I hope to have made a plausible case that the fictional character of Falstaff was designed to allude to the historical Henry VIII. One benefit of the Oxfordian hypothesis is that Oxfordian researchers have many more opportunities than orthodox Shakespeareans to speculate over the topical allusions in the Shakespeare canon regarding the political dynamics of the Queen and her court.

Endnotes

1. The next four paragraphs appear, in a slightly different version, in Waugaman, *Notes & Queries* 66(3):374–375 (2019).
2. On April 26, 2011, I posted on Hardy Cook’s Shakspeare listserv, “I am curious how others feel about the possibility that Shakespeare’s Falstaff spoofed not just Sir John Oldcastle, but was more subtly and subversively aimed at memories of the aging Henry VIII.” Then, on September 9, 2018, I asked on the same listserv, “has anyone raised the question as to whether all the fat jokes about Falstaff might be subtle allusions to Henry VIII?” Four days later, Sir Brian Vickers replied in a personal email, “Thanks for that interesting piece on ‘Henry VIII and Falstaff.’ I hope you’ll send it to N&Q [*Notes and Queries*].” When I wrote to Vickers a few months later that *Notes and Queries* accepted only the part of my article on Henry’s brain injury, but not the possible connection with Falstaff, Vickers replied, “I’m glad to hear that N&Q has taken on the first part of your article, at least. Hope you find a home for the rest.” Naturally, I recount this story because it is especially heartening as an Oxfordian to feel encouraged by a prominent Shakespeare scholar.
3. My descriptions of Falstaff come from the two *Henry IV* plays.
4. Richard Dutton maintains that Shakespeare’s plays “were staged at court far more frequently in his lifetime than those of any other dramatist” (viii). If Dutton is correct, it enhances the possibility that Falstaff was also intended to have a special meaning for Queen Elizabeth.
5. Two independent sources claim that Shakespeare revived Falstaff at the insistence of Elizabeth. John Dennis, a literary critic who adapted *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1702, asserted, “I know very well that it hath pleased one of the greatest queens that ever was in the world.... This comedy was written at her command, and by her direction, and she was so eager to see it acted that she commanded it to be finished in fourteen days; and was afterwards, as tradition tells us, very well pleased at the representation.” Moreover, Nicholas Rowe, in his *Life of Shakespeare* (1709), reports that the Queen “was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff in the two parts of *Henry IV* that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love.”

6. Allegedly reported by the Duke of Norfolk to his mistress, Elizabeth Holland; quoted in Hutchinson, p. 149.
7. At the time, a “litter” already referred to a contrivance with poles to carry someone on attendants’ shoulders. So it may have been another subtle allusion to Henry VIII when Falstaff says, “I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath oerwhelm’d all her *litter* but one” (*II Henry IV*, I.ii.11–12). Falstaff also refers to himself as lame: “’Tis no matter if I do *halt*” (*Ibid*, I.ii.245).
8. Please consult any Shakespeare concordance for act, scene, and line numbers, when I have not given them.
9. Written by English historian Eric W. Ives. Unless otherwise specified, quotations are from this ODNB entry.
10. “He is as poor as Job” also occurs as the translation of “Lui é povero come Job” in John Florio’s 1578 *Florio his firste fruities*, a bilingual Italian/English book.
11. According to *Early English Books Online*, the phrase “such a kind of man” is first used in a 1562 English translation of Machiavelli’s *The Art of War*. The context is apt—the author is advising rulers not to keep members of the army employed in peacetime, but suggests sending them away from court, to avoid such soldiers becoming “corrupt.”
12. One of his favorite psalms seems to have been Psalm 103, which he marked with a pointing hand, and which is one literary source for Sonnet 103. It includes the phrase “all the secrets of my heart.”

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