

ElizabethanDrama.org
presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

Ralph Roister Doister

by Nicholas Udall
c. 1552-3

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

by Nicholas Udall

c. 1552-3

DRAMATIS PERSONS.

Ralph Roister Doister.

Dobinet Doughtie, servant to Roister Doister.

Harpax and other *Musicians* in the service of Roister Doister.

Mathew Merygreeke, friend to Roister Doister.

Dame Christian Custance, a wealthy widow.

Tom Trupenie, servant to Dame Custance.

Margerie Mumblecrust, an old nurse to Dame Custance.

Tibet Talkapace, maid to Dame Custance.

Annot Alyface, maid to Dame Custance

Gawyn Goodluck, a London Merchant, affianced to Dame Custance.

Sym Suresby, servant to Gawyn Goodluck.

Tristram Trustie, a friend to Gawyn Goodluck.

Scrivener.

Scene: London

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

Ralph Roister Doister is considered the earliest proper stage comedy in the English language. Yet, despite its somewhat clunky language - owing to the rhyming verse - the play's clever parodies, clearly delineated characters and physical slapstick give it a surprisingly modern sensibility.

Roister's two protagonists are based on classical character-types: first, the parasite, Mathew Merygreeke, a penniless man who must flatter potential patrons in order to get food and money; and second, the swaggering and boasting, yet ultimately cowardly, soldier, Ralph Roister Doister (think Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*), a man of such weak character, he will do anything Merygreeke suggests he should do; as you read *Roister*, you may note how every line spoken by Merygreeke to Roister Doister is ironic and manipulative.

NOTE on the PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from Clarence Griffin Child's 1912 edition of the play, cited below at #4, with some original spelling from the earliest known edition of 1566 reinstated.

NOTES on the ANNOTATIONS

Mention of Flügel, Child, Farmer, Williams, Hazlitt, Cooper, Gassner, Morley and Whitworth in the annotations refers to the notes provided by each of these editors in their respective editions of this play, each cited fully below.

The most commonly cited sources are listed in the footnotes immediately below. The complete list of footnotes appears at the end of this play.

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.
2. Crystal, David and Ben. *Shakespeare's Words*. London; New York: Penguin, 2002.
3. Flügel, Ewald, ed. *Roister Doister*, pp. 87-194, from *Representative English Comedies*, Charles Mills Gayley, general editor. London: MacMillan & Co., 1916.
4. Child, Clarence Griffin. *Ralph Roister Doister*. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1912.
5. Farmer, John S. *The Dramatic Writings of Nicholas Udall*. London: Early English Drama Society, 1906.
6. Williams, W.H. and Robin, P.A. *Ralph Roister Doister*. London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1901.

7. Bates, Alfred. *British Drama*. London: Historical Publishing Company, 1906.
8. Hazlitt, W. Carew. *A Selected Collection of Old English Plays* (Originally Published by Robert Dodsley). London: Reeves and Turner, 1874.
9. Cooper, William Durrant. *Ralph Roister Doister and Gorboduc*. London: Printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1847.
11. Gassner, John. *Medieval and Tudor Drama*. New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1968.
12. Whitworth, Charles W. *Three Sixteenth Century Comedies*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1984.
22. Mazzio, Carla. *The Inarticulate Renaissance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
24. Morley, Henry. *The Library of English Literature*. London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., unknown year.

A. The Setting of *Roister*.

Unless otherwise noted, the entire play (with perhaps the partial exception of Act I, Scenes iii and v) takes place on the street either directly in front of or within sight of the entrance to Dame Christian Custance's house. A door at the back of the stage would represent the entrance to the house, and characters would enter and exit the house through this door.

Roister editor Charles Whitworth suggests that a second house, that of Roister Doister himself, may have also been represented on the stage; Whitworth further theorizes that between the homes of Custance and Roister there may have appeared something like a painting of a street (on a backdrop) disappearing into the distance, indicating to the audience that the two houses were actually located in different parts of town.¹²

Many of the scenes do not end clearly with all of the actors and actresses exiting the stage; Udall often begins a new scene whenever a character or two enters the stage to join those already present.

In these cases, you will note that the players on stage will suddenly observe another character or two coming towards them from off-stage; as the new characters enter, the separate parties will proceed to talk to themselves or to the audience as they pause in their movements or slowly approach each other.

In general, because it is very clear when the characters finally meet and converse, we have decided it was not necessary to insert relevant stage directions.

B. Oaths and Swears.

Ralph Roister Doister contains a notably wide range of oaths and swears, and almost all of them are of a religious nature, including some odd examples which invoke the Lord's passion, the mass, and even God's potstick!

As you read the play, you may observe that the characters (with the exception of the squeamish Roister Doister) have no aversion to explicitly mentioning God and Jesus in these oaths, although God is often replaced euphemistically with *Gog* and *Cock*, and even one *Goss*. It was only later, in the first decade of the 17th century, that the explicit use of God's name on stage was banned by a statute of Parliament, so that plays printed after 1605 generally contained no such explicit expressions.

A particular oddity of the era was the use of the names of body parts and other attributes as part of the oath formulae; thus we find "Gog's arms". Later plays will invoke God's eyelids, his wounds, and his blood.

C. Some Frequently Appearing Vocabulary.

Speakers of English frequently take recourse to a number of pause-phrases which parenthetically indicate an individual's frame of mind - *I believe, you think, don't you know*: "The governor, I think, is not so tall" (such expressions are part of a larger category of sentence organizers called *discourse markers*).

16th century English used some older words in these types of phrases, and these words appear repeatedly in this play:

1. *trou* = to believe; examples: *I trou, trou ye*.
2. *ween* = to expect, think; example: *I ween*.
3. *wot* = to know; examples: *I wot, I wot not*.

Some other unusual words that Udall depends heavily on include the following:

4. *warrant* = guarantee, assure; used especially in phrases such as *I warrant you*, ie. "I guarantee it", or "I assure you".
5. *wist* = to know.
6. *pastance* = pastime, recreation.
7. *use* = to treat.
8. *fet* = to fetch.

Finally, we point out that the word *and* could be used to mean either "and" or "if". Udall uses *and* in both senses regularly.

D. Roister's Rhyme Scheme.

Except for the Prologue, the entire play is written in rhyming couplets. Fortunately, the meter is completely irregular, or non-existent, and the number of syllables per line varies: this is a blessing, because otherwise the play would quickly begin to sound like a Dr. Seuss book, and the regular rhythm and rhyme would grow rapidly tiresome, indeed exhausting.

As it is, the lines generally have 10, 11 or 12 syllables; and as mentioned, thanks to there being no meter to speak of, - that is, no regular rhythm - the dialogue comes across as a little more natural, and you probably won't even be conscious of the rhyming.

Another interesting circumstance was that our author, Nicholas Udall, did not seem to obsess about having the rhymes be perfect every time; in fact, many of them seem quite strained, even taking into account the different sound of many - or most - vowels of the time compared to how we sound them today.

So, just looking at the first Scene, we have some rhymes that would work well even today, such as *say-day*, *pip-ing-grip-ing*, and *advise-wise*; we have rhymes that would have worked more obviously in the 16th century, such as *feast-guest*, and *coming-gloming*; and we also find some rhymes that require a bit of a stretch of the imagination to appreciate, or that perhaps even seem amateurish: *sop-Blinkensoppe*, *gone-compassion*, *express-worthiness*, *is-amiss*.

Another interesting feature of Udall's versifying is that he sometimes chose to use an obscure or rarely used alternative spelling or form of a word in order to make a rhyme work; for example, he uses *together* instead of *together* in order to rhyme with *hither*; and *wast* instead of *waste* in order to rhyme with *last*.

Having said all that, we recommend you not get hung up on the rhyming as you read our play; Udall used rhyming couplets as a frame, or skeleton, on which to build *Roister*, but since he did not obsess over perfect rhymes, neither should you: in fact, you will enjoy the play a great deal more if you do not think about the rhyming at all.

E. Written in the 1550's, But...

It is generally accepted that Nicholas Udall wrote *Ralph Roister Doister* in the period around 1552-1553; however, the earliest extant edition of the play was published in 1566. Interestingly, the play had actually been believed lost, until it was stumbled upon by the Reverend T. Briggs in 1818 in a quarto collection of plays.

RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

by Nicholas Udall

c. 1552-3

THE PROLOGUE.

- 1 What creature is in health, either young or old,
2 But some mirth with modesty will be glad to use? –
As we in this interlude shall now unfold,
4 Wherein all scurrility we utterly refuse,
Avoiding such mirth wherein is abuse,
6 Knowing nothing more commendable for a man's recreation
Than mirth which is used in an honest fashion.
- 8 For mirth prolongeth life, and causeth health,
Mirth recreates our spirits and voideth pensiveness,
10 Mirth increaseth amity, not hindering our wealth,
Mirth is to be used both of more and less,
12 Being mixed with virtue in decent comeliness,
As we trust no good nature can gainsay the same;
14 Which mirth we intend to use, avoiding all blame.
- 15 The wise poets long time heretofore
16 Under merry comedies secrets did declare,
Wherein was contained very virtuous lore,
18 With mysteries and forewarnings very rare.
Such to write neither Plautus nor Terence did spare,
20 Which among the learned at this day bears the bell;
These, with such other, therein did excel.

The Prologue: the Prologue, sometimes called a Chorus, is a device used to introduce the play to an audience, and is recited by a single actor.

The Prologue of our play is divided into 7-line stanzas, and employs a rhyme scheme known as *rhyme royal*, or rhythm royal: *ababbcc*. Rhyme royal was first used in English poetry in the 14th century by Geoffrey Chaucer, who may have borrowed it from Guillaume de Machaut, the famous 14th century French composer and poet.¹⁴

1-2: people of all ages appreciate a bit of good clean (*modest*) but merry entertainment.

2: *mirth* = entertainment which brings pleasure.¹

3: *interlude* = originally used to describe a brief comic entertainment performed between acts of long mystery plays, but by the early 16th century *interlude* was employed to mean any stage play, especially one of a brief and light nature.

unfold = reveal, disclose.¹

4-5: the play will not employ lewd or coarse material.

Udall was a cleric - he was serving as a vicar when he wrote *Roister* - so that his rejection of bawdy humour is not surprising.

6: *recreation* = amusement, pleasure.¹

7: *honest* = decent, not deserving of reproach.¹

8: Child notes this was a common sentiment expressed in old works on medicine.

causeth health = leads to good health.

9: *recreates* = refreshes.¹

voideth pensiveness = drives away sadness.¹

10: *not hindering our wealth* = not causing harm to our welfare.^{1,3}

11: *of more and less* = by the high and the low, ie. people of all ranks.^{1,5}

12: *comeliness* = propriety, decency.¹

13: *good nature* = (person of) virtuous character.¹
gainsay the same = deny this.

15-19: to paraphrase generally, dramatists of ancient times - especially Plautus and Terence - were able to subtly or surreptitiously teach lessons to and morally instruct their audience, even as the viewers of the plays were conscious only of being being entertained.

18: *mysteries* = truths (especially of a religious nature) or hidden meanings.^{1,4}

forewarnings = preventive admonishments.

rare = excellent, valuable.

22 Our comedy, or interlude, which we intend to play
 Is named *Roister Doister* indeed,
 24 Which against the vainglorious doth inveigh,
 Whose humour the roisting sort continually doth feed.
 26 Thus by your patience we intend to proceed
 In this our interlude by God's leave and grace;
 28 And here I take my leave for a certain space.

FINIS.

19. *Titus Maccius Plautus* and *Publius Terentius Afer* were Roman playwrights of the early 2nd century B.C.; their comic plays were models for later European comedy stage-works, and were familiar to all educated Englishmen.
- 20: the mentioned Roman writers are followed by the educated of Udall's day.
bears the bell = the lead sheep in the flock wears a bell; hence, "excels"³ or "leads".⁵
- 21: *such other* = others like them.⁴
- 22: *comedy* was used to describe a stage play with a comic style and a happy ending, as contrasted with tragedy;¹ *interludes*, as noted above, were brief secular plays that were popular in the early 16th century; Udall's use of both terms suggests he is at the intersection of the old and new style dramas of the 16th century, which were soon to lead to the explosion of work by Lyly, Marlowe and Shakespeare.
- 24: "our play censures (*inveighs against*) those who who are boastful and vain".
- 25: *humour* = temperament or inclination of character.
roisting = describing one who acts in a boisterous or uproarious manner.
sort = type of person.
- 27: *leave* = permission.
- 28: *for a certain space* = for a while - but the Chorus never does return; instead, the actor reciting the Prologue may appear later in the play.¹²

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Street in Front of, or a Short Distance from, Christian Custance's House.

Enter Mathew Merygreeke, singing.

- 1 **Mery.** As long liveth the merry man, they say,
2 As doth the sorry man, and longer, by a day.
- 4 Yet the grasshopper, for all his summer piping,
Starveth in winter with hungry griping.
- Therefore another said saw doth men advise,
- 6 That they be together both merry and wise.
This lesson must I practise, or else ere long,
8 With me, Mathew Merygreeke, it will be wrong.
- 10 Indeed men so call me, for by Him that us bought,
Whatever chance betide, I can take no thought,
- 12 Yet wisdom would that I did myself bethink
Where to be provided this day of meat and drink –
For know ye that, for all this merry note of mine,
14 He might appose me now that should ask where I dine.
- 16 My living lieth here and there, of God's grace,
Sometime with this good man, sometime in that place;
Sometime Lewis Loytrre biddeth me come near;

Scene setting: the entire play (with the possible exceptions of Act I, Scenes iii and v) takes place on the street in front of or within sight of Christian Custance's house; hence, with the exception of the above-mentioned scenes, the setting of each scene will no longer be identified.

Entering Character: *Mathew Merygreeke* plays the role of the *parasite*, a character-type famous since the days of ancient Roman comedy. The parasite depends on the good will of other, more wealthy members of society for sustenance and patronage, usually engaging in entertaining, flattering and obsequiously serving a rich patron in return for a meal.

The phrase *merry Greek* (and its equivalents, *gay Greek* and *mad Greek*) was used to describe one who was a good companion or fellow¹ or a merry rascal.⁵

1-2: Merygreeke begins the play by reciting a proverbial sentiment.

sorry = sad, dismal.⁵

3-4: allusion to Aesop's famous fable of the grasshopper and the ant: while the grasshopper spent the summer singing (*pip*ing), the ants worked hard to collect food for the winter; when winter arrived, the grasshopper, hungry, begged the ants for food, but the ants laughed at him and sent him on his way.

*hungry gri*ping = a painfully clutching or voracious hunger.^{1,2}

= common phrase for "frequently recalled adage",¹ ie. proverbial for "proverb".

6-8: a commonplace conceit, "it is good to be merry and wise;" for Merygreeke, this means that he should continue to enjoy life but, unlike the grasshopper, not wait till the last moment to figure out where he will next eat, ie. from which of his acquaintances he can wrangle his next meal.

9-10: "I am called Merygreeke, because no matter what happens to me, I generally don't worry about it."¹

by Him that bought us = an oath: "by Christ, who redeemed our sins".

= "I would be wise to".

14: "if someone were to ask me where I would eat today, I would be stumped to come up with answer."

*ap*pose = puzzle, perplex;⁵ Gassner prefers "embarrass".

= means of support.² = with or by.

= ie. Lewis Loiterer; Child notes that alliterative names have appeared in English literature since the 14th

		century; such an appellation generally suggests the owner's occupation or a particular characteristic: Flügel notes the examples of Piers Plowman, Robert the Ryfelar (Rifler) and Peter Piemaker. Loytrer = loiterer, ie. time-waster; see Act IV.iii.187 for a note on anti-loitering laws of the 16th century.
18	Somewhiles Watkin Waster <u>maketh us good cheer</u> ,	18: as a "waster" - one who spends money extra-vagantly - Watkin sometimes provides Merygreeke with a good meal. maketh us good cheer = to make one good cheer means "to gladly entertain one". ¹ = ie. been successful at dice; cast refers to "thrown dice".
	Sometime Davy Diceplayer, when he hath <u>well cast</u> ,	
20	<u>Keepeth revel-rout</u> as long as <u>it</u> will last;	20: Keepeth revel-rout = carouses, makes merry, ⁵ with the implication that Davy treats his friends to food and drink with his winnings. it = the money Davy has win gambling.
	Sometime Tom <u>Titivile</u> maketh us a feast;	= sometimes written Tutivillus , a proper name given to a scoundrel or one who spreads gossip, but also the name of a devil, especially the one who records each person's sins for presentation at Judgment Day. ¹ Tutivillus also appears as the devil in the Towneley (aka Wakefield) miracle plays. ⁶ Morley notes that Tutavilus was the "name of the demon that carried to hell all of the words skipped or mangled by the clergy in their services."
22	Sometime with Sir Hugh <u>Pye</u> I am a bidden guest;	= ie. pie, an obsolete word used to describe a chatterer (from "magpie") or sly individual. ¹
	Sometime at Nicol Neverthrive's I get a <u>sop</u> ;	23: Nicol never has money (hence Never-thrive), so Merygreeke is lucky to get from him on occasion a sop , ie. a piece of bread which is dipped in ale or wine before it is consumed - a poor meal indeed.
24	Sometime I am feasted with Bryan <u>Blinkinsoppe</u> ;	24: according to Child, one who spends his time blinking into his mirror; blinking has the connotation of being dull-eyed or staring stupidly with half-closed eyes. ¹ Blenkinsopp was a real English surname which first appears in the records of the 16th century. ¹⁵
	Sometime I hang on Hankyn <u>Hoddydodie's</u> sleeve;	25: hoddydodie = hoddydoddy, ie. fool or simpleton, ¹⁸ or a short dumpy person (OED). hang on (his) sleeve = be dependent on.
26	But this day on Ralph Roister Doister's, by his leave.	26: "but today I will hang on Roister Doister's sleeve, with his permission."
	For, truly, of all men he is my chief banker	
28	Both for <u>meat</u> and money, and my chief <u>shoot-anchor</u> .	28: meat = food. shoot-anchor = ie. sheet-anchor, the largest anchor on a ship, normally used only in an emergency; hence, meaning "last resort". ^{1,5}
	For, <u>sooth</u> Roister Doister in that he doth say,	29-30: "for, if you humour or support (sooth) ⁵ Roister in whatever he says, then he will never say 'no' to any request you make of him."
30	And, require what ye will, ye shall have no nay.	
	But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,	31: "now I will tell you something about Roister".

32	That ye may esteem him after his worthiness, In these twenty towns, and seek them throughout,	32: "so that you may form an accurate opinion of or correctly appraise his worthiness" - a deliberately ambiguous line! 33: "you could search in twenty towns".
34	Is not the like <u>stock</u> whereon to <u>graft</u> a <u>lout</u> . All the day long is he <u>facing and craking</u>	34: a horticultural metaphor: "and you will not find a similar stem or shoot (representing Roister, described as a <i>lout</i> - a country bumpkin or clown) that you can graft (<i>graft</i>) onto any other stem or stalk (<i>stock</i>)", where <i>stock</i> also was used to refer to a line of descent or family. ¹ = bullying and boasting. ⁵ The OED suggests <i>craking</i> is just an alternate spelling for <i>cracking</i> . = about. = brawling. = the test.
36	<u>Of</u> his great acts in fighting and <u>fray-making</u> , But when Roister Doister is put to <u>his proof</u> ,	
38	To keep the <u>Queen's peace</u> is more for his <u>behoof</u> . If any woman smile, or cast on him an eye, 40 <u>Up is he to the hard ears</u> in love <u>by and by</u> ;	38: he much prefers to keep the peace, ie. avoid a fight, proving himself to be a coward. <i>behoof</i> = benefit, ie. liking. ^{1,11} Editors have noted that if our play was written before 1553, then <i>King's peace</i> would have originally appeared in the place of <i>Queen's peace</i> : Edward VI was king from 1547 until his death in 1553, when he was succeeded by a string of female monarchs: Jane (queen for nine disputed days in July 1553), Mary I (1553-8), and Elizabeth I (1558-1603), so that the phrase would have been amended when the play was edited, rewritten or published after 1553. 40: "he immediately (<i>by and by</i>) falls up to his ears (ie. completely) in love." ^{1,5} <i>to the hard</i> = common expression meaning "completely up to" or "right up to"; ¹ the phrase <i>up to the hard ears</i> (and its variations <i>over the hard ears</i> and <i>over head and ears</i>), meaning "to the fullest extent" or "fully immersed", was common. ⁵
42	And in all the hot haste must she be his wife, Else farewell his good days, and farewell his life;	41-42: Roister always has an extreme reaction whenever any woman pays him even the slightest attention: he must marry her, or his life will be over.
44	Master Ralph Roister Doister is but dead and gone <u>Except</u> she on him take some compassion.	43-44: these lines express basically the same idea as lines 41-42. <i>Except</i> = unless.
46	Then chief of counsel must be Mathew Merygreeke, "What if I for marriage to such an one seek?" Then must I <u>sooth it</u> , <u>whatever it is</u> –	45: Roister always seeks out Merygreeke to assist him in these situations. 46: "what if I seek marriage with such-and-such a woman?" Merygreeke quotes Roister asking him for advice. 47: <i>sooth it</i> = "support him" or "affirm it", ie. "humour him". ⁷ <i>whatever it is</i> = "whatever he says", or "whoever he wants to marry."
48	For what he sayeth or doeth cannot be amiss; Hold up his <u>yea and nay</u> , be his <u>nown white son</u> ,	48: ie. "for one cannot find fault with anything he says or does." 49: the sense is, "uphold him in whatever he says, and be his favourite person (<i>white son</i>)."

50 Praise and roose him well, and ye have his heart won,
 For so well liketh he his own fond fashions
 52 That he taketh pride of false commendations.
 But such sport have I with him as I would not lese,
 54 Though I should be bound to live with bread and cheese.

For exalt him, and have him as ye lust indeed –

56 Yea, to hold his finger in a hole for a need.

I can with a word make him fain or loth,
 58 I can with as much make him pleased or wroth,
 I can, when I will, make him merry and glad,
 60 I can, when me lust, make him sorry and sad,
 I can set him in hope and eke in despair,
 62 I can make him speak rough, and make him speak fair.
 But I marvel I see him not all this same day;

64 I will seek him out. – But, lo! he cometh this way.

I have yond espied him sadly coming,

66 And in love, for twenty pound, by his gloming!

yea and nay = common formula describing alternating positive and negative assertions or vacillation in general.¹

noun = own, a corruption of "mine own".^{3,5}

white = the use of **white** in phrases such as **white son** and **white boy** simply indicated a term of endearment.

= flatter, extol, a synonym for **praise**.¹

= foolish.

= in sham compliments,¹ ie. flattery.

= entertainment. = lose.¹⁸

= formula for "simple or poor fare"; Merygreeke so enjoys manipulating Roister when he seeks the parasite for advice in love that he would help Roister even if meant never getting a substantial or luxurious meal ever again.

55: "if you praise him, you can get him to do anything you want (**lust**)."

56: a proverbial expression describing one who follows instructions, especially foolish ones, without question.¹ Here, Merygreeke enjoys giving ridiculous advice to Roister, which he always follows.

The expression comes from John Heywood's 1546 book of *Proverbs*: "But me seemth your counsaile wayth in the whole, / To make me put my finger in a hole."

You may note that the characters of this play - especially Merygreeke and Tibet - frequently resort to proverbial expressions, with a particular partiality for those published in John Heywood's 1546 book of *Proverbs*.

= ie. either willing or unwilling to do something.¹

= angry or enraged.

= "want to".

= ie. "I desire to".

= also.

= harshly. = kindly.

= wonder.

= you will notice throughout the play that characters announce when they see another character approaching; the two parties will usually continue to speak either to themselves or to the audience, until they finally meet.

65: "I see him over there (**yond**), wearing a serious (**sad**) expression, coming this way".

66: ie. "and I would wager 20 pounds that, based on his scowling or looking glum (**gloming**)",^{5,8} he is in love." The OED files **gloming** under **glumming**.

Scene i Postscript: Merygreeke's monologue - which comprises the entire scene - basically foreshadows the primary theme of the play: namely, to showcase the many different ways Merygreeke can manipulate Roister and lead him to repeatedly make a complete fool of himself.

ACT I, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Merygreeke.*]

Enter Roister Doister.

- 1 **Roist.** Come death when thou wilt, I am weary of my life.
- 2
- 4 **Mery.** I told you, I, we should woo another wife.
- 6
- 8 **Roist.** Why did God make me such a goodly person?
- 10 **Mery.** He is in by the week, we shall have sport anon.
- 12 **Roist.** And where is my trusty friend, Mathew Merygreeke?
- 14 **Mery.** I will make as I saw him not, he doth me seek.
- 16 **Roist.** I have him espied me thinketh, yond is he. –
- 18 Ho! Mathew Merygreeke, my friend, a word with thee.
- 20 **Mery.** I will not hear him, but make as I had haste. –
Farewell all my good friends, the time away doth waste,
- And the tide, they say, tarrieth for no man.
- Roist.** Thou must with thy good counsel help me if thou can.

Still on Stage: whenever characters remain on stage from the end of the previous scene, such will be noted in a stage direction in brackets, all added by the editor.

Scene Endings in *Ralph Roister Doister*: the scenes of our play do not always end sharply with all the characters exiting the stage; when one or more characters newly join those already on stage, Udall often begins a new scene.

Hence Roister enters the stage even as Merygreeke is wrapping up his monologue of Scene i.

Entering Character: during the early part of Scene II - up to line 18 - Merygreeke and Roister are only slowly approaching each other; to that point, Merygreeke continues to address the audience, while Roister is talking to himself.

Note that it was a convention of Elizabethan drama for characters to express their feelings aloud, even when they are by themselves, for the benefit of both the audience and any potential eavesdroppers.

The word **roister** means "swaggerer", or "boisterous person".^{1,8}

1: though Merygreeke has spied Roister approaching, Roister has not yet seen him.

3: "I told you, it looks like we (meaning Roister, with Merygreeke's assistance) shall be seeking to court another potential wife."

7: **in by the week** = caught, in the snare, ie. in love.^{1,6}
sport anon = great entertainment shortly.

11: Merygreeke will pretend not to notice Roister.

= yonder.

= note that Roister will always address Merygreeke with the informal and familiar **thee**, while Merygreeke, who is somewhat dependent on Ralph for his living, addresses him with the respectful and deferential **you**; however, as Merygreeke doesn't really have much respect for Roister, his use of "you" in general can be considered ironic.

= "pretend I do not". = "pretend I am in a hurry".

17-18: Merygreeke speaks these lines loudly, perhaps facing off-stage, making it seem to Roister that he is taking a hurried leave from a group of his friends.

18: another proverb from Heywood: "the tide tarieth no man"; **tarrieth** = tarries, ie. waits.

22	Mery. <u>God keep thee</u> , worshipful Master Roister Doister, And fare well thee, <u>lusty</u> Master Roister Doister.	20: a salutation: Merygreeke "suddenly" notices Roister. = merry. ¹
24		
26	Roist. I must needs speak with thee a word or <u>twain</u> .	= two.
28	Mery. Within a month or two I will <u>be here again</u> . Negligence in great affairs, ye know, may mar all.	= ie. return. 28: ie. if a man ignores pressing business, ruin necessarily follows; Merygreeke is suggesting he has to travel abroad on a business trip.
30	Roist. <u>Attend upon</u> me now, and well reward thee I shall.	= wait upon, ie. help.
32	Mery. I have <u>take</u> my leave, and <u>the tide is well spent</u> .	= taken. = ie. Merygreeke's <i>tide</i> of line 18 is almost out, meaning his window of opportunity for leaving in a timely fashion is closing quickly.
34	Roist. I die <u>except</u> thou help, I pray thee be content. Do thy part well now, and <u>ask what thou wilt</u> ,	= unless. = ie. "ask any payment or reward".
36	For without thy aid my matter is all <u>spilt</u> .	= ruined.
38	Mery. Then to serve your <u>turn</u> I will some pains take, And let all mine own affairs alone for your sake.	= purpose.
40		
42	Roist. My whole hope and trust resteth only in thee.	
44	Mery. Then <u>can ye not do amiss</u> , whatever it be.	= "you cannot go wrong".
46	Roist. <u>Gramercies</u> , Merygreeke, most bound to thee I am.	= "thank you"; from the French <i>grand merci</i> .
48	Mery. But up with that heart, and speak out like a <u>ram</u> ! Ye speak like a <u>capon</u> that had <u>the cough</u> now. Be of good cheer, <u>anon</u> ye shall do well <u>enow</u> .	= male sheep, ie. a man. = castrated cock. = ie. a cough. ¹ = soon. = enough.
50		
52	Roist. <u>Upon thy comfort</u> , I will all things well handle. Mery. So, <u>lo</u> , that is a <u>breast</u> to blow out a candle!	= ie. "with your support or encouragement". ² 53: Whitworth suggests that Merygreeke here is likely responding admiringly to Roister puffing out his chest. <i>lo</i> = a vague interjection, similar ot "oh!" ¹ <i>breast</i> = breathe. ⁵
54	But what is this great matter, I would <u>fain</u> know? We shall find remedy therefore I <u>trouw</u> .	= like to.
56	Do ye lack money? Ye know mine old offers; Ye have always a key to my purse and coffers.	= expect, believe.
58		
60	Roist. I thank thee! had ever man such a friend!	
62	Mery. Ye give unto me, I must needs to you lend.	61: "since you are ever ready to give money to me, I must by necessity lend money to you when you need it."
64	Roist. Nay, I have money plenty all things to discharge.	
66	Mery. [Aside] <u>That knew I right well</u> when I made offer so large.	= ie. "I already knew that".
68	Roist. But it is no such matter.	
70	Mery. What is it <u>than</u> ?	= ie. "then", written as <i>than</i> to rhyme with <i>man</i> . ⁹

	Are ye in <u>danger of debt</u> to any man?	71: "Are you in debt to any man, and therefore at risk of being imprisoned for that debt?" ⁵ Debtors' prisons were still a part of everyday life in 16th century England.
72	If ye be, take no thought <u>nor be not</u> afraid.	=double negatives such as this were accepted and common during this period.
	Let them <u>hardly take thought</u> how they shall be paid.	= "give serious thought to"; hardly = vigorously, though Flügel suggests "certainly".
74	Roist. Tut, I owe <u>nought</u> .	= nothing.
76	Mery. What then? fear ye <u>imprisonment</u> ?	= ie. for having committed some crime.
78	Roist. No.	
80	Mery. No, I <u>wist</u> ye offend not, so to be <u>shent</u> .	81: "I know (wist) you would do nothing that would be blameworthy, which would lead to your being punished (shent). ^{1,5}
82	But if ye had, <u>the Tower could not you so hold</u> ,	= ie. "even the Tower of London (a prison) could not hold you"; Merygreeke is really pouring on the flattery!
84	But to break out at all times ye would be bold.	
86	Roist. <u>What</u> is he that <u>durst</u> have <u>put me in that heat</u> ?	= who. = dared. = "enraged me so".
	He that beateth me, <u>by His arms</u> , shall well find,	= "by God's arms", referring to His might, ⁴ an oath; it was, and remained for a century more, customary to swear on God's "body parts" or other earthy attributes: e.g. God's eyelids, God's wounds, etc.
88	That I will not be far from him nor <u>run behind</u> .	= ie. be slow to get revenge.
90	Mery. That thing know all men ever since ye <u>overthrew</u>	= defeated, beat.
92	The fellow of the lion which Hercules slew.	91: "the companion-lion to the one Hercules killed;" the allusion is to Hercules' first labour, the slaying of the Nemean lion.
	But what is it then?	
94	Roist. <u>Of</u> love I make my moan.	= from, because of.
96	Mery. "Ah, this foolish-a love, wil't ne'er let us alone?"	96: Merygreeke appears to be quoting a line from some well-known song. ⁴
	But because ye were <u>refused the last day</u> ,	= rejected (by a woman). = ie. (just) yesterday.
98	Ye said ye would ne'er more be entangled that way –	
100	"I would meddle no more, since I find <u>all</u> so unkind."	= ie. "all women"; Merygreeke quotes Roister.
102	Roist. Yea, but I cannot so put love out of my mind.	
104	Mery. But is your love, tell me first in <u>any wise</u> ,	= "any way (you can)".
	In the way of marriage, or of merchandise?	104: "do you want to marry the woman, or just sleep with her?"
106	If it may otherwise than lawful be found,	105-6: if Roister only wants this woman to satisfy his lust, then - fornication being immoral as well as a crime - Merygreeke wants nothing to do with it.
	Ye get none of my help for a hundred pound.	
108	Roist. No, <u>by my troth</u> , I would have her to my wife.	= truly.
110	Mery. Then <u>are ye</u> a good man, and God save your life!	= "you are"; Merygreeke acts relieved!
112	And what or who is she, with whom ye are in love?	
114	Roist. A woman whom I know not by what means to <u>move</u> .	= arouse, inflame.
116	Mery. Who is it?	

118	Roist. A woman <u>yond</u> .	= yonder, over there.
120	Mery. What is her name?	
122	Roist. Her yonder.	
124	Mery. Whom?	
126	Roist. Mistress – ah –	125: Roister has fallen in love, but he does not even know the lady's name.
128	Mery. Fie, fie, for shame! Love ye, and know not whom – but "her yond," "a woman?" We shall then get you a wife, I cannot tell <u>whan</u> .	129: when; Udall uses an obsolete variant in spelling for the sake of the rhyme.
130		
132	Roist. The fair woman, <u>that supped with us</u> yesternight, And I heard her name twice or thrice, and had it right.	= perhaps meaning they were all eating in the same public house, though not as one party.
134	Mery. Yea, ye may see ye ne'er take me to good <u>cheer</u> with you, – If ye had, I could have told you her name now.	134: roughly, "that's what happens when you fail to invite me to join you for a good meal (<i>cheer</i>)."
136		
138	Roist. I was to blame indeed, but the next time <u>perchance</u> – And she dwelleth in this house.	= maybe. 138: the pair are now in front of the house of Dame Custance.
140	Mery. What, Christian Custance?	
142	Roist. <u>Except</u> I have her to my wife, I shall run mad.	= unless.
144	Mery. Nay, "unwise" perhaps, but <u>I warrant you for "mad."</u>	= "I guarantee you shall not go mad." <i>for</i> = against. ⁴
146	Roist. I am utterly dead unless I have my desire.	
148	Mery. Where be the bellows that blew this sudden fire?	148: metaphorically, "why the sudden interest in this woman?"
150	Roist. I hear she is worth a thousand pound and more.	150: Roister is describing Custance's annual income from her property.
152	Mery. Yea, but learn this one lesson <u>of</u> me afore – An hundred pound of marriage-money, doubtless, Is ever thirty pound sterling, or somewhat less;	= from. 153-4: Roister should not count on the rumours of Custance's income being accurate, suggesting that any bandied-about values should be discounted by at least 70%. <i>thirty pound sterling</i> = thirty pounds; in the days of the Saxon kingdoms, silver coins called <i>sterlings</i> were issued as currency, and since 240 of them could be minted from a pound of silver, British pounds were, until 1971, divided into 240 pennies, or pence; large payments, meanwhile, were more conveniently described in terms of <i>pounds of sterlings</i> . ¹⁶
154		
156	So that her thousand pound, if she be thrifty, Is much <u>near</u> about two hundred and fifty. <u>Howbeit</u> , wooers and widows are never poor.	= nearer, closer to. 157: the proverbial sentiment expressed here is a cynical one: men who court women, and widows who seek marriage, always exaggerate their wealth in order to make themselves more attractive to their potential mates. <i>howbeit</i> = however the case may be.
158		

160	Roist. Is she a widow? I love her better therefore.	
162	Mery. But I hear she <u>hath made promise</u> to another.	= is engaged.
164	Roist. He shall go without her, <u>and</u> he were my brother!	= even if.
166	Mery. I have heard say, I am right well advised, That she hath to <u>Gawyn</u> Goodluck promised.	= Gawyn is a Scottish name, meaning "white hawk". ¹⁷
168	Roist. <u>What</u> is that Gawyn Goodluck?	= who.
170	Mery. A merchant-man.	
172	Roist. Shall he <u>speed afore</u> me? Nay, sir, by sweet <u>Saint Anne</u> !	= "succeed before". = Anne was the mother of Mary, and grandmother of Jesus.
	Ah, sir, "'Backare,' quod Mortimer to his sow,"	173: in brief, "back off, Gawyn!"
		Ralph borrows a line from Heywood's <i>Proverbs</i> , "Nay, backare (quoth Mortimer to his sow)"; Heywood editor Julian Sharman ¹⁰ observes that the allusion of the expression has long been lost, but notes that the interjection backare was used to indicate condemnation of another's forward or presumptuous conduct: "stand back!" (OED) or "hands off!" (Farmer).
174	I will have her mine own self, I make God a vow. For I tell thee, she is worth a thousand pound.	
176	Mery. Yet a <u>fitter</u> wife for <u>your maship</u> might be found.	= more appropriate. = "your mastership", a title of respect, used only in the 16th century. ¹
178	Such a goodly man as you might get one with land, Besides pounds of gold a thousand and a thousand,	
180	And a thousand, and a thousand, and a thousand, And so to the sum of <u>twenty hundred thousand</u> .	= ie. two million pounds, an obviously ridiculously large amount of money;
182	Your most goodly personage is worthy of no less.	
184	Roist. I am sorry God made me so <u>comely</u> , doubtless, For that maketh me <u>eachwhere</u> so highly <u>favoured</u> ,	= handsome. = everywhere. = advantaged or blessed. ¹
186	And all women on me so enamoured.	
188	Mery. "Enamoured," <u>quod</u> you? – have ye spied out that? Ah, sir, <u>marry</u> , now I see you know what is what.	= say. = an oath, derived from the Virgin Mary.
190	"Enamoured," <u>ka</u> ? marry, sir, say that again, But I thought not ye had marked it so plain.	= quoth, ie. "you say". ¹⁸
192	Roist. Yes, <u>eachwhere</u> they gaze all upon me and stare.	= everywhere.
194	Mery. Yea, <u>Malkyn</u> , I <u>warrant</u> you, as much as they dare. –	195: Malkyn = a name for an effeminate or weak man. ¹ Merygreeke is twitting Roister in this aside. warrant = assure.
196	And ye will not believe what they say in the street, When your maship passeth by, all such as I meet,	
198	That sometimes I can scarce find what answer to make. "Who is this," saith one, " <u>Sir Launcelot du Lake</u> ?"	= Lancelot du Lac , aka Sir Lancelot of the Round Table; one of King Arthur's fabled knights, Lancelot was famous for his chivalry and courage. ¹⁹
200	"Who is this – great <u>Guy of Warwick</u> ?" saith another.	= English hero of romance, whose legendary exploits were first written down in the 12th century. He was known for slaying giants (including Colbrand , mentioned below in line 204), boars and dragons, and

		he also fought in the Crusades in the Holy Land, where he killed the Sultan. ¹⁹
	"No," say I, "it is the <u>thirteenth Hercules' brother</u> ."	= ie. "the thirteenth brother of Hercules;" Child notes that Hercules was sometimes identified as one of the 12 or 13 children of Jupiter.
202	"Who is this – noble <u>Hector of Troy</u> ," saith the third.	= Hector was the greatest of the Trojan warriors in the war with the Greeks.
	"No, but of the same nest," say I, "it is a bird."	203: "no, but he is a bird of the same nest," ie. of the same mold.
204	"Who is this – great <u>Goliah</u> , Sampson, or <u>Colbrand</u> ?"	= ie. Goliath. = Danish giant of romance and legend, slain by Guy of Warwick.
	"No," say I, " but it is a <u>brute of the Alie Land</u> ."	205: perhaps "a hero of the Holy Land", but the passage has attracted much comment. brute = a reference to Brute , the legendary descendent of the Trojan hero Aeneas, and the man credited with founding England; brute hence is used to mean "hero" ³ or "person of distinction". ⁵ Alie Land = uncertain reference, but "Holy Land" has been suggested, in response to the mention of the Biblical heroes Goliath and Sampson ; ³ Farmer, however, tentatively suggests that Alie , or alye , means "kindred" or "neighbouring", and Hazlitt, similarly, suggests "similar", so that they propose the intended meaning of the clause to be "a hero from a similar land."
206	"Who is this – <u>great Alexander</u> , or <u>Charle le Maigne</u> ?"	= Alexander the Great. = Charlemagne.
	"No, it is <u>the tenth Worthy</u> ," say I to them again. –	= Merygreeke alludes to the proverbial Nine Worthies , a collection of nine heroes from the past whose lives were worthy of admiration; they included: (a) 3 pagans: Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar; (b) 3 Jews: Joshua, David and Judas Maccabeus; and (c) 3 Christians: King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Boullion, a leader of the First Crusade, and first sovereign of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Farmer pithily refers to these absurd comparisons to Roister by Merygreeke as "mock heroic descriptions".
208	I know not if I said well.	208: ie. "was that ok how I responded?"
210	Roist. Yes, for so I am.	
212	Mery. Yea, for there were but nine Worthies before ye came. To some others, <u>the third Cato</u> I do you call.	= the first two Cato's were: (1) Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.), known as "Cato the Elder", and one of early Rome's most famous statesmen, soldiers and writers. He became notorious for his severe views on ethics, and it was his special mission to eject men from the lists of senators and knights if they failed to live up to the moral Roman code he demanded of all, earning him his most enduring epithet, "the Censor"; and (2) Marcus Porcius Cato (95-46 B.C.), called "the Younger" to distinguish him from his more famous great-grandfather. Seeing himself as a defender of the

214 And so, as well as I can, I answer them all.
 "Sir, I pray you, what lord or great gentleman is this?"
 216 "Master Ralph Roister Doister, dame," say I, "iwis."
 "O Lord," saith she then, "what a goodly man it is."
 218 Would Christ I had such a husband as he is!"

"O Lord," say some, "that the sight of his face we lack!"
 220 "It is enough for you," say I, "to see his back.
 His face is for ladies of high and noble parages,
 222 With whom he hardly 'scapeth great marriages " –
With much more than this, and much otherwise.
 224 **Roist.** I can thee thank that thou canst such answers devise;
 226 But I perceive thou dost me throughly know.

228 **Mery.** I mark your manners for mine own learning, I trow,
 But such is your beauty, and such are your acts,
 230 Such is your personage, and such are your facts,
 That all women, fair and foul, more and less,
 232 They eye you, they lub you, they talk of you doubtless.
 Your pleasant look maketh them all merry;

234 Ye pass not by, but they laugh till they be weary;
 Yea and money could I have, the truth to tell,
 236 Of many, to bring you that way where they dwell.

238 **Roist.** Merygreeke, for this thy reporting well of me –
 240 **Mery.** What should I else, sir? It is my duty, pardee.
 242 **Roist.** I promise thou shalt not lack, while I have a groat.

244 **Mery.** Faith, sir, and I ne'er had more need of a new coat.
 246 **Roist.** Thou shalt have one to-morrow, and gold for to spend.
 248 **Mery.** Then I trust to bring the day to a good end;
 For, as for mine own part, having money enow,
 250 I could live only with the remembrance of you.
 But now to your widow whom you love so hot.
 252 **Roist.** By Cock, thou sayest truth! I had almost forgot.
 254 **Mery.** What if Christian Custance will not have you, what?

free Roman state, Cato opposed Julius Caesar in the Roman civil wars; rather than live in a world ruled by Caesar, Cato famously disemboweled himself.²⁹

= assuredly.

= "I wish to Christ"; observant readers will note that such direct blasphemies explicitly mentioning the name of God or Christ are absent from later plays of the era; in 1605 Parliament banned the use of God's name on stage.

= lineages or ranks.^{1,5}

= ie. from. = escapes.

= ie. "I say".

= "I am able to render thee thanks"⁵ or "I owe you thanks".²⁴

= ie. "you know me very well;" **throughly** was commonly used for **thoroughly**.

228: "I observe your behaviour so I may learn from it, I know".

= great deeds.

= of high and low status.⁵

= love.^{1,3}

233: the original edition had **peasant** written here, which all the editors emend to **pleasant**.

234: a slyly ambiguous line! Roister, of course, never recognizes any of Merygreeke's disguised insults.

235-6: Merygreeke could ask for, or has been offered, a lot of money to bring Roister to the doors of his adoring female admirers.

= speaking.

= "by God", from the French *par Dieu*, ie. truly.¹

242: **lack** = ie. be lacking for money or anything else.
a groat = a coin worth four-pence; used here to mean, "even the least amount of money in my possession."

= ie. to.

= enough.

= by God, a common euphemistic oath; Roister tends to stay away from mentioning God explicitly in his swearing.

256	Roist. Have me? Yes, <u>I warrant you</u> , never doubt of that;	= "I assure you"; note that Roister unusually uses you here.
258	I know she loveth me, but she dare not <u>speak</u> .	= ie. "speak to me," or "tell me."
260	Mery. Indeed, <u>meet it were</u> somebody should <u>it break</u> .	= "it would be fitting for". = speak about it, ie. break the ice.
262	Roist. She looked on me twenty times yesternight, And laughed so –	
264	Mery. That she could not sit upright.	265: another not-too-disguised insult.
266	Roist. No, faith, could she not.	
268	Mery. No, <u>even such a thing I cast</u> .	= ie. "that much I guessed." cast = reckoned, estimated. ²
270	Roist. But for wooing, thou knowest, women are <u>shamefast</u> .	= shy. ¹
272	But, <u>and</u> she knew my mind, I know she would be glad, And think it the best <u>chance</u> that ever she had.	= if.
274	Mery. To her then like a man, and be bold forth to start!	= opportunity, ie. the best thing that ever happened to her.
276	Wooers never <u>speed</u> well that have a <u>false</u> heart.	= succeed. = cowardly. ⁵
278	Roist. What may I best do?	278: ie. "what do you think is the best approach I should take?"
280	Mery. Sir, remain ye awhile [<u>here</u>].	= here was added by later editors to complete the rhyme with appear .
282	Ere long one or other of her house will appear. Ye know my mind.	281: "before long one of her household staff should come out."
284	Roist. Yea, now, <u>hardly</u> , let me alone!	284: "yes, by all means (hardly), ¹ you can leave me here!"
286	Mery. In the meantime, sir, if you please, <u>I will home</u> , –	286: ie. "I will go home." Note the common grammatical construction of this clause: in the presence of a verb of intent (<i>will</i>), the verb of action (<i>go</i>) is often omitted.
288	And call your musicians, for, in this your case, It would <u>set you forth</u> , and all your wooing grace; Ye may not lack your instruments to play and sing.	287-9: Merygreeke will return with Roister's personal musicians so they may serenade Dame Custance. = "further your cause" (Whitworth, p. 107).
290	Roist. Thou knowest I can do that.	
292	Mery. As well as anything .	
294	Shall I go call your <u>folks</u> , that ye may <u>show a cast</u> ?	294: folks = servants, ie. Roister's musicians. show a cast = literally, "show her a urine specimen, ³ but meaning here "a sample of your ability" (Gassner, p. 275).
296	Roist. Yea, run, I beseech thee, in all possible haste.	
298	Mery. I go.	
300	[Exit.]	300: the original edition prints Exeat for Exit throughout the play, but for clarity's sake we will employ the modern term.

302	Ralph. Yea, for I love singing <u>out of measure</u> ,	= unrestrainedly, ^{1,5} but Farmer proposes that Roister may be unwittingly suggesting a secondary meaning of "out of tune".
	It comforteth my spirits and doth me great pleasure.	
304	But who cometh forth yond <u>from</u> my sweetheart Custance?	= ie. from the household of.
	<u>My matter frameth well</u> , this is a lucky chance.	= "my business is shaping up well".
	 <u>ACT I, SCENE III.</u> <i>The Yard before Custance's House.</i>	
	 [Still on Stage: Roister Doister.]	
	<i>Enter Madge Mumblecrust, spinning on the distaff, and Tibet Talkapace, sewing.</i>	The Setting: two of Dame Custance's servants enter the stage from the door at the back of the stage that represents their mistress' home, carrying their work with them. It is not exactly clear where the help would settle down to do their work; we can perhaps imagine a small yard directly in front of the door, while Roister stands a short distance from the ladies, himself unseen but watching them intently, and close enough to hear them speaking.
		Entering Characters: <i>Margery Mumblecrust</i> (called <i>Madge</i>) is an old nurse, <i>Tibet Talkapace</i> is a younger female servant; both are in the employ of Dame Custance. <i>mumblecrust</i> = <i>mumble</i> originally seems to have meant "to eat awkwardly, as one without teeth", ^{1,20} and <i>mumblecrust</i> was used in some later literature as a term of contempt for any decrepitly old person; <i>mumble</i> , with its modern meaning of "to speak lowly and indistinctly", also appears as a modifying word in other literature of the time, such as <i>mumble-news</i> (referring to a gossip) in Shakespeare's <i>Love's Labour Lost</i> . ⁵ <i>Tibet</i> is given its own entry in the OED, which describes the word as a name typically given to one of lower status. <i>Talkapace</i> means "talk quickly".
1	Madge. If this <u>distaff</u> were <u>spun</u> , Margerie Mumblecrust –	1: Marge is talking or muttering to herself. <i>distaff</i> = a rod of 2-3 feet in length, around which is wound wool or flax, and held under the left arm; the user would draw the fibers from the distaff, twisting them as they pass through the fingers of her left hand. The resulting yarn is wound onto a second staff (called a spindle) which she holds and rotates in her right hand. ¹ <i>spun</i> = spun off, ie. finished. ¹
2	Tibet. Where good <u>stale ale</u> is, will drink no water, I trust.	3: Tibet interrupts Mumblecrust. ³ <i>stale ale</i> = ale that is old and strong. ⁵ References to <i>stale ale</i> are common in old literature, no doubt thanks to the euphonious rhyme of the phrase. Tibet, like Merygreeke, has a penchant for quoting proverbs - though no source for has been found for this proverbial-sounding sentiment. Tibet's point depends on how she interprets Madge's unfinished thought of line 1: if Madge is basically saying "if only I were finished with this job", then Tibet may be commenting on the futility of wishing for something that is simply not so - sort of a mildly

4	Madge. Dame Custance hath promised us <u>good ale and white bread</u> .	sarcastic, "and if one has good ale to drink, then one wouldn't have to drink water."
6	Tibet. If she keep not <u>promise</u> , I will <u>beshrew</u> her head:	5: Madge absent-mindedly picks up on Tibet's mentioning <i>ale</i> . <i>good ale and white bread</i> = ie. better fare than usual (Flügel); <i>white bread</i> is bread made of a combination of rye and wheat grain, wheat being more expensive and of slightly better nutritional value than rye. Poorer folk generally only ate rye bread. ⁵
8	But it will be <u>stark</u> night before I shall <u>have done</u> .	= ie. her promise. = curse. = absolute, fully. ^{1,5} = ie. "be done (with my sewing);" assuming the ladies have just walked onto the stage, Tibet has remained standing, not yet ready to begin working, even as Madge has sat down and started spinning. Tibet's lazy nature will soon become more evident.
10	Roist. I will stand here awhile, and talk with them <u>anon</u> .	= in a moment.
12	I hear them speak of Custance, which doth my heart good;	
14	Madge. Sit down to your work, Tibet, like a good girl,	
16	Tibet. Nurse, <u>meddle you with</u> your spindle and your <u>whirl</u> !	16: <i>meddle you with</i> = "busy yourself with", or "keep your nose in", the sense of the line being "mind your own business." ¹ <i>whirl</i> = a weighty disk attached to a spindle to cause it to spin with greater force. ⁴
18	<u>No haste but good</u> , Madge Mumblecrust, for "whip and <u>whur</u> ," The old proverb doth say, "never made good <u>fur</u> ."	17-18: Tibet recites a pair of proverbial sentiments, both of which admonish against rushing a job, ie. "haste makes waste". The lazy Tibet uses these proverbs to justify her slow work. ²³ <i>No haste but good</i> = proverbial, from Heywood; a variation on an earlier formula, "an ill haste is not good", which appeared in a 1515 publication, <i>John of Bordeaux</i> , by Sir John Bouchier, Lord Berners. <i>whip and whur never made good fur</i> = William Hazlitt, in his collection of English proverbs, infers that this is an old agricultural saying. ²¹ <i>Whip</i> could refer to the instrument of whipping, or (as the OED suggests) could mean "brisk or hasty movement"; <i>whur</i> could mean either "hurry" or "scolding", ⁸ and <i>fur</i> is short for "furrow". ⁵ Putting it all together, the meaning of the phrase may be something like, "if you push your draft animal too hard, the result will be a poorly-created furrow for planting."
20	Madge. Well, ye will sit down to your work <u>anon</u> , I trust.	= soon.
22	Tibet. "Soft fire maketh sweet malt," good Madge Mumblecrust.	22: ie. "a gentle fire makes the best malt"; Tibet quotes another proverb of Heywood's, warning yet again against rushing anything.
24	Madge. And sweet malt maketh <u>jolly</u> good ale <u>for the nones</u> .	= very. ⁵ = for the nonce, ie. for the purpose or occasion. ²

26	Tibet. Which will slide down the <u>lane without any bones</u> .	= throat. ⁵ = literally referring to bones which might unexpectedly appear in one's soup, thus meaning "easily swallowed". ¹
28	[<i>Cantet.</i>]	28: "let her sing"; ²⁴ Tibet sings, and settles down to begin her work as she does so.
30	"Old brown bread crusts must have much good <u>mumblin</u> g, But good ale down your throat hath good easy tumbling."	= chewing. ¹
32	Roist. The jolliest wench that <u>ere</u> I heard, little <u>mouse</u> !	= till now. = sweetheart, common term of endearment. ¹
34	<u>May I not rejoice</u> that she shall dwell in my house!	34: if Custance marries Roister, their household staffs will merge. May I not rejoice = ie. "I do rejoice".
36	Tibet. So, <u>sirrah</u> , now this <u>gear</u> beginneth <u>for to frame</u> .	36: sirrah = Tibet could be addressing Madge or herself; sirrah could be used as a term of address for women as well as men. gear = business, matter. for to frame = to take shape. ¹
38	Madge. Thanks to God, though your work stand still, your tongue is not lame.	
40	Tibet. And though your teeth be gone, both so sharp and so fine, Yet your tongue can <u>renne on pattens</u> as well as mine.	42: ie. "run on pattens", meaning "clatter on"; Tibet borrows another proverb from Heywood: "The cow is wood. Her tongue runth on pattens." A patten was "a wooden shoe that made a great clattering" (Flügel).
42	Madge. Ye were not for <u>nought</u> named Tib Talkapace.	= nothing.
44	Tibet. Doth my talk grieve you? <u>Alack</u> , God save your grace!	= similar to "alas".
46	Madge. I <u>hold</u> a <u>groat</u> ye will <u>drink anon</u> for this <u>gear</u> .	47: "I'll bet (hold) ³ a groat (a coin worth four pence) that you will soon (anon) drink over this matter (gear). Madge is mildly admonishing Tibet: drink means both (1) imbibe and (2) be punished, ⁵ or as the OED puts it, "taste the cup of suffering".
48	<i>Enter Annot Alyface, [with her knitting].</i>	Entering Character: Annot Alyface is another of Dame Custance's female servants; Farmer thinks that Aly is meant to suggest ale , so that her name means "beery-face", or "face-of-ale"; Child suggests Annot is young and attractive.
50	Tibet. And I will pray you the <u>stripes</u> for me to bear.	51: "and I will pray that you will receive a whipping in my place." stripes = the marks or scars left on one's back from a whipping.
52	Madge. I hold a penny ye will <u>drink</u> without a cup.	53: Madge only slightly less elliptically hints that Tibet will get a good whipping. drink = used in various expressions to suggest suffering or paying a penalty, such as "to drink from the cup of sorrow". ¹
54		

	Tibet. Whereinsoe'er ye drink, I <u>wot</u> ye drink all up.	55: Tibet hints at Madge's fondness for drink; the drunken servant became a stock Elizabethan character. wot = know.
56		
	Annot. By <u>Cock</u> , and well sewed, my good Tibet Talkapace!	= God.
58		
	Tibet. And e'en as well knit, <u>my nown</u> Annot Alyface.	= "my own", a commonly-used transformation of "mine own".
60		
	Roist. See what a <u>sort</u> she keepeth that must be my wife!	61-62: Roister continues to address the audience.
62	Shall not I, when I have her, lead a merry life?	sort = company
64	Tibet. Welcome, my good <u>wench</u> , and sit here by me just.	= girl, referring to Annot; the commonly-used term wench carried no negative or condescending connotation in this era.
66		
	Annot. And how doth our old <u>beldame</u> here, Madge Mumblecrust?	= aged woman, but as Farmer points out, not necessarily a respectful term.
68	Tibet. Chide, and find faults, and threaten to complain.	68: Tibet itemizes the principal activities in which Madge has been engaging - at least from her own standpoint.
70		
	Annot. To make us poor girls <u>shent</u> to her is small gain.	= blamed or scolded; ^{5,8} shent , the past tense of the verb "to shend", appears a number of times in the play, and can also mean "shamed" or "disgraced".
72	Madge. I did neither chide, nor complain, nor threaten.	
74	Roist. It would grieve my heart to see one of them beaten.	
76	Madge. I did nothing but bid her work and <u>hold her peace</u> .	= keep quiet.
78	Tibet. <u>So would I</u> , if you could your clattering cease –	= "I would do so".
80	But the devil cannot make old <u>trot</u> hold her tongue.	= hag. ¹
82		
	Annot. Let all these matters pass, and we three sing a song, So shall we pleasantly both <u>the time beguile</u> now, And <u>eke</u> dispatch all our works ere we can tell how.	= pass the time pleasantly. ²
84		83: "and also (eke) help us finish our work without even realizing how it happened," ie. "distract us as we work."
86	Tibet. I <u>shrew</u> them that say nay, and that shall not be I.	= curse.
88	Madge. And I am well content.	
	Tibet. Sing on then, <u>by and by</u> .	= directly or at once; but it also could mean "in succession" or "one after the other", suggesting that they sing a song in the form of a round, or canon. ¹
90		
	Roist. And I will not <u>away</u> , but listen to their song,	= ie. go away.
92	Yet Merygreeke and my <u>folks tarry very long</u> .	= servants, ie. musicians. = ie. "are taking their time getting here."
94	[<i>Tibet, Annot, and Madge do sing here.</i>]	The Song: editors have speculated as to whether the song below was written by Udall, or was of earlier vintage.
96	<i>Pipe, merry Annot! etc.</i>	96: Child suggests the etc. indicates that the entire line is repeated three times, with the ladies' names appearing once with each repetition: "Pipe, merry Annot! Pipe, Merry Tibet! Pipe, merry Madge"; the

		song, continues Child, might be performed as a round (which interpretation may be supported by Tibet's use of <i>by and by</i> above in line 89).
		Williams thinks the <i>etc.</i> means the line refers to the refrain of a popular song.
		The first line of this song was referenced in an earlier published poem, <i>A Pore Helpe</i> (c.1548): " <i>And martirs woulde them make / That brent were at a stake / And sing pipe meri annot, etc.</i> "
	<i>Trilla, trilla, trillarie.</i>	
98	<i>Work, Tibet! work, Annot! work, Margerie!</i>	
	<i>Sew, Tibet! knit, Annot! spin, Margerie!</i>	
100	<i>Let us see who shall win the victory.</i>	
102	Tibet. This sleeve is not willing to be sewed, I <u>trow</u> .	= believe.
	A small thing might make me <u>all in the ground to throw</u> .	= ie. throw it all on the ground.
104		
106	[<i>Then they sing again.</i>]	
	<i>Pipe, merry Annot! etc.</i>	
108	<i>Trilla, trilla, trillarie.</i>	
	<u>What, Tibet!</u> <i>what, Annot! what, Margerie!</i>	= ie. "When, Tibet?" ie. "when will you work?", an "expression of impatience" (Gassner, p. 279).
110	<i>Ye sleep, but we do not, that shall we <u>try</u>.</i>	= prove. ⁵
	<i>Your fingers be numbed, our work will not <u>lie</u>.</i>	= ie. lie still. ¹²
112		
	Tibet. If ye do so again, well I would advise you nay.	113-4: Tibet may be reprimanding the uncooperative garment, but as Whitworth notes, these lines are not exactly clear.
114	<u>In good sooth</u> one <u>stop</u> more, and I <u>make holiday</u> .	114: In good sooth = truly. stop = obstruction or hindrance, ^{1,5} though some editors suggest "stitch". make holiday = stop working, quit. ¹
116		
	[<i>They sing the third time.</i>]	
118	<i>Pipe, merry Annot! etc.</i>	
	<i>Trilla, trilla, trillarie.</i>	
120	<i>Now, Tibet! now, Annot! now, Margerie!</i>	
	<i>Now <u>whippet apace for the maistry</u>,</i>	121: "now jump or move about (whippet) ^{1,3} rapidly (apace) to the utmost degree. ^{1,5}
122	<i>But it will not be, our mouth is so dry.</i>	for the maistry = literally "for the mastery", meaning "to the greatest degree".
124	Tibet. Ah, <u>each finger is a thumb to-day</u> , methink;	= early version of the still-common sentiment describing one's clumsiness or awkwardness as "all thumbs".
	<u>I care not to let all alone, choose it swim or sink.</u>	125: I care not to let all alone = ie. "I don't care if I do no more of this". choose it swim or sink = ie. "no matter what may happen or what the consequences are," or "take it or leave it" (Farmer); the more common formula, sink or swim , has been reversed to rhyme with methink . This still-common proverbial phrase first appeared in English letters at least as far back as 1410. ¹
126		
	[<i>They sing the fourth time.</i>]	
128		
	<i>Pipe, merry Annot, etc.</i>	
130	<i>Trilla, trilla, trillarie.</i>	

132	When, Tibet? when, Annot? when, Margerie? I will not, I cannot, no more can I. Then <u>give we all over</u> , and there let it lie.	= "we quit". give over = cease.
134		
136	[Let her cast down her work.]	135: Tibet throws her sewing down.
138	Tibet. There it lieth; <u>the worst is but a curried coat</u> – Tut, I am used thereto, I care not a groat!	= "the worst that can happen is that I'll be beaten (curried)." ^{5,8} Coat refers to Tibet's own hide. 138: "tut, I am used to it (ie. getting punished); I don't give a darn."
140	Annot. Have we done singing <u>since</u> ? Then will I <u>in</u> again. Here I found you, and here I leave <u>both twain</u> .	= already. ¹ = go in. = "the two of you." Though seemingly redundant (since twain means two), the formula both twain (and its twin both tway) was a common one. ¹
142		
144	[Exit.]	
146	Madge. And I will not be long after – <u>Tib Talkapace</u> !	= Madge suddenly notices Roister loitering nearby.
148	Tibet. What is the matter?	
150	Madge. Yond stood a man all this <u>space</u> And hath heard all that ever we spake together.	= time.
152	Tibet. Marry, the more lout he for his coming <u>hither</u> , And the less good he <u>can</u> to listen maidens talk.	= here. = ie. "can do".
154	I care not, and <u>I go bid him hence for to walk</u> ; It were well done to know what he maketh hereaway.	154: "I will go tell him to scram." 155: "it would be a good idea to know what he is doing hereabouts." ⁵
156		
158	Roist. Now might I speak to them, if I <u>wist</u> what to say.	= (only) knew.
160	Madge. Nay, we will go both off, and see <u>what</u> he is.	= "who"; the ladies approach Roister.
162	Roist. One that hath heard all your talk and singing, <u>i-wis</u> .	= assuredly, truly.
164	Tibet. The more to blame you! A good thrifty <u>husband</u> Would elsewhere have had some better matters <u>in hand</u> .	= manager of one's resources ⁵ or housekeeper. ²⁴ 164: "would have better spent his time elsewhere dealing with more important matters." in hand = to deal with. ²
166	Roist. I did it for no harm, but for good love I bear To your dame mistress Custance, I did your talk hear.	
168	And, mistress nurse, I will kiss you <u>for acquaintance</u> .	= ie. "to make your acquaintance;" it was the custom of the era for even complete strangers to greet each others with a kiss on the lips.
170	Madge. I come <u>anon</u> , sir.	= in a moment.
172	Tibet. Faith, I <u>would</u> our dame Custance Saw this <u>gear</u> .	= wish. = business.
174	Madge. I must first <u>wipe all clean</u> , yea, I must.	175: perhaps Madge wipes her mouth here; several editors identify a vague connection between this phrase and kissing.
176	Tibet. <u>Ill chieve it</u> , doting fool, but <u>it</u> must be <u>cust</u> .	177: Ill chieve it = "bad luck to her", or "may she succeed (chieve) illy". ⁵ it = ie. she.

178

Madge. God yelde you, sir; chad not so much, ichotte not
whan –

180 Ne'er since chwas bore, – chwine – of such a gay gentleman.

182 **Roist.** I will kiss you too, maiden, for the good will I bear you.

184 **Tibet.** No, forsooth, by your leave, ye shall not kiss me.

186 **Roist.** Yes, be not afeard, I do not disdain you a whit.

188 **Tibet.** Why should I fear you? I have not so little wit –
190 Ye are but a man I know very well.

192 **Roist.** Why, then?

194 **Tibet.** Forsooth for I will not! I use not to kiss men.

196 **Roist.** I would fain kiss you too, good maiden, if I might.

Tibet. What should that need?

198 **Roist.** But to honour you by this light.
200 I use to kiss all them that I love, to God I vow.

202 **Tibet.** Yea, sir? – I pray you, when did ye last kiss your cow?

204 **Roist.** Ye might be proud to kiss me, if ye were wise.

206 **Tibet.** What promotion were therein?

208 **Roist.** Nurse is not so nice.

cust = kissed.⁵

Madge receives a generous kiss from Roister while Tibet speaks this line.

179-180: "God reward you, sir; I have had not so much, since I know not when - not since I was born, I think, by such a fine gentleman."

It appears that Madge is so flustered by the kiss, that she has reverted into the rustic dialect she probably grew up speaking.

Carla Mazzio, however, argues that Madge, having been embarrassingly caught singing and chastising her fellow servants, is *deliberately* slipping into dialect to "reassert gender decorum and reestablish social distance" (p. 80).²² You may decide whether this interpretation is legitimate or is just post-modern bunk.

yelde you = "yield you", meaning "reward you".³

chad = "I had".³

ichotte = "I know".³

whan = when.

chwas bore = "I was born".

chwine = "I ween", ie. "I think".

of = by.

The **ch-** opening of all these colloquial words stands in for the pronoun "I", and was common in south-west England in the 15th-17th centuries.

= in the least.

= "I am not so dumb."

= ie. "why not".

= "am not accustomed (or) in the habit".⁵

= like to.

197: "what is the purpose of that?" or "why is that necessary?"

= a common oath.

203: Tibet alludes to yet another of Heywood's proverbs: "every man as he loveth...when that he kist his cow." Bartlett Whiting, in his *Proverbs in the Earlier English Drama*, suggests this adage has the same general meaning as the more familiar "every man to his taste".²³

206: ie. "what is the advantage in doing so?"

promotion = advancement.²

208: Roister points out that Madge was not so coy or mincing (**nice**).³

210	Tibet. Well, I have not been taught to kissing and <u>licking</u> .	= Tibet presumably does not use the word <i>licking</i> to suggest a sort of sloppy salaciousness, but rather to indicate a contemptuous comparison to the behaviour of an affectionate animal; I note the appearance of a similar phrase in William Caxton's 1484 collection of Aesop's fables: "[The asse] beganne to kysse and to lykke hym."
212	Roist. Yet I thank you, mistress nurse, <u>ye made no sticking</u> .	= Ralph is addressing Madge: "you did not hesitate."
214	Madge. I will not <u>stick for</u> a <u>koss</u> with such a man as you.	214: <i>stick for</i> = hesitate at, be overly-scrupulous with respect to. ⁵ <i>koss</i> = old, perhaps already obsolete form, for <i>kiss</i> .
216	Tibet. <u>They that lust</u> –! I will <u>again</u> to my sewing now.	216: <i>They that lust</i> = Tibet begins, without finishing, a well-known proverb which observes the lack of choosiness amongst those inclined to amorousness, ²³ but what the full proverb is, no editor has commented, and I have traced no source for it. <i>again</i> = ie. turn again, return.
218	<i>Enter Annot.</i>	218: the stage direction was added by later editors.
220	Annot. Tidings, ho! tidings! dame Custance greeteth you well.	
222	Roist. Whom? me?	
224	Annot. You, sir? No, sir! I do no such tale tell.	
226	Roist. But <u>and</u> she knew me here.	226: "but if (<i>and</i>) she knew I were here..."
228	Annot. Tibet Talkapace, Your mistress Custance and <u>mine</u> , must speak with <u>your grace</u> .	= ie. "my mistress too". = mock title for Tibet.
230	Tibet. With me?	
232	Annot. Ye must <u>come</u> in to her, <u>out of all doubts</u> .	= ie. go. = without doubt, certainly.
234	Tibet. And my work not half done? A mischief on all <u>louts</u> .	235: Tibet curses all rustic clods (<i>louts</i>), but of course she specifically means Roister, with whom she has wasted a great deal of time in idle chatter when she could have been finishing up her sewing; now she may face discipline for her job only half-done.
236	<i>[Exeunt Annot and Tibet.]</i>	
238	Roist. Ah, good sweet nurse!	
240	Madge. Ah, good sweet gentleman!	
242	Roist. <u>What?</u>	= as Cooper notes, this probably should read "who?" to rhyme with line 245.
244	Madge. Nay, I cannot tell, sir, but <u>what thing would you?</u>	= "what is it you wish for?"
246	Roist. How doth sweet Custance, <u>my heart of gold</u> , tell me how?	= meaning Madge.
248	Madge. She doth very well, sir, and <u>command</u> me to you.	= ie. obsolete form of "commends". ^{1,5} Whitworth observes that Madge has misspoken - she should have said that Custance "commends <i>herself</i> to you."
250	Roist. To me?	
252		

254	Madge. Yea, to you, sir.	
256	Roist. To me? Nurse, tell me plain, To me?	
258	Madge. Ye.	
260	Roist. That word maketh me alive again.	
262	Madge. She command me to one, last day, whoe'er it was.	262: ie. "well, she commended me to some man yesterday, whoever it was." Madge's clarification might bring another man down, but not Roister!
264	Roist. That was e'en to me and none other, <u>by the Mass</u> .	= an oath.
266	Madge. I cannot tell you surely, but one it was.	
268	Roist. It was I and none other; this <u>cometh to good pass</u> . I <u>promise</u> thee, nurse, I favour her.	= turns out well. ¹ = "assure you". ²
270	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
272	Roist. Bid her sue to me for marriage.	273: "ask her to ask me to marry her."
274	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
276	Roist. And surely for thy sake she shall <u>speed</u> .	= be successful.
278	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
280	Roist. I shall be contented to take her.	
282	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
284	Roist. But at thy request and for thy sake.	
286	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
288	Roist. And come – <u>hark</u> in thine ear what to say.	= listen.
290	Madge. E'en so, sir.	
292	[<i>Here let him tell her a great long tale in her ear.</i>]	
 <u>ACT I, SCENE IV.</u>		
[<i>Still on Stage: Roister Doister and Madge, Roister whispering to her.</i>]		
<div> <div> Enter Merygreeke, Dobinet Doughtie, Harpax, [and at least one other Musician.] </div> <div> Entering Characters: the stage activity continues seamlessly from the previous scene: along with Merygreeke, we see the arrival of Roister's servant, Dobinet Doughtie, and his musicians (probably a total of two), which include Harpax. Doughtie = doughty, meaning "valiant". Harpax = the name of a slave in Plautus' comedy <i>Pseudolus</i>, or <i>The Cheat</i>; the ancient Roman Pliny the Elder, in his <i>Natural History</i>, tells us that the word harpax was used to describe both a solution of sulfur </div> </div>		

1	Mery. Come on, sirs, <u>apace</u> , and <u>quit</u> yourselves like men,	and turpentine (used to treat leprosy) and a form of amber found in Syria;
2	Your <u>pains</u> shall be rewarded.	= "hurry". = acquit.
4	Dob. But I <u>wot</u> not when.	= efforts; Merygreeke assures the musicians they will be compensated for their work.
6	Mery. <u>Do your master worship</u> as ye have done in time past.	4: "but I don't know (wot) when." Dobinet's speeches, mostly asides, generally consist of humorous responses and interjections.
8	Dob. Speak to them; of mine office he shall have a <u>cast</u> .	= "treat your master (Roister) with the respect or due reverence". ¹
10	Mery. Harpax, look that thou do well too, and thy <u>fellow</u> .	8: in this aside, Dobinet encourages Merygreeke to continue instructing the musicians; in this way, the parasite will get a sampling (cast) of what Dobinet's job entails.
12	Harp. <u>I warrant</u> , if he will mine example follow.	= companion, ie. the other musician.
14	Mery. Curtsy, <u>whoresons</u> , duck you, and crouch at every word.	= ie. "I guarantee he will do well too".
16	Dob. Yes, whether our master speak <u>earnest or bord</u> .	14: Merygreeke instructs the musicians to bow whenever Roister speaks to them; curtsy , duck and crouch are synonyms for "bow".
18	Mery. For this <u>lieth upon</u> his <u>preferment</u> indeed.	whoreson = a common term of abuse.
20	Dob. <u>Oft</u> is he a wooer, but never doth he <u>speed</u> .	= "in earnest or in jest". ⁴
22	Mery. But with whom is he now so <u>sadly rounding yond</u> ?	18: "for this is a matter that truly concerns (lieth upon) ⁵ Roister's advancement through marriage (preferment) ¹ ."
24	Dob. With " <i>Nobs, nicebecetur, miserere</i> " fond.	= often. = succeed.
		= "seriously whispering over there?" Merygreeke goes over to where Roister is whispering to Madge.
		rounding = the original meaning of the Old English word round was "to whisper". ¹
		24: "with his words of infatuation, such as <i>dear one, dainty one, have pity on me</i> ."
		A puzzling and much discussed line. The most likely interpretation is that Dobinet is making light of Roister's talking to Madge, and the Latin words are a satirical version of the words he imputes to Roister.
		nobs = a term of endearment. ⁵
		nicebecetur = fine, dainty woman ^{1,4} or affected finicking woman. ⁶
		miserere = expressing pity. ¹
		fond = doting, infatuated, ^{1,4} an adjective describing Roister's imagined words.
		In addition, there is a parody here of the liturgical words miserere nobis , or "have pity on us".
		Farmer suggests a possible alternative interpretation of the line, which turns on miserere being understood to mean "wretch" if it is a noun instead of a verb; the Latin words then represent descriptions of Madge: "with his doting <i>dear, dainty wretch of a woman</i> ". The Latin words, continues Farmer, describe Madge's "woebegone appearance."

26	Mery. God be at your wedding, be ye <u>sped</u> already?	26: Merygreeke pretends to mistake Madge as Roister's intended bride; he knows full well she is not the woman whom Roister wants to marry. sped = successful (in his courting). = eager (to get married). ² = ie. "chosen a wife out of pure love". = ie. marriage.
28	I did not suppose that your love was so <u>greedy</u> . Mery. I perceive now ye have <u>chose of devotion</u> , – And joy have ye, lady, of your <u>promotion</u> .	
30	Ralph. Tush, fool, thou art deceived, this is not she.	
32	Mery. Well, <u>mock</u> much of her, and keep her well, I <u>'vise</u> ye.	= make. ³ = advise; ³ Merygreeke ignores Roister's correction!
34	I will <u>take no charge</u> of such a fair <u>piece</u> ' keeping.	= take no responsibility. ⁴ = person's or woman's. ⁵
36	Mumb. What aileth this fellow? he driveth me to weeping.	
38	Mery. What, weep on the wedding day? Be merry, woman, Though I say it, ye have chose a good gentleman.	
40	Roist. <u>Cocks nouns</u> , what meanest thou, man? <u>tut-a-whistle</u> !	41: Cock's nouns = an oath, a variation on "God's wounds". tut-a-whistle = "what nonsense", ⁴ or a warning to speak no more. ³
42	Mery. Ah, sir, be good to her; she is but a <u>gristle</u> .	= a delicate individual (OED), grey with age (Flügel), or a term of endearment for young girls (Farmer).
44	Ah, sweet lamb and <u>coney</u> !	= a term of endearment. ¹
46	Roist. Tut, thou art deceived.	
48	Mery. Weep no more, lady, ye shall be well <u>received</u> . – Up with some <u>merry noise</u> , sirs, to bring home the bride.	= regarded. ² = pleasant sounds, ie. music; ^{1,5} Merygreeke is addressing the musicians in this line.
50	Roist. Gog's arms, knave, art thou mad? I tell thee thou art <u>wide</u> .	= wide of the mark, ie. mistaken (a term from archery).
52	Mery. Then ye intend by night to have her home brought.	53: ie. "then you intend to be married by tonight."
54	Roist. I tell thee no.	
56	Mery. How then?	
58	Roist. 'Tis neither meant <u>ne</u> thought.	= nor.
60	Mery. What shall we then do with her?	
62	Roist. Ah, foolish <u>harebrain</u> ,	= Udall, in a 1542 work, had been the first to use this early version of this still-common adjective <i>harebrained</i> .
64	This is not she.	= "is it not she?" ³ = "let it (ie. what I said) be unsaid again!"
66	Mery. <u>No is</u> ? Why then, <u>unsaid again</u> !	
68	And what young girl is this with your maship so bold?	
70	Roist. A girl?	
72	Mery. Yea – I dare say, scarce yet three score year old.	
74	Roist. This same is the fair widow's nurse, <u>of whom ye wot</u> .	= "whom you know."

76	Mery. Is she but a nurse of a house? <u>Hence home</u> , <u>old trot</u> , Hence at once!	= "get yourself home". = decrepit old woman. ¹³ 75-76: Merygreeke is "shocked" that Madge and Roister are so intimate with each other.
78	Roist. No, no.	
80	Mery. What, <u>an</u> please your maship, A nurse talk <u>so homely</u> with one of your worship?	= if it. = in such a friendly or familiar manner. ¹³
82		
84	Roist. I will have it so: it is my pleasure and will.	
86	Mery. Then I am <u>content</u> . – Nurse, come again, <u>tarry still</u> .	= satisfied. = "please continue to hang around here."
88	Roist. What, she will help forward this my suit for her part.	87: Roister has been giving instructions to Madge for her help in his pursuit of Custance.
90	Mery. Then <u>is't</u> mine own <u>pigsney</u> , and blessing on my heart.	= ie. "she is". = sweetheart, a term of endearment. ⁵
92	Roist. This is our best friend, man.	
94	Mery. Then teach her what to say.	
96	Madge. I am taught already.	
98	Mery. Then go, make no delay.	
100	Roist. Yet <u>hark</u> , one word in thine ear.	= listen; Roister wants to give Madge one more instruction.
102	Mery. Back, sirs, from his <u>tail</u> .	101: Merygreeke addresses the musicians, who have begun to crowd Roister during this conversation; a very early editor suggests Merygreeke is herding the musicians against Roister even as he claims to be trying to hold them back. tail = backside. ¹
104	Roist. Back, villains, will ye be privy of my <u>counsail</u> ?	= counsel, advice.
106	Mery. Back, sirs, so: I told you <u>afore</u> ye would be <u>shent</u> .	= before. = chided.
108	Roist. She shall have the first day a whole <u>peck</u> of <u>argent</u> .	107: Roister instructs Madge to impress Custance with his wealth. peck = 2 gallons, about 554 cubic inches. argent = silver.
110	Madge. A peck! <i>Nomine Patris</i> , have ye so much <u>spare</u> ?	109: Nomine Patris = "the name of the Father"; Madge crosses herself here. ⁴ spare = ie. to spare, ³ or perhaps elliptical for "spare cash". ⁹
112	Roist. Yea, and a cart-load <u>thereto</u> , or else <u>were it bare</u> , Besides other moveables, household stuff, and land.	= in addition. ¹ = "it would be poorly provided indeed". ⁴
114	Madge. Have ye lands too?	
116	Roist. An hundred <u>marks</u> .	= a mark was a unit of money worth 2/3 of a pound sterling; Roister means he has an annual income of about 67 pounds from renting his land.
118	Mery. Yea, a thousand.	

120	Madge. And have ye cattle too? and sheep too?	
122	Roist. Yea, a few.	
124	Mery. He is ashamed the number of them to <u>shew</u> . E'en round about him, as many thousand sheep goes,	= common alternative for "show". 125-6: as the three of them have 30 fingers and toes, Roister has 30,000 cattle and sheep.
126	As he and thou, and I too, have fingers and toes.	
128	Madge. And how many years old be you?	
130	Roist. Forty at least.	
132	Mery. Yea, and thrice forty <u>to</u> them.	= in addition to; ¹ Merygreeke, as if he were on a roll of sorts, absurdly adds years to Roister's age with the same abandon with which he added money and livestock to his property.
134	Roist. Nay, now thou dost jest. I am not so old; thou misreckonest my years.	
136	Mery. I know that; but my mind was on <u>bullocks</u> and <u>steers</u> .	= young or castrated bulls. ¹ = bullocks or young oxen. ^{1,20}
138	Madge. And what shall I <u>show</u> her your mastership's name is?	= tell. ¹
140	Roist. Nay, she shall <u>make suit ere</u> she know that, <u>i-wis</u> .	= "press me for marriage". = before. = assuredly.
142	Madge. Yet let me somewhat know.	
144	Mery. This is he, understand,	145-182: this passage is modeled on a similar episode in Plautus' ancient Roman comedy <i>Miles Gloriosus</i> , in which the parasite absurdly extols the heroic qualities of the vain-glorious soldier he is flattering. ⁴
146	That killed the Blue Spider in <u>Blanchepowder</u> land.	146: Udall has likely invented this allusion; Merygreeke wants this assertion that Roister killed a spider in the kitchen ¹² to have the same awe-inspiring effect as if he were describing David as having "slain the giant Goliath on the plains of Judah!" Blanchepowder = a powder made from ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg, used on deserts.
148	Madge. Yea, Jesus, William <u>zee law</u> , did he <u>zo</u> , law!	148: Madge, excited, slips back into her rural dialect. zee = see; an "s" at the start of a word frequently becomes a "z" to suggest a western dialect. law = an exclamation meaning "indeed". ² zo = so.
150	Mery. Yea, and the last elephant that ever he saw, As the beast passed by, he <u>start</u> out of a <u>busk</u> ,	= jumped or emerged suddenly. ⁵ = northern dialect for "bush". ¹⁸
152	And e'en with pure strength of arms plucked out his great tusk.	150-2: Udall borrowed (and modified) the idea of the boastful captain wounding an elephant with his bare hands from the opening scene of Plautus' play <i>Miles Gloriosus</i> , in which the parasite brags that the captain had broken the thigh of an elephant with a single punch, and further suggests that if the soldier had put any effort into the blow, his "arm would have passed right through the hide, the entrails, and the frontispiece of the elephant."
154	Madge. Jesus, <i>nomine Patris</i> , what a thing was that!	

156 **Roist.** Yea, but, Merygreeke, one thing thou hast forgot.
 158 **Mery.** What?
 160 **Roist.** Of th' other elephant.
 162 **Mery.** Oh, him that fled away.
 164 **Roist.** Yea.
 166 **Mery.** Yea, he knew that his match was in place that day.
 Tut, he bet the King of Crickets on Christmas day,
 168 That he crept in a hole, and not a word to say.
 170 **Madge.** A sore man, by zembletee.
 172 **Mery.** Why, he wrong a club
 Once in a fray out of the hand of Belzebub.
 174 **Roist.** And how when Mumfision –?
 176 **Mery.** Oh, your custreling
 178 Bore the lantern a-field so before the gosling –
 Nay, that is too long a matter now to be told.
 180 Never ask his name, nurse, I warrant thee, be bold.
 He conquered in one day from Rome to Naples,
 182 And won towns, nurse, as fast as thou canst make apples.
 184 **Madge.** O Lord, my heart quaketh for fear: he is too sore.
 186 **Roist.** Thou makest her too much afeard, Merygreeke, no more.
 This tale would fear my sweetheart Custance right evil.
 188 **Mery.** Nay, let her take him, nurse, and fear not the devil.
 190 But thus is our song dashed. – Sirs, ye may home again.
 192 **Roist.** No, shall they not. I charge you all here to remain –
 The villain slaves, a whole day ere they can be found.
 194 **Mery.** Couch on your marybones, whoresons, down to the
 ground.
 196 Was it meet he should tarry so long in one place

166: the second elephant fled, knowing he had met his match at that place on this day.

167: **bet** = 16th century variation of, and perhaps regional alternative for, "beat".^{1,5}

King of Crickets = an invention of Udall's.

170: **sore** = severe or violent.¹

by zembletee = malapropism for "by semblance", meaning "by his looks". Flügel and Farmer, however, suggest "by the holy blood".

= 16th century variation for "wrung".¹

= a leading devil of Hell, sometimes conflated with Lucifer, the head demon.

= a soldier or other imaginary character Roister is raising, around whom he hopes Merygreeke will invent another tall tale.

177-8: Merygreeke plays along with Roister, but his fictional account immediately turns ridiculous.

custreling = diminutive form of **custrel**, both words referring to a servant or armour-bearer to a knight or soldier.¹

Bore = ie. "who bore", ie. carried.

= "you can be sure."

= ie. cook.⁴

= ie. of too violent character.¹

= frighten.

= proverbial.

190: "but it appears our music is spoiled." Merygreeke then dismisses the musicians.

= order.

193: if the musicians go home, it will take another whole day to round them up again.

195: Merygreeke orders the musicians to kneel before Roister.

couch = crouch or submit.¹

marybones = marrowbones, ie. knees.⁵

196: "was it right (**meet**) Roister should remain waiting here for so long (for you to arrive)"; Merygreeke is dressing down the musicians.

198	Without harmony of music, or some <u>solace</u> ? Whoso hath such bees as your master in his head	= diversion or entertainment. ² 198: the phrase <i>having bees in one's head</i> was used similarly to our modern "bees in one's bonnet", indicating one is agitated. ^{1,5}
200	Had need to have his spirits with music to be fed. – <u>By</u> your mastership's <u>licence</u> –	200: as he speaks this line, Merygreeke reaches to brush something off of Roister's coat. <i>By</i> = ie. with. <i>license</i> = permission.
202	Roist. What is that? <u>a mote</u> ?	= "some dust?"
204	Mery. No, it was a <u>fool's feather</u> had <u>light on</u> your coat.	204: here, and two more times to follow, Merygreeke, "under pretense of zealous concern" (Child), makes a show of brushing first what appears to be a feather, then a gnat, and lastly a hair, off of Roister's clothing, perhaps with undue "violence", as Child further suggests. <i>fool's feather</i> = Child notes that <i>fool's</i> and <i>fowl's</i> were pronounced more alike in Udall's day than today, so that Merygreeke wants Roister to hear the latter, while intending the former; the reference is to a feather a jester sometimes wore on his fool's cap, or coxcomb. ³ Merygreeke may be subtly but humorously implying the feather came from Ralph's own headgear, ie. he is a fool. Though the original edition has <i>fooles</i> written here, a performer will want to pronounce the word more like "fowl's" <i>light on</i> = landed on, settled on.
206	Roist. I was <u>nigh</u> no feathers since I came from my bed.	= near
208	Mery. No, sir, it was a hair that was fall from your head.	
210	Roist. My men come when it please them.	210: Roister grumbles about the failure of those who serve him to appear or come to him in a timely manner when he calls for them.
212	Mery. By your leave –	212: Merygreeke plucks something from Roister's coat again.
214	Roist. What is that?	
216	Mery. Your gown was foul spotted with the foot of a gnat.	
218	Roist. <u>Their master</u> to offend they are nothing afeard – What now?	= ie. the musicians' master, meaning himself. 219: Merygreeke picks from Roister's coat one last time.
220	Mery. A <u>lousy</u> hair from your mastership's beard.	= dirty or louse-infested.
222	Omnes famuli. And sir, for nurse's sake, pardon this one offence.	= all the servants; but the musicians are meant here. ³
224	We shall not after this show the like negligence.	
226	Roist. I pardon you this once, and come, sing ne'er the worse.	
228	Mery. How like you the goodness of this gentleman, nurse?	
230	Madge. God save his mastership that so can his men forgive! And I will hear them sing ere I go, by his leave.	
232		

234	Roist. Many, and thou shalt, wench. Come, we two will dance!	
236	Madge. Nay, I will by mine own self <u>foot</u> the song, <u>perchance</u> .	235: Madge prefers to dance (foot) alone, though the OED suggests foot here means "sing". perchance = maybe.
238	Roist. Go to it, sirs, lustily.	237: Roister steps aside to copy out a letter for Madge to carry to Custance. ⁴
240	Madge. Pipe up a merry note, Let me hear it played, I will foot it for a groat.	
242	[<i>Cantent.</i>]	242: "they sing": in the original editions, this number, entitled "the second song", appears as an appendix at the end of the play.
244	<i>Whoso to marry a <u>minion</u> wife,</i>	= darling. ²
246	<i>Hath had good <u>chance and hap</u>,</i>	= synonyms for "luck" or "fortune".
248	<i>Must love her and cherish her all his life,</i>	
250	<i>And dandle her in his lap.</i>	
252	<i>If she will fare well, if she will go gay,</i>	
254	<i>A good husband <u>ever still</u>,</i>	= always.
256	<i>Whatever she <u>lust</u> to do, or to say,</i>	= wants, desires.
258	<i>Must let her have her own will.</i>	
260	<i>About what affairs soever he go,</i>	254-6: a man must always let his wife know what he is doing and what is on his mind.
262	<i>He must <u>show</u> her all his mind.</i>	= tell.
264	<i>None of his counsel she may be kept <u>fro</u>.</i>	= "from", but some later editions print free .
266	<i>Else is he a man unkind.</i>	
268	Roist. Now, nurse, take this same letter here to thy mistress,	
270	And as my trust is in thee, <u>ply</u> my business.	= press, urge.
272	Madge. It shall be done.	
274	Mery. Who <u>made</u> it?	= ie. wrote.
276	Roist. I wrote it <u>each whit</u> .	= every last bit of it, all of it.
278	Mery. Then needs it no mending.	
280	Roist. No, no.	
282	Mery. No, I know your <u>wit</u> .	= wit was a catch-all word, used to mean intelligence, mental activity, good sense, etc.
284	Roist. I warrant it well.	274: "I guarantee it;" most edited versions of the play give this line to Merygreeke, but it would certainly fit Roister to speak it.
286	Madge. It shall be delivered.	= "are successful". = rewarded. ²
288	But, if ye <u>speed</u> , shall I be <u>considered</u> ?	
290	Mery. Whough! dost thou doubt of that?	
292	Madge. What shall I have?	
294	Mery. An hundred times more than thou canst devise to crave.	
296		

286	Madge. Shall I have some new <u>gear</u> ? – for my old is all spent.	= clothes.
288	Mery. The <u>worst</u> kitchen wench shall go in <u>ladies' raiment</u> .	= lowest. = the clothes of a lady or noble-woman.
290	Madge. Yea?	
292	Mery. And the <u>worst drudge</u> in the house shall go better Than your mistress doth now.	=ie. servant who performs the most menial tasks.
294	Madge. Then I <u>trudge</u> with your letter.	= depart. ²
296	Roist. Now, <u>may I repose me</u> – Custance is mine own. Let us sing and play homeward that it may be known.	= "I can rest confidently." Note the use of the grammatical construction known as the ethical dative, in which the superfluous me of I repose me adds emphasis to the sentiment.
298		
300	Mery. But are you sure that your letter <u>is well enough</u> ?	= a previous editor suggested changing this to "will win her" in order to provide a rhyme for the scene's last line.
302	Roist. I wrote it myself.	
304	Mery. Then sing we to dinner. [<i>Here they sing, and go out singing.</i>]	
	ACT I, SCENE V. <i>A Room in Custance's House.</i> <i>Enter Christian Custance and Madge.</i>	
1	Cust. Who <u>took</u> thee this letter, Margerie Mumblecrust?	Entering Characters: we finally meet Christian Custance , the widow Roister wishes to marry. Madge has delivered Roister's letter to Dame Custance.
2		Several editors suggest that the name Custance is a variation of Constance , and is meant to evoke her loyalty or faithfulness.
4	Madge. A lusty gay bachelor took it me of trust, And if ye <u>seek</u> to him he will <u>'low your doing</u> .	= gave. ³ 4: seek to = pursue. 'low your doing = "receive you with favour", assuming 'low stands for "allow", which means "admit" or "approve"; ³ but Child has love ; the original editions printed lowe , which could go either way.
6	Cust. Yea, but where learned he that manner of wooing?	
8	Madge. If to <u>sue to</u> him, you will any <u>pains take</u> , He will have you to his wife, he saith, for my sake.	8: an inverted pair of clauses: "if you will make an effort (pains take) to entreat (sue to) him". Madge is too busy repeating her message to Custance to notice she has been asked a question.
10	Cust. <u>Some wise gentleman</u> , <u>belike</u> . I am <u>bespoken</u> ;	11: Some wise gentleman = Custance is greatly given to speaking with irony and sarcasm. belike = probably. bespoken = spoken for, promised to another. ³
12	And I thought <u>verily this</u> had been some <u>token</u>	12: verily = truly. this = ie. the letter Madge brought to Custance. token = an expression of affection, ie. a love letter. ¹

	From my dear <u>spouse</u> , Gawyn Goodluck, whom when him please,	= fiancé. ³
14	God luckily send home to both our hearts' ease.	14: Gawyn is presently traveling on business.
16	Madge. A <u>joyly</u> man it is, I <u>wot</u> well by report,	16-17: Madge one last time suggests Custance go to Roister and beg him to marry her.
18	And would have you to him for marriage resort. Best open the writing, and see what it doth speak.	joyly = ie. jolly, an expression of admiration. ⁵ wot = know.
20	Cust. At this time, nurse, I will neither read <u>ne break</u> .	= "nor break", ie. break the seal of the letter. ⁵
22	Madge. He promised to give you a whole <u>peck of gold</u> .	= Roister actually said a peck of argent (silver); see Act I.iv.107.
24	Cust. <u>Perchance</u> , lack of a pint when it shall be all told.	= "more likely (perchance), it will be a pint of gold less than a peck when all is said and done;" ¹ there are 16 pints , or two gallons, in a peck .
26	Madge. I would take <u>a</u> gay rich husband, and I were you.	= ie. "such a".
28	Cust. In <u>good sooth</u> , Madge, e'en so would I, if I were thou.	= truth.
30	But no more of this <u>fond</u> talk now – let us go in,	= foolish.
32	And see thou no more <u>move me folly to begin</u> .	= "urge me to do anything foolish."
34	Nor bring me no more letters for no man's pleasure,	31: note the double (or perhaps triple) negative.
36	But thou know from whom.	32: "except from you-know-who", ie. Gawyn.
	Madge. I warrant ye shall be sure.	
	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	36: stage direction suggested by the editor.
	END OF ACT I.	

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter Dobinet.

Entering Characters: Roister's servant *Dobinet* is searching for Custance's house to deliver some tokens of Roister's esteem to the widow; in the meantime, he complains about the ceaseless work in which he and his fellow servants are forced to engage by their master to help him get a wife.

Act II: a day has passed since the events of Act I.

= "in front of or behind me?"

= ie. "have to do". = "will necessarily".

= expect.⁴ = ie. assignments to perform.

= much.

= gift.

= daybreak.¹ = two.

= "God's arms and wounds", an oath.

= tarried or proved remiss.^{1,4}

= "(actually) getting married".

= believe.

20-32: Dobinet rues the endless performances he and Roister's musicians must ever engage in to help him catch a wife.

lute = a primitive string instrument, plucked and fretted like a guitar.¹

= songs, or poems set to music.^{1,4} = mournful songs.¹

= ie. singing; note the unusual double-alliteration in this line.

= the well-known wind instrument with a mouthpiece on one end and six or so holes which may be covered in different combinations to play different notes: also called a "flageolet".¹

= owl.⁵ = whoop, ie. hoot.¹

= another name for an early guitar.

25-26: the excessive repetition of *thrumpledum* and *thrum* emphasizes the seemingly endless time that Roister requires his servants and musicians to spend playing the gittern specifically, and music generally.

= ie. composer.

= proverbial name used to describe one who writes bad poetry.⁴

= "(also) extemporaneously", ie. improvised.

1 **Dob.** Where is the house I go to, before or behind?
2 I know not where nor when nor how I shall it find.
3 If I had ten men's bodies and legs and strength,
4 This trotting that I have must needs lame me at length.
5 And now that my master is new set on wooing,
6 I trust there shall none of us find lack of doing.
7 Two pair of shoes a day will now be too little
8 To serve me, I must trot to and fro so mickle.
9 "Go bear me this token," "carry me this letter,"
10 Now this is the best way, now that way is better.
11 "Up before day, sirs, I charge you, an hour or twain,
12 Trudge, do me this message, and bring word quick again."
13 If one miss but a minute, then, "His arms and wounds,
14 I would not have slacked for ten thousand pounds!
15 Nay, see, I beseech you, if my most trusty page
16 Go not now about to hinder my marriage!"
17 So fervent hot wooing, and so far from wiving,
18 I trow, never was any creature living.
19 With every woman is he in some love's pang,
20 Then up to our lute at midnight, *twangledom twang*,

21 Then *twang* with our sonnets, and *twang* with our dumps,
22 And heigho from our heart, as heavy as lead lumps;

Then to our recorder with *toodleloodle poop*,

24 As the howlet out of an ivy bush should hoop.

25 Anon to our gittern, *thrumpledum, thrumpledum thrum*,
26 *Thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum,*
27 *thrum.*

28 Of songs and ballads also he is a maker,
And that can he as finely do as Jack Raker;

Yea, and extempore will he ditties compose,

30	<u>Foolish Marsyas</u> ne'er made the like, I suppose,	= Marsyas was an ancient Greek musician who played the aulos, a flute-like reed instrument; Dobinet calls him foolish because he dared challenge Apollo - the god of music - to a contest of music, the winner getting to do whatever he wanted to the other; Apollo winning, the god had Marsyas flayed alive for his presumption. ²⁵
	Yet must we sing them, as good stuff I undertake,	31-32: "we have to sing these songs, which are about as good as they can be, considering who - Roister Doister - is composing them" (Whitworth, p. 130).
32	As for such a <u>pen-man</u> is well fitting to make.	= the OED suggests pen-man meant scrivener or clerk in this period, but the sense seems to be "composer" or "author", a meaning the OED asserts did not appear until several decades later.
	"Ah, for these long nights! <u>heigho</u> ! when will it be day?	33f: Dobinet returns to quoting Roister. Heighho = heyho, or heigh-ho, an exclamation indicating dejection or longing, like a sigh. ¹
34	I fear ere I come she will be wooed away."	34: "I worry that some other man will win her before I see her again."
	Then when answer is made that it may not be,	= right away. ⁵
36	"O death, why comest thou not <u>by and by</u> ?" saith he.	= common variation for "meantime".
38	But then, from his heart to put away sorrow,	= a lovely old word for "day-break".
	He is as far in with some new love next morrow.	= pastime, ie. recreation; ^{1,3} pastance is used instead of pastime whenever a rhyme is needed - three times with Custance , once with dalliance . ³
40	But in the <u>mean season</u> we trudge and we trot.	= some other keepsake of Roister's love, wrapped in a cloth or rag (clout).
	From <u>dayspring</u> to midnight I sit not, nor rest not.	= yesterday.
42	And now am I sent to dame Christian Custance,	
	But I fear it will end with a mock for <u>pastance</u> .	
	I bring her a ring, with a <u>token in a clout</u> ,	
44	And by all guess this same is her house out of doubt.	
	I know it now perfect, I am in my right way.	
46	And, lo! yond the old nurse that was with us <u>last day</u> .	
	ACT II, SCENE II. [Still on Stage: Dobinet.]	
	<i>Enter Madge.</i>	
1	Madge. I was ne'er so <u>shoke up</u> afore, since I was born.	= severely rebuked. ⁵
2	That our mistress could not have chid, I would have sworn –	= "I would have sworn that Custance was not capable of chiding a person as she did me" - a testament to Madge's mistress' normally moderate temperament. ³⁰
	And I pray God I die, if I meant any harm,	
4	But for my life-time <u>this</u> shall be to me a <u>charm</u> .	4: this = ie. this scolding. charm = ie. to keep Madge from doing anything like this ever again.
6	Dob. <u>God you save and see</u> , nurse, and how is it with you?	= "God save and see you"; see means protect or watch over.
8	Madge. Marry, a great deal the worse it is <u>for such as thou</u> .	= "because of you."
10	Dob. <u>For me</u> ? Why so?	10: "because of me?"
12	Madge. Why, were not thou one of them, say,	

ACT II, SCENE III.

[Still on Stage: Dobinet.]

Enter Tom Trupenie.

- 1 **Tom.** I am clean lost for lack of merry company,
2 We 'gree not half well within, our wenches and I:
- They will command like mistresses, they will forbid,
4 If they be not served, Trupenie must be chid.
Let them be as merry now as ye can desire,
6 With turning of a hand, our mirth lieth in the mire.
- I cannot skill of such changeable mettle,
- 8 There is nothing with them but "in dock out nettle."
- 10 **Dob.** Whether is it better that I speak to him first,
Or he first to me? – It is good to cast the worst.
12 If I begin first, he will smell all my purpose,
Otherwise I shall not need anything to disclose.
14 **Tom.** What boy have we yonder? I will see what he is.
16 **Dob.** He cometh to me. It is hereabout, i-wis.
18 **Tom.** Wouldest thou ought, friend, that thou lookest so about?
20 **Dob.** Yea, but whether ye can help me or no, I doubt.
22 I seek to one mistress Custance house here dwelling.
24 **Tom.** It is my mistress ye seek to, by your telling.
26 **Dob.** Is there any of that name here but she?
28 **Tom.** Not one in all the whole town that I know, pardee.
30 **Dob.** A widow she is, I trow.

wrong.⁴

Other editors suggest *touch* means *touchstone*, a substance used to test material for gold or silver content.

Entering Character: Tom Trupenie is another of Custance's servants. *Truepenny* became its own word, used to describe an honest or trustworthy person.¹

1-2: there is no one in Custance's household for Tom to pal around with, as he is in constant conflict with the other servants - all of whom are female.
'gree = agree, ie. get along.

= "boss me around as if they were the ladies of the house", ie. in charge.
= ie. "if I don't do what they tell me to do".

6: *With turning of a hand* = "then in the next moment".¹

mirth = merry-making.

in the mire = very common phrase, describing something that is stuck or difficult to retrieve.¹

7: *skill of* = understand,⁵ find a reason for,²⁴ or deal with.¹¹

changeable mettle = reference to female fickleness.

= from Heywood's *Proverbs*: a reference to the folk cure for nettle-stings by rubbing them with dock leaves.³ The phrase became proverbial for fickleness or inconstancy.^{4,5}

= expect, plan for.²
= ie. speak.

= who.

= ie. Custance's house. = assuredly, truly.

= "is there anything you need".

ought = variation of *ought*, meaning "anything".

= certainly; from the French *par dieu*, by God.

= believe.

32	Tom. And what <u>and</u> she be?	32: "and what if she is?" and = if.
34	Dob. But <u>ensured</u> to an husband.	34: ie. "but she is engaged (ensured)."
36	Tom. Yea, so think we.	
38	Dob. And I dwell with her husband that <u>trusteth</u> to be.	38: "and I live with the man that expects (trusteth) to be her husband."
40	Tom. In faith, then must thou needs be welcome to me – Let us for acquaintance shake hands <u>together</u> , And <u>whate'er</u> thou be, heartily welcome hither.	40: "in that case, I am glad to meet you;" but Tom mistakes Dobinet for a servant of Custance's real fiancé, Gawyn. = common alternative of together , used here to rhyme with hither . = whoever.
44	<i>Enter Tibet and Annot.</i>	
46	Tibet. Well, Trupenie, <u>never but flinging</u> ?	= "never doing anything but". = running about. ³
48	Annot. And <u>frisking</u> ?	= frolicking. ¹
50	Tom. Well, Tibet and Annot, still <u>swinging and whisking</u> ?	= synonyms for running about rapidly or impetuously. ¹
52	Tibet. But ye <u>roil abroad</u> –	= range or wander about. ⁵
54	Annot. In the street everywhere.	
56	Tom. Where are ye twain – in chambers – when ye meet me <u>there</u> ? But come hither, fools, I have one now by the hand, Servant to him that must be our mistress' husband, Bid him welcome.	56: Tom responds with sarcasm: "and where are the two of you when I meet up with you here in the street (there) - in your rooms?" 57: Tom plays with the proverbial phrase, "take a fool by the hand", though of course here he calls the ladies fools , but has Dobinet by the hand .
60	Annot. To me truly is he welcome.	57-59: Tom introduces the ladies to Dobinet, whom he believes to be one of Gawyn's servants.
62	Tibet. Forsooth, and as I may say, heartily welcome.	
64	Dob. I thank you, mistress maids.	
66	Annot. I hope we shall better <u>know</u> .	= become acquainted. ⁵
68	Tibet. And when will our new master come?	
70	Dob. Shortly, I <u>trow</u> .	= believe.
72	Tibet. I <u>would</u> it were to-morrow: for till he <u>resort</u> ,	= wish. = arrives or visits, ¹ with the sense of "returns safely from his trip".
74	Our mistress, being a widow, hath small comfort; And I heard our nurse speak of an husband to-day	75-76: Tibet overheard Madge describe Roister, but thinks she was describing Gwyn.
76	Ready for our mistress, a rich man and a gay. And we shall go in our <u>French hoods</u> every day,	77-83: Tibet dreams of wearing the finest of clothing once Custance is married to Gawyn. French hoods = a style of hood popular in the 16th and 17th centuries, comprised of a hard band (sometimes shaped like half a bow) with a long loose cloth hanging from its back which covered the ears,

78	In our silk <u>cassocks</u> (I warrant you) <u>fresh</u> and gay, In our <u>trick ferdegews</u> and <u>biliments</u> of gold;	neck and upper back. ¹ = dresses or long loose gowns. ^{1,5} = sharp, new. ⁵ 79: trick = neat. ³ ferdegews = a malapropism for farthingales , the "framework of hoops, usually of whalebone", as was found frequently in skirts of the day (OED). biliments = there is little agreement amongst the editors regarding what is meant by this word: editors have suggested ornamented or jeweled bonnet-like women's head attire ^{1,3} or necklaces; ⁵ biliment is derived from the word habiliment , from which the first two letters "gradually or unintentionally" were lost, a linguistic development known as <i>aphesis</i> (OED).
80	<u>Brave</u> in our <u>suits of change</u> , <u>seven double fold</u> ,	80: Brave = finely dressed. suits of change = perhaps meaning "various or alternate livery or outfits". ⁴ seven double fold = though without any particular substantive meaning, fold alone was used to suggest rich clothing; seven double fold simply intensifies the sense.
82	Then shall ye see Tibet, sirs, <u>tread the moss</u> so <u>trim</u> – Nay, why said I "tread"? – ye shall see her glide and swim, Not <i>lumperdee</i> , <i>clumperdee</i> , like <u>our spaniel Rig</u> .	= walk softly. = smartly, elegantly. = "not clomping around like our dog;" Williams suggests this is an allusion to the current practice of teaching dogs to dance; he also notes that Rig was a common name given to dogs
84	Tom. Marry, then, <u>prick-me-dainty</u> , come <u>toast me a fig</u> !	85: prick-me-dainty = one who is overly-fastidious or affected with respect to his or her dress. ¹ toast me a fig = according to the OED, in the mid-16th century, fig referred to the fruit, and toast as a verb had only one meaning, to heat or cook, as in a fire; so, the literal meaning of the phrase is clear; but as to its subtext, no editor, other than Flügel, has dared tackle it. Flügel hesitantly wonders if toast me a fig is related to the expression "give a fig", which refers to the rude gesture of "thrusting the thumb between two...closed fingers or the mouth" (OED, <i>fig</i> , def. n.2); however, the OED's earliest citation for this use of fig appeared only several decades after Roister. Fig was, however, used in various phrases suggesting contempt (e.g. "a fig for all her chastity", from 1450) or worthlessness (e.g. "all beer in Europe is not worth a fig", from 1600); could Tom be implying that Tibet's vain imaginings are without value?
86	Who shall then <u>know</u> our Tib Talkapace, <u>trow ye</u> ?	= recognize. = "do you think?"
88	Annot. And why <u>not</u> Annot Alyface <u>as fine</u> as she?	= cannot. = ie. dress as finely.
90	Tom. And what had Tom Trupenie, a father or none?	90: Tom begs for consideration too, based on the fact that he is not a bastard, and as such deserves a share of the spoils as much as the others; the literal sense of the line is, "am I not legitimate as well?" (Child).

92	Annot. Then our pretty new-come man will look to be one.	92: a sly line: once Gawyn is married to Custance, he will seek to become a new <i>father</i> .
94	Tom. We four, I trust, shall be a <u>joyly</u> merry <u>knot</u> . Shall we sing a <u>fit</u> to welcome our friend, Annot?	= jolly, merry. ⁵ = company. ⁵ Tom looks forward to the merging of the serving staffs of the two households. = stanza or part of a song, ^{1,5} but perhaps here referring to a full song. ⁸
96	Annot. Perchance he cannot sing.	
98	Dob. I am <u>at all assays</u> .	= common phrase for "ready for anything".
100	Tibet. By Cock, and the better welcome to us always.	
102	[<i>Here they sing.</i>]	
104	<i>A thing very fit</i>	
106	<i>For them that have wit,</i> <i>And are fellows <u>knit</u></i>	= united.
108	<i>Servants in one house to be,</i> <i>Is fast for to sit,</i>	
110	<i>And not oft to <u>flit</u>,</i> <i>Nor vary a whit,</i>	= change households, ie. move. ¹
112	<i>But lovingly to <u>agree</u>.</i>	= get along with each other.
114	<i>No man complaining,</i> <i>No other disdain,</i>	
116	<i>For loss or for gaining,</i> <i>But fellows or friends to be.</i>	
118	<i>No grudge remaining,</i> <i>No work refraining,</i>	
120	<i>Nor help restraining,</i> <i>But lovingly to agree.</i>	
122	<i>No man <u>for despite</u>,</i>	= for spite, out of contempt. ¹
124	<i>By word or by <u>write</u></i> <i>His fellow to <u>twite</u>,</i>	= writing. = alternate form of <i>twit</i> , meaning "to censure" or "to criticize". ¹
126	<i>But further in honesty,</i> <i>No good <u>turns</u> <u>entwite</u>,</i>	127: "no good deeds (<i>turns</i>) to make a subject of reproach (<i>entwite</i>)." ³
128	<i>Nor old sores recite,</i> <i>But let all <u>go quite</u>,</i>	128: ie. no old points of contention or wrongs should should be brought up or remembered. = ie. "go quit", meaning "go unpunished", ie, "be forgiven". ¹² Udall uses the alternate spelling of <i>quite</i> for <i>quit</i> to rhyme with the rest of the stanza.
130	<i>And lovingly to agree.</i>	= (a long day of) dreary work.
132	<i>After <u>drudgery</u>,</i> <i>When they be weary,</i>	
134	<i>Then to be merry,</i> <i>To laugh and sing, they be free –</i>	
136	<i>With chip and cherry,</i> <i>Heigh derry derry,</i>	136-8: a series of popular refrains. ⁵ 136: with cheeps and chirps. ⁵ 137: often written <i>hey derry derry</i> . ⁵
138	<i>Trill on the <u>berry</u> –</i> <i>And lovingly to agree.</i>	138: play music on a barrow or small hill (<i>berry</i>); ⁸ the OED, however, very hesitantly suggests "pass around the wine," with <i>trill</i> , or <i>tril</i> , defined (also
140		

	<i>Finis.</i>	with admitted uncertainty) as a twirling or circulating of liquid, even as in a separate entry the OED defines berry as a small hill.
142		
144	Tibet. Will you now in with us unto our mistress go?	
146	Dob. I have first for my master an errand or two. But I have here from him a token and a ring, They shall have most thank of her that first doth it bring.	
148		
150	Tibet. Marry, that will I!	
152	Tom. See <u>and</u> Tibet snatch not now.	151: "see if (and) Tibet doesn't try to grab the trinkets herself to bring in."
154	Tibet. And why may not I, sir, <u>get thanks</u> as well as you?	= ie. from Custance; one may note how Custance's servants fear verbal and physical punishment from their mistress, yet simultaneously, like children, eagerly seek her praise.
156		
158	[<i>Tibet grabs the gifts from Dobinet, then exits.</i>]	155: except for exits , stage direction added by Whitworth.
160	Annot. <u>Yet get ye not all</u> , we will go with you both, And have part of your thanks, be ye never so loth.	= "so that you will not get all the thanks".
162		
164	[<i>Exeunt omnes.</i>]	160: Annot and Tom exit, leaving Dobinet alone on the stage.
	Dob. <u>So</u> my hands are rid of it, I care for no more. I may now return home, <u>so durst I not afore</u> .	= ie. "so long as". = "as I did not dare do before."
	[<i>Exit.</i>]	
	<u>ACT II, SCENE IV.</u>	
	<i>Enter Custance, Tom, Tibet and Annot.</i>	
1	Cust. Nay, come forth all three; and <u>come hither, pretty maid</u> .	= this last gentle command is directed at Tibet, who may be more hesitant to approach Custance, as she fears she may be due a dressing down for having brought the gifts from Dobinet to her mistress.
2	Will not so many forewarnings make you afraid?	2: Custance is addressing Tibet specifically here; Custance had warned her staff not to bring her anything from anyone other than Gawyn.
4	Tibet. Yes, forsooth.	
6	Cust. But still be a runner up and down, Still be a bringer of tidings and tokens to town.	7: note the alliteration in this line.
8		
10	Tibet. No, forsooth, mistress.	
12	Cust. Is all your delight and joy In <u>whisking</u> and <u>ramping</u> abroad like a <u>tom-boy</u> ?	12: whisking = running about. ramping = engaging in horseplay, ⁵ or behaving wantonly or immodestly. ¹ tom-boy = this is the earliest appearance in English

14 **Tibet.** Forsooth, these were there too, Annot and Trupenie.

16 **Trup.** Yea, but ye alone took it, ye cannot deny.

18 **Annot.** Yea, that ye did.

20 **Tibet.** But if I had not, ye twain would.

22 **Cust.** You great calf, ye should have more wit, so ye should; –
But why should any of you take such things in hand?

24 **Tibet.** Because it came from him that must be your husband.

26 **Cust.** How do ye know that?

28 **Tibet.** Forsooth, the boy did say so.

30 **Cust.** What was his name?

32 **Annot.** We asked not.

34 **Cust.** No?

36 **Annot.** He is not far gone, of likelihood.

38 **Tom.** I will see.

40 **Cust.** If thou canst find him in the street, bring him to me.

42 **Tom.** Yes.

44

46 [Exit.]

48 **Cust.** Well, ye naughty girls, if ever I perceive
That henceforth you do letters or tokens receive,
To bring unto me from any person or place,
50 Except ye first show me the party face to face,
Either thou or thou, full truly abye thou shalt.

52 **Tibet.** Pardon this, and the next time powder me in salt.

54 **Cust.** I shall make all girls by you twain to beware.

56 **Tibet.** If ever I offend again, do not me spare!
58 But if ever I see that false boy any more
By your mistressship's licence, I tell you afore,

letters of this still current term, though the OED defines **tom-boy** here to mean a boisterous youth, and not necessarily referring to a girl acting like a boy.

14-20: the servants, again like children, each scramble to avoid shouldering any blame.

= two.

= intelligence; Child suggests line 22 is addressed to Tom, and line 23 to all three servants.

35: the original edition has "No did?" here, but editors delete the latter word for the sake of the rhyme.

37: "he has not likely gotten far yet."

= wicked, blameworthy.¹

= individual in question.¹

= "you shall be punished", or "you shall pay the penalty."^{1,3}

abye = abide (the consequences).⁸

53: "please forgive me this time, and if I ever do this again, preserve me in salt;"^{1,11} in those pre-refrigerator days, salt was used to preserve meat.^{1,12}

55: "I shall make an example of you two to teach all girls to be careful or heedful."

= ie. with respect to punishment or discipline.

= ie. Dobinet, who had unintentionally led Custance's servants to believe he worked for Gawyn.

59: "with your permission, I am telling you now ahead of time".

60	I will rather have my <u>coat</u> twenty times <u>swinged</u> ,	= hide. = beaten, thrashed; ⁵ the root word here is <i>swinge</i> , not <i>swing</i> .
	Than on the naughty <u>wag</u> not to be avenged.	= mischievous boy.
62	<i>Cust.</i> Good wenches would not so <u>ramp</u> abroad idly,	= romp. ⁵
64	But keep within doors, and ply their work earnestly.	
	If one would speak with me that is a man likely,	
66	Ye shall have right good thank to bring me word quickly.	
	But otherwise with messages to come <u>in post</u>	= ie. in the manner of official messengers. ¹
68	From henceforth, I promise you, shall be to your cost.	
	Get you in to your work.	
70	<i>Tibet.</i> Yes, forsooth.	
72	<i>Cust.</i> Hence, both twain.	73: "get out of here, you two."
74	And let me see you play me such a part again.	
76	[Exit Tibet and Annot.]	
78	Re-enter Tom.	
80	<i>Tom.</i> Mistress, I have run past the far end of the street,	
	Yet can I not yonder crafty boy see nor meet.	
82	<i>Cust.</i> No?	
84	<i>Tom.</i> Yet I looked as far beyond the people,	
86	As one may see out of the top of <u>Paul's steeple</u> .	= the steeple of St. Paul's church.
88	<i>Cust.</i> Hence, <u>in at doors</u> , and let me no more be vexed.	= "get back inside".
90	<i>Tom.</i> Forgive me this one fault, and <u>lay on</u> for the next.	= "you can thrash me".
92	[Exit.]	
94	<i>Cust.</i> Now will I in too, for I think, so God me mend,	
	This will prove some foolish matter in the end.	
96	[Exit.]	
	END OF ACT II.	

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter Merygreeke.

1 **Mery.** Now say this again – he hath somewhat to doing
2 Which followeth the trace of one that is wooing,

1-2: "I'll say this again: one has a lot of work to do, if one is trying to help out a man who is courting a lady"; though Child suggests **say** is short for **assay**, meaning "try".

trace = path, track.

4 Specially that hath no more wit in his head,
Than my cousin Roister Doister withal is led.

4: **cousin** = a term of familiarity, not literal.

withal is led = ie. "has"; **withal** means "with".

= discover, find out.¹ = observe.

= rare alternate spelling for **work**, used here to rhyme with **mark**.

= quickly.

6 I am sent in all haste to espy and to mark
How our letters and tokens are likely to wark.

= common oath.

8 Master Roister Doister must have answer in haste,
For he loveth not to spend much labour in waste.
Now as for Christian Custance, by this light,
10 Though she had not her troth to Gawyn Goodluck plight,

10: "if she were not engaged to Gawyn"; **to plight one's troth** means "to become engaged".

11-12: she would be better off being poor and alone than being married to such a clown as Roister.

12 Yet rather than with such a loutish dolt to marry,
I daresay would live a poor life solitary.

= "I would like to". = (only) knew.

= ie. to continue with the fun.

14 But fain would I speak with Custance, if I wist how,
To laugh at the matter – yond cometh one forth now.

ACT III, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Merygreeke.*]

Enter Tibet.

1 **Tibet.** Ah, that I might but once in my life have a sight
2 Of him that made us all so ill shent – by this light,
He should never escape if I had him by the ear,
4 But even from his head I would it bite or tear!
Yea, and if one of them were not enow,
6 I would bite them both off, I make God avow!

= ie. Dobinet. = grievously disgraced or punished.⁵

8 **Mery.** What is he, whom this little mouse doth so threaten?

= ie. one of his ears. = enough.

10 **Tibet.** I would teach him, I trow, to make girls shent or beaten!

= who.

= expect. = chided.

12 **Mery.** I will call her. – Maid, with whom are ye so hasty?

= irritated, angry.¹

14 **Tibet.** Not with you, sir, but with a little wag-pasty,
A deceiver of folks by subtle craft and guile.

= mischievous scamp.⁵

16 **Mery.** I know where she is – Dobinet hath wrought some wile.
18

17: an aside: ie. "I know what (ie. who) she means - Dobinet has engaged in some trick or deception."

wrought = the past tense of "to work", **wrought** was used in a broad sense to mean "arranged" or "manipulated", or "worked" in its many nuanced senses.

some wile = most of the editors combine these two words to create the compound word **somewile**, or **somewhile**, which means "once" or "at one time"; if

Tibet. He brought a ring and token which he said was sent
 20 From our dame's husband, but I wot well I was shent –
 For it liked her as well, to tell you no lies,
 22 As water in her ship, or salt cast in her eyes;
 And yet whence it came neither we nor she can tell.
 24
Mery. We shall have sport anon – I like this very well! –
 26 And dwell ye here with mistress Custance, fair maid?
 28 **Tibet.** Yea, marry do I, sir – what would ye have said?
 30 **Mery.** A little message unto her by word of mouth.
 32 **Tibet.** No messages, by your leave, nor tokens forsooth.
 34 **Mery.** Then help me to speak with her.
 36 **Tibet.** With a good will that.
 Here she cometh forth. Now speak ye know best what.
 38
Enter Custance.
 40
Cust. None other life with you, maid, but abroad to skip?
 42
Tibet. Forsooth, here is one would speak with your mistress-
 ship.
 44
Cust. Ah, have ye been learning of mo messages now?
 46
Tibet. I would not hear his mind, but bade him show it to you.
 48
Cust. In at doors.
 50
Tibet. I am gone.
 52
[Exit.]
 54
Mery. Dame Custance, God ye save.
 56
Cust. Welcome, friend Merygreeke – and what thing would
 ye have?
 58
Mery. I am come to you a little matter to break.
 60
Cust. But see it be honest, else better not to speak.
 62
Mery. How feel ye yourself affected here of late?
 64
Cust. I feel no manner change but after the old rate.
 But whereby do ye mean?
 66
Mery. Concerning marriage.
 Doth not love lade you?
 68
 70

this was Udall's intent, then the meaning of the line's
 second clause becomes, "Dobinet has recently done
 something."¹

= "know", "am aware".

= pleased.

22: that is, not at all!

= from where.

25: line 25 is another aside.

= ie. "what is it you want said to her?"

= certainly.

41: "there is nothing else for you to do, Tibet, but run
 around outside the house?"

abroad = out and about.

= more; Custance is sarcastic.

= asked.

49: "get inside."

= speak about.²

= inclined.²

= ie. the same as before.

rate = level or degree.¹

= what or how.

= load, ie. burden.¹

72	Cust. I feel no such <u>carriage</u> .	= burden. ³
74	Mery. Do ye feel no pangs of <u>dotage</u> ? answer me <u>right</u> .	= infatuation, love. = with truth, honestly.
76	Cust. I dote so, that I make but one sleep all the night. But what need all these words?	75: humorously sarcastic: "I'm so in love that I can only get one sleep during the night", ie. the whole night!
78	Mery. Oh, Jesus, will ye see What dissembling creatures these same women be? –	79: women are greatly inclined to mask their feelings. = know.
80	The gentleman ye <u>wot</u> of, whom ye do so love That ye would <u>fain</u> marry him, if ye <u>durst it move</u> ,	= like to. = dare to urge it.
82	Among other rich widows, which are of him glad,	= ie. "in a contest with other wealthy widows who also would be happy to marry him".
84	Lest ye, for <u>lesing of him</u> , <u>perchance</u> might run mad, Is now contented that, upon your suit-making, Ye be as one in election of taking.	= "should you lose him". = perhaps. 84-85: ie. "Roister is satisfied that if you ask him to marry you, you would be as good as chosen" (Whitworth, p. 143).
86	Cust. What a tale is this? "that I <u>wote</u> of?" "whom I love?"	= past tense of wot , ie. "knew".
88	Mery. Yea, and he is <u>as loving a worm</u> , <u>again</u> , as a dove.	89: as loving a worm = worm and loving worm were used as sympathetic or playful epithets for a "fellow creature", ¹ ie. "poor creature". ¹³
90	E'en of very pity he is willing you to take, Because ye shall not destroy yourself for his sake.	again (line 89) = furthermore. ⁴
92	Cust. Marry, God <u>yield</u> his maship <u>whatever</u> he be.	= reward. = whoever.
94	It is <u>gentmanly</u> spoken.	94: short form of gentlemanly ; Udall's use of gentman and gentmanly is almost unique: a search of Early English Books Online shows that gentman appears elsewhere in our era in only one other work, George Chapman's play, <i>The Gentleman Usher</i> , written in 1606.
96	Mery. Is it not, <u>trow ye</u> ? If ye have the <u>grace</u> now to offer yourself, ye <u>speed</u> .	= "do you think?" = sense. = ie. will be successful.
98	Cust. As much as though I did – this time it shall not need.	99: "I am already as successful as if I did offer myself - but I do not have to offer myself now, as I am already engaged." ^{4,6}
100	But what gentman is it, I pray you tell me plain, That wooeth so <u>finely</u> ?	= excellently.
102	Mery. Lo, <u>where ye be again</u> ,	= "now you are right back where you started".
104	As though ye knew him not.	
106	Cust. Tush, ye speak in jest.	
108	Mery. Nay sure, the <u>party</u> is in good <u>knacking</u> earnest, And have you he will, he saith, and have you he must.	= individual. = downright. ⁵
110	Cust. I am <u>promised</u> during my life; that is <u>just</u> .	= promised to another, ie. engaged. = settled, decided. ⁴
112	Mery. Marry so thinketh he, unto him alone.	
114	Cust. No creature hath <u>my faith and troth</u> but one,	= ie. her pledge of engagement, a common formula.
116	That is Gawyn Goodluck, and, if it be not he,	

118	He hath no title <u>this way whatever</u> he be, Nor I <u>know none</u> to whom I have such word spoken.	= ie. "to me". = whoever. = note the double negative.
120	Mery. Ye know him not, you, by his letter and token?	
122	Cust. Indeed true it is, that a letter I have, But I never read it yet, as God me save.	
124	Mery. Ye a woman, and your letter so long unread?	125: Merygreeke mocks the stereotyped curiosity of women.
126	Cust. Ye may thereby know what haste I have to wed.	127: ie. "this is evidence for you of how eager I am to marry this man you speak of."
128	But now who it is, <u>for my hand</u> I <u>know by</u> guess.	= an oath. = ie. can.
130	Mery. Ah, well I say!	
132	Cust. It is Roister Doister, doubtless.	
134	Mery. Will ye never leave this dissimulation? Ye know him not?	
136	Cust. But by imagination,	137: ie. "only by a mental conception or inference based on what I have heard about him". ⁴
138	For no man there is but a very dolt and lout That to woo a widow would <u>so go about</u> .	= "go about it in this (idiotic) fashion."
140	He shall never have me his wife while he do live.	
142	Mery. Then will he have you if he may, <u>so mote I thrive</u> , And he <u>biddeth</u> you send him word by me,	= "so I hope to thrive;" ¹ mote = might. = invites.
144	That ye humbly beseech him, ye may his wife be, And that there shall be no <u>let</u> in you nor mistrust,	= hindrance, obstacle.
146	But to be wedded on Sunday next if he <u>lust</u> , And biddeth you to look for him.	= wishes.
148	Cust. Doth he bid so?	
150	Mery. When he cometh, ask him whether he did or no.	
152	Cust. Go say that I bid him keep <u>him</u> warm at home, For if he <u>come abroad</u> , he shall <u>cough me a mome</u> ;	= himself. = "leaves his house". = "show or demonstrate what a fool he is;" an expression whose origins are highly obscure. ¹
154	My mind was vexed, I <u>shrew</u> his head, <u>sottish</u> dolt!	= curse. = stupid, foolish.
156	Mery. He hath in his head –	
158	Cust. As much brain as a <u>burbolt</u> .	= ie. birdbolt, a short arrow with a blunted head for shooting birds. ⁵
160	Mery. Well, dame Custance, if he hear you thus <u>play choploge</u> –	= engage in chop-logic, ie. quibble argumentatively, play the sophist. ¹
162	Cust. What will he?	163: "then what will he do?"
164	Mery. Play the devil in the <u>horologe</u> .	165: ie. "he will cause a ruckus;" this proverbial expression from Heywood was used to describe any confusion sown by a "mischievous agent" (OED); the image is of the devil loitering inside a timepiece and
166		

		messing with the delicate works, causing chaos. <i>horologe</i> = timepiece, hour-glass.
168	<i>Cust.</i> I defy him, lout.	
170	<i>Mery.</i> Shall I tell him what ye say?	
172	<i>Cust.</i> Yea, and add whatsoever thou canst, I thee pray. And I will <u>avouch it</u> , whatsoever it be.	= ie. "back you up", "confirm I said it".
174	<i>Mery.</i> Then let me alone –; <u>we will laugh well, ye shall see</u> .	= is this an aside? or is Merygreeke letting Custance know the whole set-up is a joke on Roister? It does seem that Custance will not catch on for quite a while still.
	It will not be long <u>ere</u> he will <u>hither resort</u> .	= before. = "visit here."
176	<i>Cust.</i> Let him come when <u>him lust</u> , I wish no better <u>sport</u> .	= "he wishes". = entertainment.
178	Fare ye well, I will <u>in</u> , and read my great letter. I shall to my wooer make answer the better.	= ie. go in.
	[Exit.]	
	<u>ACT III, SCENE III.</u> [Still on Stage: Merygreeke.]	
	<i>Enter Roister Doister.</i>	
1	<i>Mery.</i> Now that the whole answer <u>in my device doth rest</u> ,	1: generally, "now that the carrying out of this whole project is up to me". <i>in my device doth rest</i> = "depends on my scheme".
2	I shall <u>paint out</u> our wooer in colours of the best,	2-5: Merygreeke plans to insult Roister extensively to his face - but he will be able to get away with it because everything he will say he can attribute to Custance.
4	And all that I say shall be on Custance's mouth; She is author of all that I shall speak forsooth. But yond cometh Roister Doister now in a trance.	<i>paint out</i> (line 2) = depict unfavourably, ⁵ a metaphor with <i>colours</i> .
6	<i>Roist.</i> <u>Juno</u> send me this day good luck and good chance!	7: <i>Juno</i> is evoked in her guise as the goddess of marriage. ⁵
8	I <u>cannot</u> but come see how Merygreeke <u>doth speed</u> .	= ie. cannot help. = is succeeding, ie. is doing.
10	<i>Mery.</i> I will not see him, but give him <u>a jut</u> indeed. – I cry your mastership mercy.	10: Merygreeke pretends not to see Roister approaching, then crashes hard into him. <i>jut</i> = knock or jostle. ^{3,8}
12	<i>Roist.</i> And <u>whither</u> now?	11: an apology.
14	<i>Mery.</i> As fast as I could run, sir, <u>in post against</u> you.	= ie. "to where (are you going)".
16	But why speak ye so faintly, or why are ye so <u>sad</u> ?	= hurrying. = towards. ¹ = serious.
18	<i>Roist.</i> Thou knowest the proverb – because I cannot be had. Hast thou spoken with this woman?	18: Eric Partridge in <i>A Dictionary of Catch-Phrases</i> (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House, 1982) suggests that "because I cannot be had" is not really a proverb, nor part of any known proverb, but is basically just a rhyming response to Merygreeke's question.
20		
22	<i>Mery.</i> Yea, that I have.	

24 **Roist.** And what will this gear be?

26 **Mery.** No, so God me save.

28 **Roist.** Hast thou a flat answer?

30 **Mery.** Nay, a sharp answer.

32 **Roist.** What?

34 **Mery.** Ye shall not, she saith, by her will marry her cat.
Ye are such a calf, such an ass, such a block,
Such a lilburn, such a hoball, such a lobcock,

36 And because ye should come to her at no season,
She despised your maship out of all reason.

38 "Bawawe what ye say," ko I, "of such a gentman."

40 "Nay, I fear him not," ko she, "do the best he can.
He vaunteth himself for a man of prowess great,
Whereas a good gander, I daresay, may him beat.
42 And where he is louted and laughed to scorn,
For the veriest dolt that ever was born,
44 And veriest lover, sloven and beast,
Living in this world from the west to the east:
46 Yet of himself hath he such opinion,
That in all the world is not the like minion.

48 He thinketh each woman to be brought in dotage
With the only sight of his goodly personage.
50 Yet none that will have him – we do him lout and flock,
And make him among us our common sporting stock,

52 And so would I now," ko she, "save only because."
"Better nay," ko I, "I lust not meddle with daws."

54 Ye are happy," ko I, "that ye are a woman.
This would cost you your life in case ye were a man."

56 **Roist.** Yea, an hundred thousand pound should not save her life!

58 **Mery.** No, but that ye woo her to have her to your wife –
60 But I could not stop her mouth.

62 **Roist.** Heigh ho, alas!

23: "how will this business (*gear*) turn out?" (Gassner, p. 301), ie. "so what was her answer?"

27: absolute, unqualified.

= severe; Merygreeke puns *sharp* with *flat*; the former word likely refers to a sharp edge, as on a sword, or a sharp or pointy angle, and the latter to a flat surface, including the broad side of a sword.

= ie. "even her".

= ie. blockhead.

= lout, stupid person.¹⁸ = clown, clod.¹ = country bumpkin, boor.¹

= at no time, ie. never.

= "your mastership", ie. "you".

38: *Bawawe* = an interjection of contempt,³ though Child feels it is likely a misprint for *beware*.

ko = quoth, said.

= brags of.

= ie. any fool.

= humiliated, mocked for being a lout.^{3,8}

= greatest.

= would-be gallant (Child). = disreputable person, rogue.¹

47: the most likely paraphrase for this line is, "that Roister believes he has no equal in the world"; *minion* could mean (1) lover, (2) favourite,⁵ or (3) gallant.¹²

= "will fall deeply in love with him".

= ie. "only the".

= mock and treat with disdain.^{1,5}

= ie. "our laughing stock"; *stock* is a term of abuse, meaning "idiot".¹

= "and I will do so now".

53: "it's better not to (said I), I will not have any dealings with such fools."

daws = jackdaws, a type of crow; many bird names were used in the era to mean "fools".

= lucky.

55: ie. if Custance were a man and had said such things about Roister, Roister would have no choice but to challenge Custance to a duel to defend his honour.

57: in which case Roister would not spare Custance's life for even the stated amount of money.

= unless.

64	Mery. Be of good cheer, man, <u>and let the world pass.</u>	= a recommendation to live his own life merrily and ignore everything else that goes on in the world: ie. "come what may." ⁵ This proverbial-sounding expression is a variation on the older "let the world wagge"; similarly, in the Induction of Shakespeare's <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> , Sly says "let the world slide."
66	Roist. What shall I do or say now that <u>it will not be</u> ?	= ie. his marriage to Custance will not be taking place.
68	Mery. Ye shall have choice of a thousand as good as she, And ye must pardon her; <u>it is for lack of wit.</u>	= ie. Custance won't marry Roister because she is not clever or intelligence enough to see the advantage of doing so.
70	Roist. Yea, for were not I <u>an husband for her fit</u> ?	= "a suitable husband for her?"
72	Well, what should I now do?	
74	Mery. In faith I cannot tell.	
76	Roist. I will go home and die.	
78	Mery. Then shall I <u>bid toll the bell</u> ?	= call for the bell to be tolled, as for a dead person.
80	Roist. No.	
82	Mery. God have mercy on your soul, ah, good gentleman, That e'er ye should thus die for an unkind woman.	
84	Will ye <u>drink once</u> ere ye go?	84: Merygreeke speaks to Roister as if he were a criminal about to be executed, offering him a customary last drink (Child). ⁴
86	Roist. No, no, I will none.	
88	Mery. How feel your soul to God?	88: "what is your feeling about the condition of your soul in its relation to God?" ⁴
90	Roist. I am <u>nigh gone</u> .	= near gone, ie. nearly dead.
92	Mery. And shall we <u>hence straight</u> ?	= "leave here right away?"
94	Roist. Yea.	96ff: here begins a mock Requiem, or parody of the Roman Catholic <i>Office of the Dead</i> , which is a liturgy performed when someone dies, or on the anniversary of someone's death. The <i>Office of the Dead</i> , in its full expression, is comprised of the following elements, either in whole or in part: (1) Vespers (the evening monastic service), which includes the reading of Psalms 114, 119, 120, 129 and 137, followed by the Magnificat (the song of Mary, a canticle, or song, from Luke 46-55), and preces (a short prayer of intercession, said or sung responsorially, ie. lines spoken alternately by the cleric and the congregation); (2) Mass ; (3) the Lord's Prayer ; (4) Matins (the morning monastic service), also called the Dirge , comprised of three nocturns (groups of psalms), each nocturn followed by three prescribed Lessons ; (5) Lauds , a morning service, which is made up of the three Psalms 50, 64, and combined 62 / 66; the song

96 **Mery.**

Placebo dilexi.

98 Master Roister Doister will straight go home and die,

of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:10-14 and 17-20), and the three Psalms known collectively as the **Laudate Psalms** (148, 149 and 150); and lastly

(6) the song, or canticle, of Zachariah, also called the **Benedictus**, from Luke 1:68-79.

Sprinkled throughout the service are **antiphons** (the congregation's responses to certain verses) and **versicles and responses** (call and answer between the cleric and the congregation).

The Psalmody: some portion of the parody of the *Office of the Dead* was originally published at the end of the play as an appendix, and was entitled *Psalmody*, or "collection of psalms". We may note that many of the lines of the Psalmody were also included in the main text, and some not.

I have not reproduced the Psalmody as it appeared in the appendix of the 1566 edition in a parallel appendix here; instead I have incorporated those lines that appear in the Psalmody but not in the original text into the text, to give the reader the complete experience of the parody. If a reader absolutely needs to see what the Psalmody in the appendix looked like, he or she may consult any of the editions of the play cited in the footnotes.

I have used both Gassner and Whitworth to arrange the Psalmody's lines into the body of the text wherever they were lacking, in order to create as cohesive and comprehensive scene as is possible.

Chanting and Speaking the Office of the Dead: in observing the presence of random Latin words and phrases from the *Office of the Dead* sprinkled throughout the parody, Child suggests (1) the Latin words are plain chanted; (2) the English lines were "presumably intoned (ie. sung, but in a monotone) nasally in parody of the longer English portions of the burial service"; and he notes that (3) at one point when Roister interrupts him, Merygreeke responds in regular prose. "The humorous effect", writes Child, "of the intermingled chant and dialogue must have been very great."

96: Merygreeke begins by combining two words that appear separately in the *Office of the Dead's* opening psalm, Psalm 114.

Placebo (which means "please"), the name given to Vespers, appears in several antiphons, and in Psalm 114: (Psalm 114:9: *placebo Domino in regione vivorum* = "I will please the Lord in the land of the living").

dilexi (which means "love") is from the opening verse of Psalm 114 (Psalm 114:1: *dilexi, quoniam audies Domine: vocem deprecationis meae* = "I have loved, because the Lord will hear the voice of my prayer").

The Latin translations in this note are of the Vulgate, or Latin Bible, and are quoted from the website *Vulgate.org*.

100	Our Lord Jesus Christ his soul have mercy upon! Thus you see <u>to-day a man, to-morrow John</u> .	103: ie. "today he is a man, but tomorrow he is nothing"; John , says Farmer, was used as an expression of contempt, though the OED does not support this explanation. The expression may be an adaptation of the line, "To-day a man, To-morrow none", which appeared on the title page of Sir Walter Raleigh's <i>Farewell to His Lady</i> , published in 1540. A subsequent edition of Roister Doister actually replaced to-morrow John with to-morrow none . = "if not for".
102	Yet <u>saving for</u> a woman's extreme cruelty, He might have lived yet a month or two or three.	
104	Roist. Heigh-ho! Alas, the pangs of death my heart do break!	
106	Mery. Hold your peace for shame, sir, a dead man may not speak!	
108	<u>Nequando</u> . – What mourners and what torches shall we have?	= "lest", from Psalms 7:2: <i>nequando rapiat ut leo animam meam dum non est qui redimat neque qui salvum faciat</i> = "Lest he tear my soul like a lion, while there is none to deliver, or to save." This verse is the antiphon recited after the reading of Psalms 7, the third psalm read in the first nocturn of Matins. All remaining translations of Latin in this parody are taken from <i>The Roman Breviary</i> (Vol. II), translated by John, Marquess of Bute, K.T. (Edinburgh, London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1908).
110	Roist. None. Mery. <u>Dirige</u> .	111: Dirige = the first word of the first antiphon of the first nocturn: <i>Dirige Domine Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam</i> = "Make my way straight before Thy face, O Lord my God." Also used as a name for the service of Matins. ¹
112	He will go <u>darkling</u> to his grave, <i>Neque lux, neque crux, neque</i> mourners, <i>neque</i> clink,	= "in the dark". 113: "without candle, cross, mourners, nor bell", ⁶ the usual accessories of a funeral; clink onomatopoeically refers to the ringing of a bell. Candles and bells were supposed to drive away evil spirits. The editors quote a great line from the 16th century preacher Hugh Latimer about the alleged efficacy of bells in repelling evil spirits: "The devil should have no abiding place in England if ringing of bells would serve" (would serve = ie. were actually effective in serving this purpose), a wry comment on the ubiquitousness of church bells pealing throughout England.
114	He will <u>steal to</u> Heaven, <u>unknowing</u> to God, I think, <u>A porta inferi</u> . Who shall your goods possess?	= sneak into. = unknown. = "from the gates of hell": from an antiphon which appears multiple times throughout the service: <i>A porta inferi, erue Domine animam meam</i> = "from the gates of hell, deliver their souls O Lord"; though the two clauses may also appear split up between versicle and antiphon.
116		

	Roist. Thou shalt be my <u>sectour</u> , and <u>have all more and less</u> .	= executor. ³ = ie. "inherit everything I own, of great and low value."
118	Mery. <i>Requiem aeternam</i> . – Now, God reward your mastership.	= "eternal rest"; recited after each psalm in the service, either alone, or as part of the full line, <i>requiem aeternum dona eis Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis</i> = "Oh Lord, grant them eternal rest, and let the everlasting light shine upon them!"
120	And I will cry <u>halfpenny-dole</u> for your worship.	= "alms to the poor"; such gifts were customary at funerals. ⁵
122	Come forth, sirs, hear the doleful news I shall you tell.	
124	[<i>Evocat servos militis.</i>]	123: "he (ie. Merygreeke) calls for the soldier's (ie. Roister's) servants"; four of Roister's servants - which will presumably include Dobinet and Harpax - will be needed to assist in the service.
126	Our good master here will no longer with us dwell. But in spite of Custance, which hath him <u>wearied</u> ,	= interestingly, though Udall wrote weried here, the OED files this word under worry (ie. worried), meaning "to treat roughly".
128	Let us see his maship solemnly buried. And while some piece of his soul is yet him within, Some part of his <u>funerals</u> let us here begin.	= ie. funeral services. ¹
130	Yet, sirs, as ye will the bliss of Heaven win, When he cometh to the grave lay him softly in.	
132	<u>Audivi vocem</u> .	= "I heard a voice"; part of a versicle recited after Psalms 137: <i>Audivi vocem de caelo dicentem mihi</i> = "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me" (from Revelations 14:13).
134	All men <u>take heede</u> by this one gentleman, How you set your love upon an unkind woman. For these women be all such mad <u>peevis</u> h elves,	= "be forewarned by the example of".
136	They will not be won except it please themselves. But in faith, Custance, if ever ye come in hell,	= headstrong, stubborn ² (or) silly, senseless. ⁵
138	Master Roister Doister shall <u>serve you</u> as well! And will ye needs go from us thus in very deed?	= "serve your purpose".
140		
142	Roist. Yea, in good sadness.	
144	Mery. Now, Jesus Christ be your speed. Good-night, <u>Roger</u> , old <u>knave</u> ! farewell, Roger, old knave!	144-5: these lines are intoned as in the Psalmody. Roger = why is Roger used here for Ralph ? For one theory, see hypotheses (4) in the note immediately below. knave = used here as a term of endearment.
	Good-night, Roger, old knave! knave, <u>knap</u> !	= there is great disagreement amongst the editors as to the meaning of knap . (1) Farmer suggests knap is simply "nap", ie. sleep; the OED confirms knap was indeed a 16th century variation of nap . (2) Child says knap represents the sound of a sharp blow, specifically the nailing shut of a coffin. (3) The OED cites this line as an example of knap used for knape , meaning a knave or scoundrel. (4) finally, Whitworth presumes that lines 146-7 are lyrics adapted from a popular song - which would at

		least explain where the name Roger came from; furthermore, he agrees with Child that knap means "a blow", and suggests that Merygreeke, having likely added knap gratuitously to the end of the borrowed lyric, takes the opportunity to rap Roister on the head.
146	<i>Nequando. Audivi vocem. Requiem aeternam.</i>	146: Nequando = "lest"; see the note at line 107 above. Audivi vocem = "I heard a voice;" see line 132 above. Requiem aeternam = "eternal rest"; see line 119 above.
148	Pray for the late master Roister Doister's soul,	
150	And come forth, parish clerk, let the passing bell toll. –	
152	<i>Enter the Parish Clerk.</i>	151: stage direction added by Whitworth.
154	Pray for your master, sirs, and for him ring a peal. He was your right good master while he was in <u>heal</u> .	153-4: Addressed to Roister's servants. = health. ⁵
156	<i>[The Peal Of Bells Rung By The Parish Clerk And Roister Doister's Four Men.]</i>	156-172: this section was printed in the back of the original edition as an appendix.
158	<i>The first Bell a Triple.</i>	
160	When died he? When died he?	160: this line is sung as a round, suggests Child, as would also be lines 163, 166, 169 and 172.
162	<i>The second.</i>	
164	We have him, we have him.	
166	<i>The third.</i>	
168	Roister Doister, Roister Doister.	
170	<i>The fourth Bell.</i>	
172	He cometh, he cometh.	
174	<i>The great Bell.</i>	
176	<i>Our own, our own.</i>	
178	Mery. <i>Qui Lazarum.</i>	174: "who Lazarus"; the opening words of the response after the second lesson of the first nocturn: <i>Qui Lazarum resuscitasti a monumento foetidum</i> = "Thou who didst call up Lazarus from the grave after that he had begun to stink."
180		
182	Roist. Heigh-ho!	
184	Mery. Dead men go not so fast <i>In Paradisum.</i>	179: "into paradise;" from an antiphon sung when a corpse is carried to the grave; the antiphon begins, <i>in paradisum deducant te angeli</i> = "into paradise may the angels lead you."
186	Roist. Heigh-ho!	
188	Mery. <u>Soft</u> , hear what I have <u>cast</u> .	= "quiet" = contrived, planned.
190	Roist. I will hear nothing, I am past.	
192	Mery. Whough, <u>wellaway</u> !	= a very ancient - Old English - cry of lament, similar to "alas!" ¹
194	Ye <u>may tarry one hour</u> , and hear what I shall say,	= "can wait one hour".

	Ye were best, sir, for a while to revive again,	189-190: "it would be best for you, sir, to return to life for a while".
190	And <u>quite them</u> ere ye go.	= either (1) "pay them", referring to compensation due to those who performed Roister's funeral, or (2) "pay them back", referring to any vengeance Roister should take on those who caused his "death". quite = requite, ie. reward or repay; could be used in either a positive or negative sense.
192	Roist. Trowest thou so?	192: "you think so?"
194	Mery. Yea, <u>plain</u> !	= honestly or absolutely. ¹
196	Roist. How may I revive, being now so far past?	
198	Mery. I will rub your temples, and <u>fet</u> you again at last.	= fetch, ie. revive.
200	Roist. It will not be possible.	
202	Mery. Yes, for twenty pound.	
204	Roist. <u>Arms</u> , <u>what dost thou</u> ?	= "God's arms", an oath. = "what are you doing?" Merygreeke begins to massage Roister's forehead with great violence.
206	Mery. Fet you again out of your <u>sound</u> . <u>By this cross</u> ye were <u>nigh</u> gone indeed, I might feel	= swoon. ³ 207: By this cross = another oath; Merygreeke refers to the shape of a cross suggested by the form of his sword, with the hilt and blade comprising the cross's vertical bar, and the cross-guard comprising its shorter traverse, or horizontal, bar. Knights in the Middle Ages took seriously binding vows on the "cross" of their swords. nigh = nearly.
208	Your soul departing within an inch of your heel.	
210	Now follow my <u>counsel</u> .	= advice.
212	Roist. What is it?	
214	Mery. If I were you, Custance should <u>eft</u> seek to me, ere I would <u>bow</u> .	214: "Custance should have to again (eft) entreat or come to me before I would submit to her (bow)." ¹
216	Roist. Well, as thou wilt have me, even so will I do.	
218	Mery. Then shall ye revive again for an hour or two.	
220	Roist. As thou wilt, I am content for <u>a little space</u> .	= a short space of time.
222	Mery. " <u>Good hap is not hasty</u> , yet <u>in space cometh grace</u> ."	222: Good hap is not hasty = good fortune doesn't hurry; this clause sounds proverbial, but no source has been identified. in space cometh grace = grace comes in due time; this second expression appears in Heywood's <i>Proverbs</i> . space = time.
224	To speak with Custance yourself should be very well, What good thereof may come, nor I nor you can tell.	= concerns. ⁵
226	But now the matter <u>standeth upon</u> your marriage, Ye must now take unto you a <u>lustye courage</u> .	= vigorous, great. = a later edition changed courage to carriage to rhyme more pleasingly with marriage . ³
	Ye may not speak with a faint heart to Custance,	

228	But with a lusty <u>breast</u> and countenance, That she may know she hath to answer to a man.	= voice.
230		
232	Roist. Yes, I can do that as well as any can.	
234	Mery. Then because ye must Custance face to face woo, Let us see how to behave yourself ye can do. Ye must have a <u>portly brag after your estate</u> .	234: Merygreeke instructs Roister to practice a manly bearing with which to confront Custance. 235: portly = imposing, dignified. ¹ brag = pompous demeanor or swagger. ^{1,5} after your estate = "as is fitting for one of your condition or status," or "as you are able to do."
236	Roist. Tush, I can handle that <u>after the best rate</u> .	= to the best or greatest level. ¹ Roister begins to put on the appearance of a most swaggering man.
238		
240	Mery. Well done! so lo, up man with your head and chin, Up with that <u>snout</u> , man! So, lo, now ye begin! – So, that is something like – but, <u>pranky cote</u> , <u>nay whan</u> !	= nose, but also used to refer to the projecting part of an animal's head; Child suggests Merygreeke is speaking to Roister as if he were a horse. 241: watching Roister strut around, Merygreeke criticizes his mincing bearing. pranky cote = one who dresses ostentatiously, ie. a dandy; ⁵ pranky meant fine or gorgeous; ²⁸ cote was a Middle English spelling for coat . ²⁸ Whitworth wonders if Merygreeke is showing Roister how he should properly hold himself as he speaks this line. nay whan = "nay when", meaning "not so", ie. "not like that!" ²⁸
242	That is a lusty <u>brute</u> – hands <u>under your side</u> , man! So, lo, now is it even as it should be –	= gallant. ³ = ie. "on your hips", that is, akimbo. ¹²
244	That is somewhat like, for a man of your degree. Then must ye stately go, <u>jetting</u> up and down. Tut, can ye no better shake the tail of your gown? There, lo, such a lusty brag it is ye must make.	244: "this is more like it, for a man of your (high) rank." = strutting.
248	Roist. To come behind, and <u>make curtsy</u> , thou must some pains take.	249: "you will have to follow me, and demonstrate due respect and obeisance to me (make curtsy)." ¹
250		
252	Mery. Else were I much to blame, I thank your mastership. The Lord one day <u>all-to-begrime</u> you with <u>worship</u> ! – Back, <u>Sir Sauce</u> , let gentlefolks have elbow room,	252: all-to-begrime = literally "cover with grime", or "besmear", humorously used simply to mean "cover"; all is used as intensifier. worship = deferential attention (Child). 253: as Roister proudly moves about the stage, Merygreeke pretends to push back an adoring but imaginary crowd. Sir Sauce = ie. not uncommon epithet for "saucy, or impudent, fellow". ³
254	Void , sirs, see ye not master Roister Doister come? Make <u>place</u> , my masters.	= "clear away!" = room; Merygreeke "accidentally" roughs up Roister as he performs the role of an usher.
256		

258	Roist. Thou jostlest now too nigh.	257: "you are pushing too close to me!"
260	Mery. Back, all rude louts!	
262	Roist. Tush!	261: Roister responds testily to Merygreeke's continued jostling.
264	Mery. I cry your maship mercy. <u>Heyday</u> – if fair fine mistress Custance saw you now, Ralph Roister Doister <u>were her own</u> , I <u>warrant you</u> .	263: "I beg your pardon." = a cry of wonder or surprise. ¹ = "would be hers". = "guarantee it."
266	Roist. Ne'er an M. by your girdle?	267: ie. "do you not have a title such as <i>Master</i> in your possession to use?" Roister rebukes Merygreeke for omitting his title, thus not showing him due respect. ³ There were in the old days a number of odd phrases, with different meanings, using the word <i>girdle</i> : <i>to give up the girdle</i> (to admit one was defeated), and <i>to turn one's girdle</i> (to find an outlet for one's wrath), are two examples. ¹
268	Mery. Your Good Mastership's	269-271: Merygreeke more than makes up for his oversight!
270	Mastership were her own Mistress-ship's Mistress-ship!	= possibly short for "taken up for hawk's meat", meaning "you would be snapped up like hawk's meat for a husband" (Farmer), in which case Custance is the "rapacious, husband-hunting hawk (Whitworth, p. 155).
272	Ye were <u>take up for hawks</u> , ye were gone, ye were gone! But now one other thing more yet I think upon.	= "tell (me)".
274	Roist. <u>Show</u> what it is.	276-8: "even the poorest suitor serenades his beloved with music; so what will you, who are so much greater than any such miserable wretch, do?"
276	Mery. A wooer, be he never so poor, Must play and sing before his best-beloved's door,	
278	How much more, then, you?	
280	Roist. Thou speakest well, out of doubt.	
282	Mery. And <u>perchance</u> that would make her the sooner come out.	= perhaps.
284	Roist. Go call my musicians, bid them <u>hie apace</u> .	= "hurry quickly."
286	Mery. I will be here with them <u>ere ye can say "Treyace"</u> .	= "before you can say <i>Treyace</i> "; it is still common to use similar expressions to indicate the great speed with which something can be done (e.g. "before you can say Jack Robinson"). <i>Treyace</i> = abbreviation for "three and one", a French way of indicating this result of tossing two dice. ^{3,5}
288	[Exit.]	
290	Roist. This was well said <u>of</u> Merygreeke. I <u>'low his wit</u> . Before my sweetheart's door we will have a <u>fit</u> , That if my love come forth, that I may with her talk, I doubt not but this <u>gear</u> shall <u>on my side walk</u> . But, lo, how well Merygreeke is returned <u>sence</u> .	= by. = "I grant he is a clever fellow." 'low = allow, ie. admit. ⁵ = song. = matter. = ie. "go my way." 294: lo = "look!"; used to draw attention to the approach of another. sence = already; alternate spelling of since , used here to rhyme with hence .

296	[<i>Re-enter Merygreeke with the musicians.</i>]	296: stage direction added by the editors. Note the use of the playwright's technique of <i>Compression of Time</i> ; in the brief time it took Roister to speak five lines, Merygreeke went back to Roister's home, called the musicians together, and returned with them; this dramatist's tactic helps speed up the action.
298	Mery. There hath grown no grass on my heel since I went hence, Lo, here have I brought <u>that</u> shall make you <u>pastance</u> .	298: Merygreeke means he hasn't rested a moment while working to complete his mission since he left Roister. = ie. "something that". = pastime, entertainment.
300	Roist. Come, sirs, let us sing to win my dear love Custance.	
302	[<i>Cantent.</i>]	303-330: these lyrics, appearing originally in the appendix at the end of the play, are identified as the play's "Fourth Song". Cantent = they sing. ⁷
304	<i>I <u>mun</u> be married <u>a</u> Sunday,</i>	= must, a dialectal word. ¹⁸ = on.
306	<i>I mun be married a Sunday,</i>	
308	<i>Whosoever shall come that way,</i>	
310	<i>I mun be married a Sunday.</i>	
312	<i>Roister Doister is my name,</i>	
314	<i>Roister Doister is my name,</i>	
316	<i>A <u>lusty brute</u> I am the same,</i>	= vigorous gallant.
318	<i>I mun be married a Sunday.</i>	
320	<i>Christian Custance have I found,</i>	
322	<i>Christian Custance have I found,</i>	
324	<i>A widow worth a thousand pound,</i>	
326	<i>I mun be married a Sunday.</i>	
328	<i>Custance is as sweet as honey,</i>	
330	<i>Custance is as sweet as honey,</i>	
332	<i>I her lamb and she my coney,</i>	
334	<i>I mun be married a Sunday.</i>	
	<i>When we shall make our wedding feast,</i>	
	<i>When we shall make our wedding feast,</i>	
	<i>There shall be <u>cheer</u> for man and beast,</i>	= good food and drink.
	<i>I mun be married a Sunday.</i>	
	<i>I mun be married a Sunday, etc.</i>	
	Mery. <u>Lo</u> , <u>where</u> she cometh, some <u>countenance</u> to her make, And ye shall hear me <u>be plain</u> with her for your sake.	= "look!" = ie. "here". = sign or gesture. ¹ = ie. speak plainly, ie. clearly and unambiguously.
	ACT III, SCENE IV. [<i>Still on Stage: Merygreeke and Roister Doister.</i>]	
	<i>Enter Custance.</i>	
1	Cust. What <u>gauding</u> and fooling is this <u>afore</u> my door?	= merry-making. ⁵ = in front of, before.
2	Mery. May not folks be <u>honest</u> , pray you, though they be poor?	= repectable; ² the notion that one could be poor yet honest was proverbial.

4	Cust. As that thing may be true, so rich folks may be fools.	5: "just as that proverbial sentiment may be true, it is also true that rich people may be fools." The conceit of a rich fool appears frequently in old literature.
6	Roist. Her talk is as fine <u>as she had learned in schools</u> .	= "as if she were educated;" as a female, Custance was unlikely to have received any formal education.
8	Mery. Look partly toward her, and draw a little near.	9: an aside: Merygreeke instructs Roister to glance at Custance, and move a little closer to her.
10	Cust. Get ye home, idle folks!	
12	Mery. Why, may not we be here?	
14	Nay, <u>and</u> ye will <u>ha'ze</u> , ha'ze – otherwise, I tell you plain,	14-15: "if (and) you will have us (ha'ze), then have us; if not, and I tell you plainly, if you will not have us, give us back our stuff (gear)" ¹ (referring to the gifts Roister has sent Custance).
16	And ye will not ha'ze, then give us our <u>gear</u> again.	
18	Cust. Indeed I have of yours much gay things, God save all.	19-21: Merygreeke and Roister speak in asides to each other in lines 19 and 21. take all = ie. "keep everything (I gave her)."
20	Roist. Speak gently unto her, and let her <u>take all</u> .	
22	Mery. Ye are too tender-hearted: shall she make <u>us daws</u> ? –	= ie. "fools of us?"
24	Nay, dame, I will be plain with you in my friend's cause.	
26	Roist. Let all this pass, sweetheart, and accept my <u>service</u> .	= service was a catch-all word with various shades of meaning, including devotion, attention, and courtship.
28	Cust. I will not be served with a fool in no <u>wise</u> .	= ways.
30	When I choose an husband I hope to take a man.	
32	Mery. And where will ye find one which can do that he can?	
34	Now this man toward you being so kind,	
36	You not to make him an answer somewhat <u>to his mind</u> !	31: ie. "and imagine you not giving him an affirmative answer in response (to his offering you his service)!" to his mind = in accordance with his wishes.
38	Cust. I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?	
40	Mery. And I reported it.	
42	Cust. Nay, I must speak it again.	
44	Roist. No, no, he told it all.	
46	Mery. Was I not <u>meetly</u> plain?	= suitably, reasonably. ^{1,2}
48	Roist. Yes.	
50	Mery. But I <u>would not tell all</u> ; for faith, if I had,	= "did not tell him everything you said".
52	With you, dame Custance, ere this hour it had been bad,	46: "then things would have gone in a bad way for you, Dame Custance, before this hour were up."
	And not without cause – for this goodly personage	
	Meant no less than to join with you in marriage.	
	Cust. Let him waste no more labour nor suit about me.	
	Mery. Ye know not where your <u>preferment</u> lieth, I see,	= an interesting word, meaning "advancement", used to

54	He sending you such a token, ring and letter.	suggest an increase in status through marriage.
56	Cust. Marry, here it is – ye never saw a better.	
58	Mery. Let us see your letter.	
59	Cust. Hold, read it if ye can, And see what letter it is to win a woman.	59: Custance hands her letter from Roister to Mery-greeke, who begins to read it.
62	Mery. "To mine own dear coney-bird, sweet-heart, and pigsney, Good Mistress Custance, <u>present these by and by</u> ."	62: The letter begins with several terms of endearment. = unclear meaning; though Gassner unhelpfully defines by and by to mean "at once".
64	Of this <u>superscription</u> do ye blame the style?	64: "do you find any fault with the manner in which the letter addresses you?" superscription = heading, addressment. = ie. "it is as".
66	Cust. With the rest <u>as</u> good stuff as ye read a great while.	
68	Mery. "Sweet mistress, where as I love you nothing at all – Regarding your <u>substance and riches</u> chief of all;	69: ie. "except that I especially love your wealth;" substance and richesse (<i>riches</i>) are synonyms for "wealth". = appearance. = not a bit. = health. ²
70	For your <u>personage</u> , beauty, demeanour and wit, I commend me unto you <u>never a whit</u> .	
72	Sorry to hear report of your good <u>welfare</u> , For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,	
74	That ye be worthy favour of no living man; To be abhorred <u>of</u> every honest man;	
76	To be taken for a woman inclined to vice, Nothing at all to virtue giving her due price.	
78	Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought Such a fine paragon, as ne'er honest man bought.	
80	And now by <u>these presents</u> I do you advertise, That I <u>am minded</u> to marry you in no wise.	80: "and now with this letter I do inform you". these presents = common phrase for "this document". ¹ = intend. ¹ = "are inclined". ¹ = clothing and food. = anxiety. = wish.
82	For your goods and substance, I could be content To take you as ye are. If ye <u>mind</u> to be my wife,	
84	Ye shall be assured, for the time of my life, I will keep you right well from good <u>raiment and fare</u> ;	
86	Ye shall not be kept but in sorrow and <u>care</u> . Ye shall in no wise live at your own liberty;	
88	Do and say what ye <u>lust</u> , ye shall never please me. But when ye are merry, I will be all sad;	
90	When ye are sorry, I will be very glad; When ye seek your heart's ease, I will be unkind.	
92	At no time in me shall ye much gentleness find, But all things contrary to your will and mind	
94	Shall be done – otherwise I will not <u>be behind</u> To speak. And as for all them that would do you wrong,	
96	I will so help and maintain, ye shall not live long; Nor any foolish dolt shall <u>cumber</u> you but I.	
98	I, <u>whoe'er say nay</u> , will stick by you till I die. Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord <u>you save and keep</u>	= encumber, ie. burden. ⁵ = "(despite) whoever denies it". = ie. "save you and keep you".
100	From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep, Who favoureth you no less (ye may be <u>bold</u>)	
102	Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold."	= sure.

104	Cust. How by this letter of love? is it not fine?	
106	Roist. <u>By the arms of Caley's, it is none of mine.</u>	106: <i>By the arms of Caley's</i> = "by the arms of Calais"; as Farmer notes, this French port city had since 1450 "been mourned as the only English holding in France". This oath appeared earlier in two of the works of the English poet John Skelton (1460-1529). Calais was finally lost to France in 1558. <i>arms</i> = coat of arms. ¹ <i>it is none of mine</i> = "I didn't write that."
108	Mery. <u>Fie</u> , you are foul to blame, this is your own <u>hand</u> !	= a word of reproach. = ie. handwriting; as will become clear, the letter had been first written by a professional document-drafter (a <i>scrivener</i>), and then copied over by Roister to give to Custance.
110	Cust. Might not a woman be proud of such an husband?	
112	Mery. Ah, that ye would in a letter show such <u>despite</u> !	= malice.
114	Roist. Oh, I <u>would</u> I had him here, <u>the which</u> did <u>it endite</u> !	= wish. = "he who." = compose it; <i>endite</i> usually is written as <i>indite</i> .
116	Mery. Why, ye made it yourself, ye told me, by this light.	
118	Roist. Yea, I meant I wrote it mine own self yesternight.	118: Roister means that the letter they are looking at is indeed his own writing, but he did not compose it, he only copied it.
120	Cust. <u>I-wis</u> , sir, I would not have sent you such a mock.	= assuredly.
122	Roist. Ye may so take it, but I meant it not so, by Cock.	
124	Mery. Who can blame this woman to fume and fret and rage? Tut, tut! yourself now have marred your own marriage. –	
126	Well, yet mistress Custance, if ye can this <u>remit</u> ,	= forgive. ¹
128	This gentleman otherwise may your love <u>requit</u> .	= reciprocate.
130	Cust. No, God be with you both, and seek no more to me.	
132	[Exit.]	
134	Roist. Wough! she is gone for ever, I shall her no more see.	133: Roister begins to cry.
136	Mery. What, weep? Fie, for shame! And blubber? For manhood's sake,	
138	Never let your foe so much pleasure of you take. Rather play the man's part, and <u>do love refrain</u> .	= "forbear from feeling or expressing love."
140	If she despise you, <u>e'en despise ye her again</u> .	= "then you should despise her right back." ¹¹
142	Roist. By <u>Goss</u> , and for thy sake I defy her indeed.	= a euphemism for the euphemism <i>Gog's</i> .
144	Mery. Yea, and perchance that way ye shall much sooner <u>speed</u> , For one mad <u>property</u> these women have <u>in fey</u> ,	= succeed. = quality. = "in faith", ie. truly; ⁵ but the OED suggests "in fee", meaning "holding in absolute possession", a legal term.
146	When ye will, they will not, will not ye, then will they. – Ah, foolish woman! ah, most unlucky Custance! Ah, unfortunate woman! ah, peevish Custance!	144: Merygreeke describes women as always doing the opposite of what one wants; his point is that if Roister shows disdain for Custance, she will perversely begin to desire him. 145-150: Merygreeke apostrophizes to Custance.

196	Roist. <u>Gramercies</u> , with all my heart!	= "thank you".
198	Mery. But since that cannot be, will ye play a wise part?	
200	Roist. How should I?	
202	Mery. Refrain from Custance a while now, And I warrant her soon right glad to seek to you.	203: "and I guarantee she will soon be coming and begging to you." = in no time at all.
204	Ye shall see her <u>anon</u> come on her knees creeping, And pray you to be good to her, salt tears weeping.	
206		
208	Roist. But what <u>and</u> she come not?	= if.
210	Mery. In faith, then, <u>farewell she</u> . Or else if ye be <u>wroth</u> , ye may avenged be.	= "good-bye to her", with a sense of "good riddance". 210: "or if she really makes you mad (wroth), you can get revenge on her."
212	Roist. <u>By Cock's precious potstick</u> , and e'en so I shall.	= a potstick is a stick used to stir the contents of a pot; ¹ but Farmer asserts that potstick is thought to be a reference to the stalk of the plant onto which a sponge, which had been soaked in sour wine, was wedged and held up for Christ to drink from during his crucifixion in order to alleviate his thirst (Matthew 27:48).
214	I will utterly destroy her, and house and all. But I would be avenged in the <u>mean space</u> , On that vile <u>scribbler</u> , that did my wooing disgrace.	= meantime. = disparaging term for the Scrivener, the man who wrote the original draft of Roister's letter.
216		
218	Mery. "Scribbler," <u>ko you</u> , indeed he is worthy no less. I will call him to you, and ye bid me doubtless.	= "quoth you", ie. "you call him". 218: "I will go get him, most assuredly, if you ask me to."
220	Roist. Yes, for <u>although</u> he had as many lives, As a thousand widows, and a thousand wives,	= ie. even if.
222	As a thousand lions, and a thousand rats, A thousand wolves, and a thousand cats,	
224	A thousand bulls, and a thousand calves, And a thousand legions divided in halves,	
226	He shall never 'scape death on my sword's point, Though I should be torn therefore joint by joint.	
228		
230	Mery. Nay, if ye will kill him, I will not <u>fet</u> him, I will not in so much extremity set him; He may yet <u>amend</u> , sir, and be an honest man, Therefore pardon him, good soul, as much as ye can.	= fetch. = make amends.
232		
234	Roist. Well, for thy sake, this once with his life he shall pass, But I will hew him all to pieces, <u>by the Mass</u> .	= an oath.
236		
238	Mery. Nay, faith, ye shall promise that he shall no harm have, Else I will not fet him.	
240	Roist. I shall, so God me save – But I may <u>chide him a-good</u> .	= "thoroughly chew him out." ^{5,8}
242		
244	Mery. Yea, that do, <u>hardily</u> . Roist. Go, then.	= by all means. ³

246	Mery. I return, and bring him to you <u>by and by</u> .	= right away.
248	[Exit.]	249: it is unclear if Roister also exits the stage; we will assume he remains where he is.
ACT III, SCENE V.		
[Still on Stage: Roister Doister.]		
<i>Enter Merygreeke and Scrivener.</i>		
1	Roist. What is a gentleman but his word and his promise?	1-2: Roister regrets having promised Merygreeke not to kill the Scrivener.
2	I must now save this villain's life in any wise, And yet at him already my hands do tickle,	3: ie. "And yet my hands are itching to get at him".
4	I shall <u>uneth</u> hold them, they will be so <u>fickle</u> .	4: uneth = uneath, ie. scarcely or hardly, ⁵ or "with great difficulty". ⁸ A strange and archaic-sounding word, derived from the ancient Saxon word eath , meaning "easy". ¹ fickle = uncertain, unreliable. ¹
	But, <u>lo</u> , <u>and</u> Merygreeke have not brought him <u>sens</u> .	5: lo = look. and = the sense is "see if". sens = obsolete form of since , meaning "already", used to rhyme with pence . ^{1,9}
6	Mery. Nay, I would I had of my purse <u>paid forty pence</u> .	= "nay, I wish I had bet (paid) forty pence of my own money" (presumably wagering that Roister should have successfully won Custance over with the letter the Scrivener wrote for him). forty pence seems to have been a favourite or customary amount in a wager. ^{1,5}
8	Scriv. So would I too; but it needed not, that <u>stound</u> .	9: "I would have bet too; but it did not have to happen, this set-back (stound)". ⁵ Child, however, assumes that stound takes its alternate meaning of "time" or "moment", so that line might be interpreted, "I wish I had, too, but it was not necessary, at that time."
10	Mery. But the gentman had rather spent five thousand pound,	11: Roister would have gladly spent 5000 pounds to avoid the humiliation he incurred in the recent meeting with Custance.
12	For it disgraced him at least five times so much.	
14	Scriv. He disgraced himself, his loutishness is such.	
16	Roist. How long they stand <u>prating</u> ! – Why comest thou not away?	= chattering.
18	Mery. <u>Come now to himself</u> , and <u>hark</u> what he will say.	= ie. "go over to him". = "listen to"; Merygreeke is still addressing the Scrivener.
20	Scriv. I am not afraid in his presence to appear.	
22	Roist. Art thou come, fellow?	
24	Scriv. How think you? Am I not here?	24: the Scrivener is not at all intimidated by Roister.

26	Roist. What <u>hindrance</u> hast thou done me, and what villainy?	= meaning either (1) injury or wrong, or (2) obstruction, in the sense that the Scrivener's letter has brought Roister's courtship to a dead stop.
28	Scriv. It hath come of thyself, if thou hast had any.	28: "any harm that has come to you is through your own fault, if indeed you have suffered any such." Note that the Scrivener addresses Roister with <i>thou</i> to indicate his disdain for this man who dares to rebuke him.
30	Roist. All the <u>stock</u> thou comest of <u>later or rather</u> ,	30: the sense is, "not any of your ancestors (<i>stock</i>) from whom you are descended". <i>later or rather</i> = regionalism for "later or sooner". ¹
32	From thy first father's grandfather's father's father,	32: "nor any of your descendents to come between now and the end of time".
34	Nor all that shall come of thee to the world's end,	= actionable wrong or injury.
36	Though to threescore generations they descend,	
38	Can be able to make me a just recompense,	
40	For this <u>trespass</u> of thine and this one offence.	
42	Scriv. Wherein?	37: "in what respect (have I injured you)?"
44	Roist. Did not you make me a letter, <u>brother</u> ?	= a term of familiarity, not literal; just as Merygreeke referred to his <i>cousin Roister Doister</i> at Act III.i.4. ⁵
46	Scriv. <u>Pay the like hire</u> , I will make you such another.	= "if you pay me a similar fee".
	Roist. Nay, see <u>and</u> these whoreson <u>Pharisees and Scribes</u>	43-44: <i>and</i> = if.
	Do not get their living by <u>polling</u> and <u>bribes</u> .	<i>Pharisees and Scribes</i> = two subgroups of the Jewish faith that are frequently paired in the New Testament.
	If it were not for shame –	The <i>Pharisees</i> distinguished themselves through their hyper-strict interpretation of the Law, and as such were considered hypocritical for what appeared to be their "holier than thou" attitude. ¹⁹
		<i>Scribes</i> was the word used in the New Testament to describe Jewish lawyers; they came into frequent conflict with Jesus, and after his crucifixion maintained hostile relations with the apostles. ²⁶
		In the Old Testament, however, <i>Scribes</i> described those Jews who were clerks and professional copyists, and who held offices such as that of Secretary of State; like Pharisees, they were considered to be "upholders of ancestral tradition" (OED, <i>scribe</i> , n.1, def. 1).
		Roister thus pairs <i>Pharisees</i> and <i>Scribes</i> as the New Testament does, but at the same time links the Old Testament Scribes, by virtue of their profession, to the Scrivener; and as both groups have, because of their New Testament histories, come down through the ages with bad reputations, Roister ascribes to them, and thus to the Scrivener, the qualities listed in line 44.
		<i>polling</i> = swindling. ³
		<i>bribes</i> = robbery ³ or corruption. ¹
46	Scriv. Nay, hold thy hands still.	47: the Scrivener notes that Roisters hands have turned into fists, or are engaged in some similar threatening gesture - though at least one editor suggests Roister actually strikes the Scrivener here, ³⁰ even if that would be out of character for our cowardly hero. Cooper plausibly assigns this line to Merygreeke;

48	Mery. Why, did ye not promise that ye would not him <u>spill</u> ?	the Scrivener quickly shows he actually has no fear of Roister.
50	Scriv. Let him not spare me.	= destroy or kill. ¹
52		51: it appears that at this point the Scrivener strikes Roister either preemptively or in return; Roister recoils, and the Scrivener threatens to dish him another blow.
54	Roist. Why, wilt thou strike me again?	
56	Scriv. Ye shall have as good as ye bring of me, that is plain.	
58	Mery. I cannot blame him, sir, though your blows would him grieve. For he knoweth present death to ensue of all ye give.	57-58: spoken to Roister, as an ironic compliment: "I can't blame the Scrivener for defending himself, because he knows that you are likely to kill someone if you were to strike them."
60	Roist. Well, <u>this man for once</u> hath purchased thy pardon.	= ie. Merygreeke. = "this time"; a face-saving line, especially if, as we surmise, the Scrivener has struck Roister above.
62	Scriv. <u>And what say ye to me?</u> or else I will be gone.	= ie. "so what is it exactly you brought me here to tell me?"
64	Roist. I say the letter thou madest me was not good.	
66	Scriv. Then did ye wrong copy it, of likelihood.	
68	Roist. Yes, out of thy copy word for word I wrote.	
70	Scriv. Then was it as ye <u>prayed</u> to have it, I wot, But in reading and <u>pointing there was made some fault.</u>	= asked. = punctuation. = ie. "mistakes were made".
72	Roist. I wot not, but it made all my matter to halt.	73: "I don't know about that, but it crippled my project." halt = limp, proceed lamely. ¹
74	Scriv. How say you, is this mine original or no?	75: Roister and the Scrivener examine the Scrivener's original draft of the letter.
76	Roist. The self same that I wrote out of, <u>so mote I go!</u>	= old expression of affirmation. ¹
78	Scriv. Look you on your own <u>fist</u> , and I will look on this,	79: the Scrivener will read aloud his draft of the letter; Roister is to follow along on his copy; Roister must have kept his own letter to Custance after Merygreeke read it out loud in the previous scene. fist = writing, or handwriting. ¹
80	And let this man be judge whether I read amiss. "To mine own dear coney-bird, sweetheart, and pigsney, 82 Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by." How now? doth not this <u>superscription</u> agree?	83: ie. "how is this so far? Do the openings (super-scriptions) of the two letters agree exactly with each other?"
84		
86	Roist. Read that is within, and there ye shall the fault see.	
88	Scriv. "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you; nothing at all Regarding your riches and substance – chief of all For your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit 90 I commend me unto you; never a whit Sorry to hear report of your good welfare,	87-88: nothing...substance = ie. "but it is not for your wealth (that I love you)."

92	For (as I hear say) such your conditions are, That ye be worthy favour; of no living man	
94	To be abhorred; <u>of</u> every honest man	= by.
96	To be taken for a woman inclined to vice. Nothing at all; to virtue giving her due price.	
98	Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought Such a fine paragon, as ne'er honest man bought.	
100	And now, by these presents, I do you advertise That I am minded to marry you; in no wise	99: "and now with this letter I do inform you". 100-1: <i>in no wise...substance</i> = "but not for your
102	For your goods and substance; I can be content To take you as you are. If ye will be my wife,	wealth".
104	Ye shall be assured for the time of my life, I will keep you right well; from good raiment and fare	
106	Ye shall not be kept; but in sorrow and care Ye shall in no wise live; at your own liberty,	
108	Do and say what ye lust; ye shall never please me But when ye are merry; I will be all sad	
110	When ye are sorry; I will be very glad When ye seek your heart's ease; I will be unkind	
112	At no time; in me shall ye much gentleness find. But all things contrary to your will and mind	= slow, hesitant.
114	Shall be done otherwise; I will not be <u>behind</u> To speak. And as for all them that would do you wrong	
116	(I will so help and maintain ye) shall not live long. Nor any foolish dolt shall <u>cumber</u> you; but I,	= encumber, ie. burden.
118	I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die. Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord you save and keep.	
120	From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep, Who favoureth you no less (ye may be <u>bold</u>)	= sure.
122	Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold." Now, sir, what <u>default</u> can ye find in this letter?	= ie. fault.
124	Roist. Of truth, in my mind there cannot be a better.	
126	Scriv. Then was the fault in reading, and not in writing, No, nor I dare say in the <u>form of enditing</u> .	= composition.
128	But who read this letter, that it sounded so <u>naught</u> ?	= wrong or incorrect.
130	Mery. I read it, indeed.	
132	Scriv. Ye read it not as ye ought.	
134	Roist. Why, <u>thou wretched villain</u> , was all this same fault in thee?	= Roister moves to assault Merygreeke.
136	Mery. I knock your <u>costard</u> if ye <u>offer</u> to strike me!	136: Farmer suggests Merygreeke actually strikes Roister here. <i>costard</i> = properly a type of large apple, but used frequently - and humorously - as here, to mean "head". <i>offer</i> = try, attempt.
138	Roist. Strikest thou, indeed? and I offer but in jest?	138: "have you really hit me? when I am threatening (to hit you) only in jest?"
140	Mery. Yea, and rap you again except ye can sit in rest – And I will no longer <u>tarry</u> here, me believe!	= hang around.
142	Roist. What, wilt thou be angry, and I do thee forgive? –	
144	Fare thou well, scribbler, <u>I cry thee mercy</u> indeed.	= basically a request for pardon.

146	Scriv. Fare ye well, <u>bibbler</u> , and worthily may ye <u>speed</u> !	= heavy drinker. = succeed; the Scrivener presumably exits after speaking this line.
148	Roist. If it were another but thou, it were a knave.	148: to Merygreeke: "if any other person had done this to me, I would consider him a scoundrel."
150	Mery. <u>Ye are another yourself</u> , sir, the Lord us both save.	= a common but meaningless retort. ¹
152	Albeit in this matter I must your pardon crave. Alas, would ye wish <u>in me the wit that ye have</u> ?	= "that I had the same level of intelligence as you have?"
	But as for my fault I can quickly <u>amend</u> ,	= make amends, ie. make all right.
154	I will show Custance it was I that did offend.	
156	Roist. By so doing her anger maybe <u>reformed</u> .	= put right or reversed, ie. appeased. ¹
158	Mery. But if by no entreaty she will be turned,	= "consider her to be of no value".
160	Then <u>set light by her</u> and be as testy as she, And do your force upon her with extremity.	158-160: if Custance doesn't change her mind about Roister, says Merygreeke, Roister should resort to extreme measures, perhaps even physical violence, to get her to do so.
162	Roist. Come on, therefore, let us go home <u>in sadness</u> .	= in earnest. ¹
164	Mery. That if force <u>shall need</u> all may be in a readiness –	= "will be needed (to get her)"; Hazlitt plausibly wonders if this line doesn't properly belong to Roister.
	And as for this letter, <u>hardily</u> , let all go.	= by all means. ³
166	We will know <u>where</u> she refuse you for that or no.	= whether. ³
168	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	
	END OF ACT III.	

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter Sym Suresby.

Entering Character: Sym Suresby is the servant of Gawyn Goodluck, Custance's fiancé; Sym and his master have just returned from their overseas trip, a crossing which appears to have been a difficult one.

Suresby became its own word, used to describe a reliable person.¹

= only.

= upon himself.

= truly. = ie. Neptune, the god of the seas.

= someone.

7-8: Neptune had seen fit to save all the ship's passengers from the storm primarily because of his admiration for Sym.

9: **fie on** = a phrase of disgust.

that servant = ie. a hypothetical servant.

wealth = welfare.³

= hesitate.

11-12: an awkward sentence: Gawyn has decided to rest on the ship for a day before disembarking, thanks to the ill effects he is suffering from the rough seas, while Sym goes ashore to run some errands on his behalf.

15: typically meaning both (1) work and (2) travel.

= objective, ie. errand. = why.

= greet, meet with.

= betrothed. = holds dear, cherishes.⁵

= ie. if all is well or not with her.

= expect with impatience.⁵

= two.

= ie. on her door.

= fortunately.

1 **Sym.** Is there any man but I, Sym Suresby, alone,
2 That would have taken such an enterprise him upon,
In such an outrageous tempest as this was,
4 Such a dangerous gulf of the sea to pass?
I think, verily, Neptune's mighty godship
6 Was angry with some that was in our ship,
And but for the honesty which in me he found,
8 I think for the others' sake we had been drowned.

But fie on that servant which for his master's wealth

10 Will stick for to hazard both his life and his health.
My master, Gawyn Goodluck, after me a day,
12 Because of the weather, thought best his ship to stay,

And now that I have the rough surges so well past,
14 God grant I may find all things safe here at last.
Then will I think all my travail well spent.
16 Now the first point wherefore my master hath me sent,
Is to salute dame Christian Custance, his wife
18 Espoused, whom he tendreth no less than his life.
I must see how it is with her, well or wrong,
20 And whether for him she doth not now think long.
Then to other friends I have a message or tway,
22 And then so to return and meet him on the way.
Now will I go knock that I may despatch with speed,
24 But lo, forth cometh herself happily indeed.

ACT IV, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Sym.*]

Enter Custance.

1 **Cust.** I come to see if any more stirring be here,
2 But what stranger is this which doth to me appear?

4 **Sym.** I will speak to her. – Dame, the Lord you save and see.

6 **Cust.** What, friend Sym Suresby? Forsooth, right welcome ye be!
How doth mine own Gawyn Goodluck, I pray thee tell?

8 **Sym.** When he knoweth of your health he will be perfect well.

= ie. if any other action or commotion is going on in front of Custance's house.

= does, ie. "is (he) doing".

10 *Cust.* If he have perfect health, I am as I would be.
 12 *Sym.* Such news will please him well, this is as it should be.
 14 *Cust.* I think now long for him.
 16 *Sym.* And he as long for you.
 18 *Cust.* When will he be at home?
 20 *Sym.* His heart is here e'en now,
 22 His body cometh after.
 24 *Cust.* I would see that fain.
 26 *Sym.* As fast as wind and sail can carry it amain. –
 But what two men are yond coming hitherward?
 28 *Cust.* Now I shrew their best Christmas cheeks both
 togetherward.

ACT IV, SCENE III.

[*Still on Stage: Custance, Sym.*]

Enter Roister Doister and Merygreeke.

1 *Cust.* What mean these lewd fellows thus to trouble me still?
 2 *Sym* Suresby here perchance shall thereof deem some ill,
 And shall suspect in me some point of naughtiness –
 4 And they come hitherward!
 6 *Sym.* What is their business?
 8 *Cust.* I have nought to them; nor they to me in sadness.
 10 *Sym.* Let us hearken them; somewhat there is, I fear it.

24: "I am eager (*fain*) to see that (ie. his body)."

= ie. Gawyn's body. = with all speed.²

29: Custance sees Merygreeke and Roister
 approaching, and fires a curse in their direction.

shrew = curse.

Christmas cheeks = Child and Flügel explain that this odd curse is simply an extension of the Medieval practice of using body parts in oaths (e.g. *God's arms* appears in this play); *Christmas*, he goes on, intensifies the curse, so that the full meaning becomes, "I curse their best cheeks, even the ones they wear at Christmas."

Farmer, however, wonders if *Christmas cheeks* is a reference to a holiday bonnet or head attire of some sort: *cheeks* may be short for "cheeks and ears", the name of a popular and "fantastic headdress" of the period. Unfortunately the earliest recognized use of this phrase was 1605, half a century after *Roister* was written.

togetherward = uncommon variation of *together*.

1-4: in this aside, Custance expresses her worry that if Sym sees Roister and Merygreeke talking to her, he will become suspicious regarding Custance's faithfulness to Gawyn during the latter's absence.

lewd = base.⁴

= perhaps. = reckon, judge.

= immorality.¹

= in this direction.

= ie. nothing to say to. = seriousness.

= "hear them out." = "something is going on"; the second half of the line may be an aside.

12 **Roist.** I will speak out aloud best, that she may hear it.

14 **Mery.** Nay, alas, ye may so fear her out of her wit.

16 **Ralph.** By the cross of my sword, I will hurt her no whit.

18 **Mery.** Will ye do no harm indeed? shall I trust your word?

20 **Roist.** By Roister Doister's faith, I will speak but in bord. –

Sirs, see that my harness, my target, and my shield,

22 Be made as bright now, as when I was last in field,
As white as I should to war again to-morrow:
24 For sick shall I be, but I work some folk sorrow.

Therefore see that all shine as bright as Saint George,
26 Or as doth a key newly come from the smith's forge,
I would have my sword and harness to shine so bright,
28 That I might therewith dim mine enemies' sight,

I would have it cast beams as fast, I tell you plain,
30 As doth the glittering grass after a shower of rain.
And see that in case I should need to come to arming,
32 All things may be ready at a minute's warning,
For such chance may chance in an hour, do ye hear?

34 **Mery.** As perchance shall not chance again in seven year.

36 **Roist.** Now draw we near to her, and hear what shall be said.

38 **Mery.** But I would not have you make her too much afraid.

40 **Roist.** Well found, sweet wife, I trust, for all this your sour look.

42 **Cust.** "Wife" – why call ye me wife?

44 **Sym.** [Aside.] "Wife?" This gear goeth a-crook.

12-20: as they approach Custance, Roister and Merygreeke converse for a while yet outside of her hearing.

= frighten. = the expressions *in one's wits* and *out of one's wits* seem to go back at least to the early 15th century.

= an oath: see Act III.iii.207. = not a bit.

= in jest.

Starting in line 21, Roister will loudly give instructions to some imaginary servants off-stage, which he wants Custance to hear.

21f: Child notes that this speech is adapted from the opening speech of Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*: "Take ye care that the lustre of my shield is more bright than the rays of the sun are wont to be at the time when the sky is clear; that when occasion comes, the battle being joined, 'mid the fierce ranks right opposite it may dazzle the eyesight of the enemy, etc."

harness = armour.

target = small, round shield.²

= ie. on the field of battle.

= the sense seems to be "shiny". = "as if I were off".

24: "because if I don't bring some misery into certain people's lives soon, I'm going to be sick."

25: England's patron saint since the 14th century.

= want.

= ie. blind his enemies with the sun's reflection off his armour.

= emit sunbeams.

= "arm myself".

= occurrence. = happen.

35: an aside: "as might not come again for seven years."

Note that Merygreeke playfully imitates Roister's double-use of *chance*.

37-39: these lines are spoken outside of Custance's hearing.

= "well met", typical greeting during a chance encounter.

= business. = awry, ie. wrongly, not proceeding the way it is supposed to.

Mery. Nay, mistress Custance, I warrant you, our letter
 48 Is not as we read e'en now, but much better,
 And where ye half stomached this gentleman afore.
 50 For this same letter, ye will love him now therefore,
 Nor it is not this letter, though ye were a queen,
 52 That should break marriage between you twain, I ween,
 54 **Cust.** I did not refuse him for the letter's sake.
 56 **Roist.** Then ye are content me for your husband to take?
 58 **Cust.** You for my husband to take? nothing less truly.
 60 **Roist.** Yea, say so, sweet spouse, afore strangers hardily.
 62 **Mery.** And though I have here his letter of love with me,
 Yet his ring and tokens he sent, keep safe with ye.
 64 **Cust.** A mischief take his tokens, and him and thee too!
 66 But what prate I with fools? have I naught else to do? –
 Come in with me, Sym Suresby, to take some repast.
 68 **Sym.** I must ere I drink, by your leave, go in all haste,
 70 To a place or two, with earnest letters of his.
 72 **Cust.** Then come drink here with me.
 74 **Sym.** I thank you!
 76 **Cust.** Do not miss.
 You shall have a token to your master with you.
 78 **Sym.** No tokens this time, gramercies, God be with you.
 80
 82 [Exit.]
 84 **Cust.** Surely this fellow misdeemeth some ill in me,
 Which thing but God help, will go near to spill me.

47-48: Merygreeke announces that Roister's letter had not been properly read to Custance earlier.
 = disliked, resented;^{1,8} Farmer, however, prefers the opposite meaning of "inclined to" or "liked."⁵
 = because of.
 51-52: "so that not even the letter could stop you from marrying Roister, even if you were a queen" (in which case their differing ranks would otherwise preclude a wedding between them).
twain = two.
ween = believe.
 = possibly meant ironically; Williams, however, suggests the intended meaning of this expression is "nothing less likely", but that Custance's choice of words is unfortunately ambiguous, so that Roister understands her to be saying "I will take nothing less worthy than you for a husband, really."⁴
 60: "then please formally pledge your intention to marry me in front of these witnesses, by all means." Vows of engagement made before witnesses were considered binding.
spouse = fiancée.
hardily = right away or by all means; or boldly, openly.⁴
 65-66: an aside.
 = prattle. = nothing.
 = refreshment; Custance doesn't want Sym to return to his master without her first having a chance to clear up any misapprehensions he may have.
 = before. = "with your permission".
 = important.
 = "afterwards"; again, Custance hopes Sym will return to her before he sees Gawyn.
 77: ie. "I shall give you a present to bring to Gawyn".
 = right now.
 83-84: in this aside, Custance recognizes that Sym is indeed suspicious, and in reporting what he has seen to his master, will ruin her by ruining her relationship with Gawyn.
misdeemeth = is suspicious of.¹

		<i>but</i> = unless. ²⁴ <i>spill</i> = ruin.
86	Roist. Yea, farewell, fellow, and tell thy master <u>Goodluck</u> That he cometh too late <u>of this blossom to pluck</u> .	= Gawyn's surname. = ie. "to pick this flower in its full bloom," a metaphor for winning Custance - the flower - for himself.
88	Let him keep him there still, or at leastwise make no haste, As for his labour hither he shall spend in waste.	88: "let him remain there (on the ship), or at least be in no rush to leave it". 89: "for he will be wasting his efforts if he chooses to come here."
90	His betters be in place now.	90: "he has been replaced by better people."
92	Mery. As long as it will hold.	92: a wry aside.
94	Cust. I will be even with thee, thou beast, thou mayst be <u>bold</u> !	94: Custance switches to the contemptuous <i>thee</i> (now that Sym has left the stage) in addressing Roister to reveal her loathing for the man. Farmer thinks this line may be an aside. <i>bold</i> = sure, certain. ¹¹
96	Roist. Will ye have us then?	
98	Cust. I will never have thee!	
100	Roist. Then will I have you?	100: Roister, either naively or obnoxiously, simply rephrases his question of line 96.
102	Cust. No, the devil shall have thee! I have gotten this hour more shame and harm by thee,	
104	Than all thy <u>life days</u> thou canst do me <u>honesty</u> .	104: "than you could show respect (<i>honesty</i>) ¹ for me over your entire lifetime." <i>life days</i> = lifetime; the phrase <i>life days</i> had been in use since the days of Old English, or the Anglo-Saxon period; its synonym "lifetime" entered the language in the 14th century. ¹
106	Mery. Why now <u>may ye see</u> what it cometh to, in the end, To make a deadly foe of your most loving <u>friend</u> ; –	106-7: Merygreeke is likely warning Roister (and not Custance) about what will happen if he makes an enemy of the woman he loves; we remember that the parasite had admonished Roister earlier in the scene not to frighten her. <i>may ye see</i> = "you will see". <i>friend</i> = frequently used, as here, to mean "lover".
108	And, <u>i-wis</u> , this letter, if ye would hear it now –	108: this line is addressed to Custance. <i>i-wis</i> = certainly.
110	Cust. I will hear none of it.	
112	Mery. In faith, would ravish you.	112: ie. "truly, it would sweep you off your feet."
114	Cust. He hath stained my name for ever, this is clear.	
116	Roist. I can make all as well in an hour.	
118	Mery. As ten year. – How say ye, will ye have him?	118: "as in ten years;" another witty aside.
120	Cust. No.	
122	Mery. Will ye take him?	
124	Cust. I defy him.	
126		

128	Mery. At my word?	
130	Cust. A shame take him. Waste no more <u>wind</u> , for it will never be.	= breath.
132	Mery. This one fault with <u>twain</u> shall be mended, ye shall see.	= two.
134	Gentle mistress Custance, now, good mistress Custance!	
136	Honey mistress Custance, now, sweet mistress Custance!	
	Golden mistress Custance, now, <u>white</u> mistress Custance!	= a term of endearment.
138	Cust. Faith, rather than to marry with such a doltish lout,	
140	I would <u>match</u> myself with a beggar, <u>out of</u> doubt.	= marry. = "without a".
	Mery. Then I can say no more; to <u>speed we are not like</u> ,	141-2: spoken as an aside to Roister. Speed we are not like = "we are unlikely to succeed (<i>speed</i>)".
142	Except ye <u>rap</u> out a <u>rag of your rhetoric</u> .	142: roughly, "unless you can quickly spin out a winning bit of amorous discourse", but with more humour. Note also the rare alliteration in this line. Udall borrowed the expression rag of rhetoric from John Skelton's <i>Repycacion</i> : "A lytell ragge of rethorique." rap out = common transitive phrase conveying a sense of rapid and sudden disclaiming. ¹ rag = scrap. ¹
144	Cust. Speak not of winning me, for it shall never be so!	
146	Roist. Yes, dame, I will have you, whether ye will or no!	
148	I command you to love me, <u>wherefore</u> should ye not?	= why.
150	Is not my love to you <u>chafing</u> and burning hot?	= inflaming, arousing,
152	Mery. <u>To her</u> ! That is well said.	= "take it to her!"
154	Roist. Shall I so <u>break my brain</u>	= "drive myself mad" ¹³ or "exhaust my brain". ¹
156	To dote upon you, and ye not love us again?	
158	Mery. Well said yet!	
160	Cust. <u>Go to</u> , you <u>goose</u> !	157: Go to = common phrase for "get out of here". goose = common term for "fool".
162	Roist. I say, <u>Kit</u> Custance,	= older nickname for Christian (Custance's forename) as well as for Christopher. The Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe was nicknamed thus. ²⁷
164	In case ye will not <u>ha'ze</u> , – well, better "yes," perchance!	= "have us". ⁵
166	Cust. <u>Avaunt</u> , <u>loset</u> ! <u>pick thee hence</u> .	= begone! = lout ³ or ne'er-do-well. ⁵ = "get out of here." ⁵
168	Mery. Well, sir, ye perceive,	
170	For all your kind offer, she will not you receive.	
	Roist. Then <u>a straw for</u> her, and a straw for her again,	167: a straw for (one) was a common expression of contempt. ¹
	She shall not be my wife, <u>would she never so fain</u> –	= "no matter how eager she might be to."
	No, and though she would be at ten thousand pound cost!	169: "even if she were worth, or paid me, 10,000 pounds!" ¹¹

172	Mery. Lo, dame, ye may see what an husband ye have lost.	
174	Cust. Yea, <u>no force</u> , <u>a jewel</u> much better lost than found.	= no matter. ⁵ = ie. "he is a jewel".
176	Mery. Ah, ye will not believe how this doth my heart wound. How should a marriage between you be <u>toward</u> ,	= impending. ²
178	If both parties draw back, and become so <u>froward</u> ? Roist. Nay, dame, I will <u>fire thee</u> out of thy house,	= adverse or obstinate. ² = literally "burn out". = incensed, Roister too switches to addressing Custance with thee . Note that line 179 does not rhyme with line 180; Flügel has suggested adding "though I die" to the end of this line.
180	And destroy thee and <u>all thine</u> , and that <u>by and by</u> !	= ie. "everything you own". = right away, very soon.
182	Mery. Nay, for the passion of God, sir, do not so.	
184	Roist. Yes, <u>except</u> she will say yea to that <u>she said no</u> .	= unless. = ie. "to which she said <i>no</i> ."
186	Cust. And what – be there no <u>officers</u> , <u>trow we</u> , in town To check idle <u>loiterers</u> , <u>bragging</u> up and down?	186: officers = those with powers to arrest or administer justice. trow we = ie. "that we know of". 187: "to control or reign in such loiterers who swagger up and down the street?" loiterer = in the 16th century, an increase in itinerant workers and the unemployed led Parliament to pass anti-vagrancy laws; Farmer notes the most recent law pre-dating our play was passed in 1547, which labeled any person engage in "lurking...loitering, or idle wandering" to be a "vagabond", and liable to be brought before a magistrate for having committed a criminal offense. ⁵ bragging = strutting. ¹
188	Where be they, by whom vagabonds should be repressed, That poor <u>silly</u> widows might live in peace and rest?	188: "where are those officers through whose agency vagabonds should be suppressed or stamped out". = timid, ³ simple, or harmless. ⁵
190	Shall I never rid thee out of my company?	
192	I will call for help. – <u>What ho, come forth, Trupenie!</u>	= Custance calls for her servant Tom to come out of the house.
194	<i>Enter Tom.</i> Trup. <u>Anon</u> . What is your will, mistress? did ye call me?	= anon, ie. "coming!" Shakespeare's waiter Francis in <i>Henry IV, Part I</i> , responds "Anon, anon" and "Anon, sir" over and over again as Poins repeatedly calls for him, in this famous literary practical joke.
196	Cust. Yea. Go run <u>apace</u> , and as fast as may be,	= quickly.
198	<u>Pray</u> Tristram Trustie, my most assured friend,	= ask.
200	To <u>be here by and by</u> , that he may me defend.	= "come here right away".
202	Trup. That message so quickly shall be done, by God's grace, That at my return ye shall say, I went apace.	
204	<i>[Exit.]</i>	
206	Cust. Then shall we see, I trow, whether ye shall do me harm.	

208	Roist. Yes, in faith, Kit, I shall <u>thee and thine so charm</u> ,	= "subdue or overcome (charm) ⁴ you and those who are close to you" (meaning Custance's servants). thee and thine = variation of the common formula thou and thine , meaning "you and your family or friends". ¹
210	That all women incarnate by thee may beware.	209: "so that all women clothed in flesh will be forewarned by the example I will make of thee." One wonders if women incarnate is a parody or precursor of the phrase of abuse devil incarnate .
212	Cust. Nay, as for charming me, come hither if thou dare, I shall <u>clout thee</u> till thou stink, both thee and <u>thy train</u> ,	= "knock you about". = "your followers", meaning Roister's servants as well as Merygreeke.
214	And <u>coil</u> thee <u>mine</u> own hands, and send thee home again.	= beat. ¹ = ie. "with my".
216	Roist. Yea, sayest thou me that, dame? Dost thou me threaten? — Go we, I will see whether I shall be beaten!	
218	Mery. Nay, for the <u>pashe</u> of God, let me now <u>treat</u> peace, For bloodshed will there be in case this strife increase. —	= passion. ³ = sue for.
220	Ah, good dame Custance, <u>take better way with you</u> .	= "behave more responsibly from now on." ¹²
222	Cust. Let him do his worst.	
224	Mery. [<i>To Custance.</i>] Yield in time.	224: Roister perhaps approaches Custance threateningly, and Merygreeke urges Custance to submit. However, Custance succeeds in driving Roister away, and, having been worsted, Roister retreats.
226	Roist. Come hence, thou.	226: to Merygreeke: "come along, you."
228	[<i>Exeunt Roister Doister and Merygreeke.</i>]	
	ACT IV, SCENE IV. [<i>Still on Stage: Custance.</i>]	
1	Cust. So, <u>sirrah</u> , if I should not with him take this way,	1-2: Custance, addressing herself, realizes she needs to do something drastic if she is to rid herself of Roister once and for all; as noted earlier, the term of address sirrah could be applied to either a man or woman.
2	I should not be rid of him, I think, till doom's day.	
4	I will call forth my <u>folks</u> , that, without any mocks, If he come again we may give him raps and knocks. — Madge Mumblecrust, come forth, and Tibet Talkapace.	= servants. 4: worried about Roister's threats of violence, Custance will call on her servants to prepare to meet him on his own violent terms.
6	Yea, and come forth too, mistress Annot Alyface.	
8	<i>Enter Annot, Tibet and Madge.</i>	8: Tom Truepenny, we remember, had been sent to fetch her fiancé's friend Tristram Trustie.
10	Annot. I come.	
12	Tibet. And I am here.	
14	Mumb. And I am here too, <u>at length</u> .	= eventually; the elderly Madge slowly brings up the rear.
16	Cust. Like warriors, if need be, ye must show your strength. The man that this day hath thus <u>beguiled</u> you,	= tricked.
18	Is Ralph Roister Doister, whom ye know well <u>inowe</u> ,	= alternate spelling of enow , ie. enough.

20	The most lout and <u>dastard</u> that ever on ground trod.	= skulking coward. ¹
22	Tibet. I see all folk mock him when he goeth <u>abroad</u> .	= out and about, out of his house.
24	Cust. What, pretty maid, will ye talk when I speak?	
26	Tibet. No, forsooth, good mistress!	
28	Cust. Will ye my tale <u>break</u> ? – He threateneth to come hither with all his force to fight, I charge you, if he come, on him with all your might.	27: another expression describing an interruption. break = cut short. ¹
30		
32	Mumb. I with my <u>distaff</u> will reach him one rap.	= her club-like rod used for spinning; see Act I.iii.1
34	Tibet. And I with my new broom will sweep him one <u>swap</u> , And then with our great club I will reach him one rap.	= blow. ⁵
36	Annot. And I with our <u>skimmer</u> will fling him one flap.	= ladle, or implement for skimming liquid. ^{1,5}
38	Tibet. Then Trupenie's <u>firefork</u> will him <u>shrewdly</u> <u>fray</u> , And you with the spit may drive him quite away.	= poker. = severely = assault or frighten away. ¹
40		
42	Cust. Go, make all ready, that it may be even so.	
44	Tibet. For my part I <u>shrew</u> them that <u>last about it go</u> . [<i>Exeunt.</i>]	= curse. = ie. are slow to arm and join the fight. 45: Custance remains on stage.
 <u>ACT IV, SCENE V.</u> [<i>Still on Stage: Custance.</i>]		
 <i>Enter Tom and Tristram Trustie.</i>		
1	Cust. Trupenie did promise me to run a great pace,	Entering Characters: Custance's servant Tom has finally returned with Tristram Trustie , a trusted friend of Gawyn, and through him Custance.
2	My friend Tristram Trustie to <u>fet</u> into this place.	
4	Indeed he dwelleth <u>hence</u> a good <u>start</u> , I confess: But yet a quick messenger might twice since, as I guess, Have gone and come again. Ah, yond I spy him now!	= fetch. = from here. = distance. ¹
6		
8	Tom. Ye are a slow goer, sir, I make God avow. My mistress Custance will in me put all the blame, Your legs be longer than mine – <u>come apace</u> for shame!	= hurry.
10		
12	Cust. I <u>can thee thank</u> , Trupenie, thou hast done right well.	= "am able to thank you".
14	Tom. Mistress, since I went no grass hath grown on my heel, But master Tristram Trustie here <u>maketh no speed</u> .	13: this is the second use in our play of this proverbial expression, indicating here that Tom has not paused once in his efforts to retrieve Trustie. = ie. is very slow.
16	Cust. That he came at all, I thank him in very deed, For now have I need of the help of some wise man.	
18	Trust. Then may I be gone again, for none such I am.	19: Trustie responds with formulaic modesty.
20	Tom. Ye may be <u>by your going</u> – for no <u>Alderman</u>	21-22: Tom's response is rather sarcastic!

22	Can go, I dare say, a <u>sadder pace</u> than ye can.	<i>by your going</i> = "to judge by your pace". ¹² <i>Alderman</i> = a civil officer or magistrate of a city or ward; <i>aldermen</i> were proverbial for their slow or deliberate progress: hence the inclusion of the following in two 17th century collections of proverbs: "He is paced like an alderman." ²¹ <i>sadder pace</i> = slower or more grave walking speed. ⁵
24	<i>Cust.</i> Trupenie, get thee in. Thou shalt among them know, How to <u>use thyself</u> like a <u>proper</u> man, I trow.	= behave. = respectable or worthy. ^{1,2}
26	<i>Tom.</i> I go.	
28		
30		[Exit.]
32	<i>Cust.</i> Now, Tristram Trustie, I thank you right much. For, at my first sending, to come ye never <u>grutch</u> .	32: the sense is, "I don't have to ask you twice to come over when I need you." <i>grutch</i> = complain.
34	<i>Trust.</i> Dame Custance, God ye save, and while my life shall last, For my friend Goodluck's sake ye shall not <u>send in wast</u> .	= ie. "send for me in vain (<i>in wast</i>);" <i>wast</i> is used in place of <i>waste</i> for the sake of the rhyme.
36	<i>Cust.</i> He shall give you thanks.	
38	<i>Trust.</i> I will do much for his sake.	
40	<i>Cust.</i> But alack, I fear, great displeasure <u>shall be take</u> .	= perhaps meaning "is pending" or "is on the horizon."
42	<i>Trust.</i> Wherefore?	43: "why?"
44	<i>Cust.</i> For a foolish matter.	
46	<i>Trust.</i> What is your cause?	
48	<i>Cust.</i> I am ill <u>accumbred</u> with a couple of <u>daws</u> .	= burdened. = fools.
50	<i>Trust.</i> Nay, weep not, woman, but tell me what your cause is.	
52	As concerning <u>my friend</u> is anything amiss?	= ie. Gawyn.
54	<i>Cust.</i> No, not on my part; but here was Sym Suresby –	
56	<i>Trust.</i> He was with me and told me so.	56: Trustie has already heard about the incident with Roister from Sym.
58	<i>Cust.</i> And he stood by While Ralph Roister Doister with help of Merygreeke, For promise of marriage did unto me seek.	
62	<i>Trust.</i> And had ye made any promise <u>before them twain</u> ?	= "in front of the two of them?" Trustie is concerned that Custance may have made a promise to marry Roister in front of a witness, which would make such a vow that much more binding.
64	<i>Cust.</i> No, I had rather be torn in pieces and slain, No man hath my faith and troth, but Gawyn Goodluck, And that <u>before</u> Suresby did I say, and there <u>stuck</u> , But <u>of</u> certain letters there were such words spoken –	= in front of. = ie. "held my ground". = regarding.
66		
68	<i>Trust.</i> He told me that too.	
70	<i>Cust.</i> And of a ring and token, –	

72	That Suresby I <u>spied</u> did more than half suspect, That I my faith to Gawyn Good luck did reject.	= perceived. ²
74		
76	Trust. But there was no such matter, dame Custance, indeed?	
78	Cust. If ever my head thought it, God send me <u>ill speed</u> ! Wherefore, I beseech you, with me to be a witness, That in all my life I never intended thing less, And what a brainsick fool Ralph Roister Doister is, Yourself know well enough.	= bad luck. ¹
82	Trust. Ye say full true, <u>i-wis</u> .	= certainly.
84	Cust. Because to be his wife I <u>ne</u> grant nor <u>apply</u> , <u>Hither</u> will he come, he sweareth, <u>by and by</u> , To kill both me and mine, and beat down my house flat. Therefore I pray your aid.	= neither. = "consider" or "consent to". ^{1,4} = to here. = ie. "and soon too".
90	Trust. I warrant you that.	= ie. "I promise you I will help."
92	Cust. Have I so many years lived a sober life, And showed myself honest, maid, widow, and wife, And now to be abused in such a vile <u>sort</u> ? Ye see how poor widows live <u>all void of</u> comfort.	= manner. ¹ = completely without.
96	Trust. I <u>warrant him</u> do you no harm nor wrong at all.	= "assure you he will".
98	Cust. No, but Mathew Merygreeke doth me most appall, That he would <u>join himself with</u> such a wretched lout.	= join sides with.
100	Trust. He doth it for a jest, I know him <u>out of</u> doubt, And here cometh Merygreeke.	= ie. without a.
102		
104	Cust. Then shall we hear his mind.	
106		
	ACT IV, SCENE VI. [Still on Stage: Custance and Trustie.]	
	<i>Enter Merygreeke.</i>	
1	Mery. Custance and Trustie both, I do you here well find.	
2	Cust. Ah, Mathew Merygreeke, ye have <u>used</u> me well.	= "treated"; Custance is her usual ironic self.
4	Mery. Now <u>for altogether</u> ye must your answer tell. Will ye have this man, woman, or else will ye not? Else will he come, <u>never boar so brim</u> nor toast so hot.	= once and for all. ³ = "never was a boar so fierce"; Udall had originally written brymme here; if the intended word is breme (though written as brim in all the editions), then the editors' collective definition of brymme , or brim , as "fierce" is correct (the OED also cites this line for the same said definition). It is worth pointing out that the OED indicates in a separate entry that brim , or breme , when applied to a boar , usually referred to its being in heat; ¹ however, as Udall has kept this play scrupulously clean, he certainly does not intend this meaning.
6		
8		

10	Trust. And Cust. But why join ye with him?	
12	Trust. For mirth?	11: "as a joke?"
14	Cust. Or else in <u>sadness</u> ?	= earnest.
16	Mery. The more <u>fond</u> of you both <u>hardly</u> <u>yat</u> matter guess.	15: "the more foolish (fond) of both of you to have such difficulty in guessing what is going on!" hardly = with difficulty. yat = already obsolete alternative for "that". ¹
18	Trust. Lo, how say ye, dame?	
20	Mery. Why do ye think, dame Custance, That in this wooing I <u>have meant</u> ought but <u>pastance</u> ?	= "intended any purpose other than entertainment?"
22	Cust. Much things ye <u>spake</u> , I wot, to <u>maintain his dotage</u> .	22: spake = obsolete or dialectal form of <i>spoke</i> . maintain his dotage = ie. "support Roister in his infatuation with me."
24	Mery. But well might ye judge I spake it all in <u>mockage</u> . For why? Is Roister Doister a fit husband for you?	= mockery.
26		
28	Trust. I daresay ye never thought it.	
30	Mery. No, to God I vow. And did not I know <u>afore</u> of the <u>insurance</u> Between Gawyn Goodluck and Christian Custance?	= beforehand. = betrothal. ⁵
32	And did not I <u>for the nonce</u> , by my <u>conveyance</u> , Read his letter in a wrong sense <u>for dalliance</u> ? That if you could have take it up <u>at the first bound</u> , We should thereat such a <u>sport and pastime</u> have found, That all the whole town should have been the merrier.	32: for the nonce = usually this phrase means "for the purpose", but here it seems to take its other meaning of "indeed". ¹ conveyance = skilful or underhanded contrivance. ^{1,5} = for sport. ¹
34		34: ie. "that if you had recognized I was kidding right from the beginning (at the first bound)". ¹ = synonyms for "entertainment" or "recreation".
36		
38	Cust. Ill <u>ache</u> your heads both! I was never wearier, Nor never more <u>vexed</u> since the first day I was born!	= ie. "cause pain to"; a rare transitive use of ache . = troubled.
40		
42	Trust. But very well I <u>wist</u> <u>he</u> here did all in <u>scorn</u> .	= knew. = ie. Merygreeke. = mockery or contempt. ¹
44	Cust. But I feared thereof to take <u>dishonesty</u> .	43: "but I was afraid to appear disloyal (to Gawyn)." dishonesty = the root word honest carried various shades of meaning, including chastity, loyalty, and honourable behaviour generally. ¹
46	Mery. This should both have made sport and <u>showed</u> your honesty, And Goodluck, I dare swear, <u>your wit therein would 'low</u> .	= demonstrated. = ie. "would have commended you for your clever handling of the matter." 'low = allow, meaning "admit" or "sanction".
48	Trust. Yea, being no worse than we know it to be now.	
50	Mery. <u>And nothing yet</u> too late; for when I come to <u>him</u> , <u>Hither will he repair</u> with a <u>sheep's look</u> full grim,	= "but it is not". = ie. Roister. = "he will come here". = ie. a sheepish countenance or manner; ¹ an ironic phrase, considering Merygreeke's next line.

52	By plain force and violence to <u>drive</u> you to yield.	= force.
54	Cust. If ye two <u>bid me</u> , we will with him <u>pitch a field</u> , I and my maids together.	54: bid me = "ask me (to do this)", though bid seems to be carrying a sense of "support" or "back up". pitch a field = offer battle. ¹
56	Mery. Let us see! be bold.	
58	Cust. Ye shall see women's war!	
60	Trust. That fight will I behold!	61: true to his word, Trustie will watch, but not take part in, the climactic battle.
62	Mery. If occasion serve, taking his part <u>full brim</u> , I will strike at you, but the rap shall <u>light on</u> him, When we first appear.	63-64: "if the right opportunity comes along, I will, while fighting on Roister's behalf, make to land a blow on you, but it will land on (light on) him instead." full brim (line 63) = with the greatest degree of ferocity. ^{5,13}
66	Cust. Then will I run away As though I were afeard.	
68	Trust. Do you that part well play And I will sue for peace.	
70	Mery. And I will set him on. Then will he look as fierce as a <u>Cotsold lion</u> .	= ie. Cotswold lion, a humorous term for a sheep; ³ see also Merygreeke's line 51 above.
72	Trust. But when goest thou for him?	
74	Mery. That do I <u>very now</u> .	= ie. right now.
76	Cust. Ye shall find us here.	
78	Mery. Well, God have mercy on you!	82: Merygreeke likely exits at this point.
80	Trust. There is no cause of fear; the least boy in the street –	
82	Cust. Nay, the least girl I have, will <u>make him take his feet</u> . But hark! methink they make preparation.	= "cause Roister to run away." 87: Custance sees or hears Roister and his army approaching in the distance.
84	Trust. <u>No force</u> , it will be a good recreation!	= no matter.
86	Cust. I will stand within, and step forth speedily, And so make as though I ran away <u>dreadfully</u> .	91-92: Custance will return inside her house, then emerge when Roister's band arrives, then, pretending to be frightened, quickly scurry back inside again. dreadfully = ie. full of dread
88		
90		
92		
94	[Exit.]	94: it is unclear if Trustie exits with Custance; we will assume he remains on stage.
ACT IV, SCENE VII.		
[Still on Stage: Trustie.]		
<i>Enter Roister Doister [with his army of servants, including] Merygreeke, Dobinet, and Harpax</i>		
1	Roist. Now, sirs, keep <u>your ray</u> , and see your hearts be stout.	Entering Characters: Roister arrives with his battalion, in marching order, and all armed; the editors add that they are accompanied by a pair of drummers, though a single drummer is more likely. = in line, in array. ³

2	But where be these <u>caitiffs</u> ? Methink they dare not <u>rout</u> !	= wretches. = assemble for the purpose of offering battle. ⁴
4	How sayest thou, Merygreeke? – what doth Kit Custance say?	
6	Mery. I am loth to tell you.	
8	Roist. Tush, speak, man – yea or nay?	
10	Mery. Forsooth, sir, I have spoken for you all that I can,	
12	But if ye win her, ye must e'en play the man,	
14	E'en to fight it out, ye must a man's heart take.	
16	Roist. Yes, they shall know, and thou knowest, I have <u>a stomach</u> .	= with the phrase a stomach , Roister means he has courage, but Merygreeke repeatedly and deliberately misunderstands Roister by taking a stomach to mean "appetite".
18	Mery. "A stomach," quod you, yea, as good as e'er man had!	
20	Roist. I trow they shall find and feel that I am a <u>lad</u> .	= man of spirit or courage. ^{1,5}
22	Mery. <u>By this cross</u> , I have seen you eat your meat as well	= another oath sworn on the cross of a sword.
24	As any that e'er I have seen of or heard tell.	
26	"A stomach," quod you? He that will that deny,	
28	I know, was never at dinner in your company.	
30	Roist. Nay, the stomach of a man it is that I mean.	
32	Mery. Nay, the stomach of a horse or a dog, I <u>ween</u> .	= think or expect.
34	Roist. Nay, a man's stomach with a weapon, mean I.	
36	Mery. Ten men can scarce match you with a spoon in a pie.	
38	Roist. Nay, the stomach of a man to <u>try</u> in strife.	= prove, test.
40	Mery. I never saw your stomach <u>cloyed</u> yet in my life.	= full, satiated.
42	Roist. Tush, I mean in strife or fighting to try.	
44	Mery. We shall see how ye will strike now, being angry.	
46	Roist. <u>Have at</u> thy <u>pate</u> then, and save thy head if thou may.	40: Have at (something) = phrase used to signal the beginning of a fight or confrontation; Roister threatens to strike Merygreeke, though Farmer suggests he actually hits Merygreeke, who either way now strikes Roister. pate = head.
48	Mery. Nay, then have at your pate again by this day.	
50	Roist. Nay, thou mayst not strike at me again in no wise.	
52	Mery. I cannot in fight make to you such <u>warrantise</u> :	= a guarantee. ⁵
54	But as for your foes, here let them <u>the bargain bie</u> .	= ie. buy the bargain , an expression meaning "pay the penalty (for their actions)".
56	Roist. Nay, as for they, shall every mother's child die.	
58	And in this my <u>fume</u> a little thing might make me	= fury.
60	To beat down house and all, and else the devil take me!	
62	Mery. If I were as ye be, by Gog's dear mother,	
64	I would not leave one stone upon another,	54: Roister should completely tear down Custance's house.
66	Though she would <u>redeem it</u> with twenty thousand pounds.	= ransom it, ie "pay me to forbear from destroying it".

56	Roist. It shall be even so, <u>by His lily wounds</u> .	= by God's, or Christ's, white wounds.
58	Mery. <u>Be not at one</u> with her upon any <u>amends</u> .	59: the sense is "don't agree to any offers Custance makes," or "do not reconcile with her no matter what" (Hazlitt).
60		be not at one = be not of one mind. ¹ amends = compensation, reparations. ¹
62	Roist. No, though she make to me never so many friends, Nor if all the world for her would <u>undertake</u> ,	= intercede, ³ or be surety for, or answer for. ¹
64	No, not God himself neither, shall not her peace make, On, therefore, march forward! – <u>Soft</u> , <u>stay a while</u> yet.	= "hold on". = "wait a moment".
66	Mery. On.	66-74: Merygreeke and Roister hilariously give conflicting orders to Roister's "army".
68	Roist. Tarry.	68: "wait."
70	Mery. Forth.	
72	Roist. Back.	
74	Mery. On.	
76	Roist. Soft! Now forward set!	
78	<i>Enter Custance.</i>	78,80: these stage directions added by editor.
80	Cust. What business have we here? Out! alas, alas!	80: Custance sees Roister's army getting near.
82	<i>[Custance, feigning fright, runs back inside.]</i>	
84	Roist. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Didst thou see that, Merygreeke, how afraid she was? Didst thou see how she fled apace out of my sight? Ah, good sweet Custance, I pity her <u>by this light</u> .	= an oath.
88	Mery. That tender heart of yours will <u>mar altogether</u> , – Thus will ye be <u>turned</u> with <u>wagging of a feather</u> .	= ruin everything. 90: turned = dissuaded (from fighting). wagging of a feather = to wag the feather means to "display one's honours" (OED). ¹
92	Roist. On, sirs, keep <u>your ray</u> .	= in order or in ranks.
94	Mery. On, forth, while this <u>gear</u> is hot.	= business.
96	Roist. Soft, <u>the arms of Caley's</u> , I have one thing forgot!	= this is the second time this oath has been used in this play; see the note at Act III.iv.106.
98	Mery. What <u>lack we</u> now?	= "are we missing".
100	Roist. Retire, or else we be all slain!	
102	Mery. Back, for the <u>pash</u> of God! back, sirs, back again! What is the great matter?	= passion.
104	Roist. This hasty forthgoing Had almost brought us all to utter <u>undoing</u> , It made me forget a thing most necessary.	= ruin.
108	Mery. Well remembered <u>of</u> a captain, by Saint Mary.	= by.
110	Roist. It is a thing must be had.	

112	Mery.	Let us have it then.	
114	Roist.	But I <u>wot</u> not where nor how.	= know.
116	Mery.	Then wot not I when.	
118		But what is it?	
120	Roist.	Of a chief thing I am <u>to seek</u> .	= lacking. ²⁴
122	Mery.	Tut, so will ye be, when ye have studied a week. – But tell me what it is?	122: something like, "you could think about this all week, and you will still be missing something;" in this aside, ⁴ Merygreeke seems to be suggesting that Roister can be expected to continuously look for excuses not to go forward with the attack.
124	Roist.	I lack yet <u>an headpiece</u> .	= a helmet.
126	Mery.	The kitchen <u>collocavit</u> , <u>the best hens to grease</u> ,	127: <i>collocavit</i> = a kitchen utensil, probably a pot or pail, since Merygreeke is suggesting it be used as a helmet; perhaps meaning <i>collock</i> , a pail. ¹ <i>the best hens to grease</i> = a difficult clause to interpret, but Child gives it a shot: assuming <i>collocavit</i> to be a pail in which scraps are collected and then used to feed chickens, Child proposes "which is used to fatten up (<i>grease</i>) the best hens." Roister is of course the <i>hen</i> due to his cowardice. Williams has an additional take on this clause; he suggests Merygreeke may be speaking with double-meaning here: while the audience hears the line as written, he intends Roister to hear "the best hence to Greece", ie. the best from here to Greece.
128		Run, <u>fet</u> it, Dobinet, and come at once <u>withal</u> ,	= fetch. = with it.
130		And bring with thee my <u>potgun</u> , hanging by the wall.	= a child's gun (perhaps a corruption of <i>popgun</i>), or any ineffectual gun or pistol, used humorously here for any gun. ^{1,4,5}
132		[Exit Dobinet.]	
134		I have seen your head with it, full many a time, Covered as safe as it had been with a <u>skrine</u> ;	= scrine, ie. a chest or box.
136		And I <u>warrant it save</u> your head from any stroke, Except perchance to be <u>amazed</u> with the smoke.	= "guarantee it will save". = stunned, stupefied. ³
138		I warrant your head therewith, except for the mist, As safe as if it were fast locked up in a <u>chist</u> .	= ie. chest, common spelling in mid-16th century. ¹
140		And lo, here our Dobinet cometh with it now.	
142		Re-enter Dobinet.	
144	Dob.	It will cover me to the shoulders well <u>enow</u> .	= enough; Dobinet is commenting on the ample size of the pot or pail.
146	Mery.	Let me see it on.	145: Roister now puts on the collocavit.
148	Roist.	In faith, it <u>doth metely well</u> .	= "fits" or "will work suitably well."
148	Mery.	There can be no fitter thing. Now ye must us tell	

150	What to do.	
152	Roist. Now <u>forth in ray</u> , sirs, and stop no more!	= "go forward in ranks or in array."
154	Mery. Now, <u>Saint George to borrow</u> , <u>drum dub-a-dub afore</u> !	154: <i>Saint George to borrow</i> = this strange expression actually appears frequently in 16th century literature, and, like the very common "Saint George for England", was primarily used as a battle cry. ^{3,5} Several editors suggest <i>borrow</i> specifically means "protect", or "be a surety for", while the OED defines it as "security for one's honour"; Child thus glosses the phrase as "St. George be my pledge". The 13th century monk and writer Bartholomaeus Anglicus interestingly argued in one tract against the employment of saints' names in battle cries: "so at this day, those which wuld be loth to be called otherwise these christians, are not ashamed so call Saint George, to borrowe, for the English, Saint Denis for Fraunce, S. Andrew for Scotlande, " etc. <i>drum dub-a-dub afore</i> = Merygreeke instructs the drummer to beat a military refrain in front of the advancing troops.
156	Trust. What mean you to do, sir, commit <u>manslaughter</u> ?	= the <i>gh</i> in words such as <i>manslaughter</i> could be pronounced as an "f" in this era, ie. <i>slaughter</i> , which would then rhyme with <i>laughter</i> .
158	Roist. To kill forty such is a matter of laughter.	
160	Trust. And who is it, sir, whom ye intend thus to <u>spill</u> ?	= destroy.
162	Roist. Foolish Custance here forceth me against my will.	
164	Trust. And is there no <u>mean</u> your extreme wrath to <u>slake</u> ? She shall some amends unto your good maship make.	= means, way. = mollify.
166	Roist. I will <u>none</u> amends.	= ie. "accept no".
168	Trust. Is her offence so sore?	
170	Mery. <u>And</u> he were a lout she could have done no more.	= if.
172	She hath called him fool, and <u>dressed</u> him like a fool, Mocked him like a fool, <u>used</u> him like a fool.	= addressed. ⁵ = treated.
174	Trust. Well, yet the sheriff, the justice, or constable, Her misdemeanour to punish might be able.	175-6: Trustie suggests Roister let the law take its course, if perhaps he wants to accuse Custance of some crime, such as slander.
178	Roist. No, sir, I mine own self will, in this present cause, Be sheriff, and justice, and whole judge of the laws; This matter to amend, all officers be I shall, Constable, bailiff, sergeant.	
182	Mery. And hangman and all.	
184	Trust. Yet a noble courage, and the heart of a man, Should more honour win by <u>bearing with</u> a woman. Therefore <u>take</u> the law, and let her answer thereto.	= enduring. = take to, ie. go with.
188	Roist. Merygreeke, the best way were even so to do.	
190	What honour should it be with a woman to fight?	

192	Mery. And what then, will ye thus <u>forgo</u> and <u>lese</u> your right?	= abandon. = lose.
194	Roist. Nay, I will take the law on her <u>withouten</u> <u>grace</u> .	= without mercy. ¹
196	Trust. Or, if your maship could pardon this one <u>trespass</u> , I pray you forgive her!	= injury (of Custance's).
198	Roist. <u>Hoh!</u>	= the cry of "hoh!" could be used to command some activity to cease; ¹ thus Roister, Williams suggests, may be calling for his "soldiers" to stand down.
200		
202	Mery. Tush, tush, sir, do not! Be good, master, to her.	201-2: "don't do this (ie. back down), sir! Go on, give it to her good!" But Whitworth argues this speech should be assigned to Trustie, who is trying to dissuade Roister from commencing his attack; if this interpretation is correct, continues Whitworth, then line 202 should be written without commas - "be good master to her" - meaning, "prove you are a better master than she is." Whitworth would presumably further give Trustie line 206.
204	Roist. Hoh!	
206	Mery. Tush, I say, do not. And what! shall your people here return straight home?	
208	Roist. Yea, <u>levy</u> the camp, sirs, and <u>hence</u> again each one.	209: levy the camp = "break up the camp". ¹ Roister's use of such military jargon emphasizes the absurdity of the scene. hence = "go back", "return home".
210	But be still in readiness, if I hap to call. I cannot tell what sudden <u>chance</u> may befall.	= occurrence.
212		
214	Mery. Do not <u>off</u> your <u>harness</u> , sirs, I you advise, At the least for this fortnight in no manner wise. Perchance in an hour, when all ye think least, Our master's appetite to fight will be best. But soft, ere ye go, <u>have one</u> at Custance' house.	= remove. = armour.
216		
218	Roist. Soft, what wilt thou do?	= ie. "I will take one shot".
220	Mery. Once discharge my <u>harquebouse</u> ,	= ie. harquebus, an early long-gun, longer than a musket, and from whose barrel extended a foot-long thin iron rod on which to rest the weapon. ⁵ 221-231: Merygreeke fires his weapon repeatedly through the end of the scene. ¹²
222	And, for my heart's ease, <u>have once more</u> with my <u>potgun</u> .	222: have once more = ie. "I will fire again". potgun = see the note at line 129 above; interestingly, Udall spells potgun here as potgoon (whereas earlier he spelled it potgunne), suggesting a slightly modified pronunciation to make it rhyme with fordone .
224	Roist. Hold thy hands, else is all our purpose clean <u>fordone</u> .	= spoiled or ruined; ⁵ a compound word, for-done . ¹ Roister worries that if Merygreeke fires his weapon, then war with Custance may break out after all - which is exactly what Merygreeke wants.
226	Mery. And it cost me my life.	226: ie. "I will do this even if it costs me my life."

228	Roist. I say, thou shalt not.	228: Roister orders Merygreeke not to fire his weapon.
230	Mery. <u>By the matte</u> , but I will. Have once more with <u>hail shot</u> . I will have <u>some pennyworth</u> , I will not <u>lese</u> all. ACT IV, SCENE VIII. [Still on Stage: Trustie, Roister Doister and his army, with Merygreeke, Dobinet and Harpax, and at least one drummer.] <i>Enter Custance.</i> 1 Cust. What <u>caitiffs</u> are those that so shake my house wall? 2 3 Mery. Ah, <u>sirrah</u> ! now, Custance, if ye had so much wit, 4 I would see you ask pardon, and yourselves submit. 5 6 Cust. Have I still this ado with a couple of fools? 7 8 Mery. Hear ye what she saith? 9 10 Cust. Maidens, come forth with your tools! 11 12 <i>Enter Custance's army of servants, all armed for battle.</i> 13 14 Roist. In array! 15 16 Mery. Dubbadub, sirrah! 17 18 Roist. In array! 19 They come suddenly on us. 20 21 Mery. Dubbadub! 22 23 Roist. In array! 24 <u>That ever I was born</u> , we are <u>taken tardy</u> . 25 26 Mery. Now, sirs, <u>quit</u> ourselves like <u>tall</u> men and hardy! 27 28 Cust. On afore, Trupenie! Hold thine own, Annot! 29 On toward them, Tibet! for 'scape us they cannot! 30 Come forth, Madge Mumblecrust, to stand fast together! 31 32 Mery. God send us a <u>fair</u> day! 33 34 Roist. See, they march on <u>hither</u> ! 35 36 Tibet. But, mistress 37 38 Cust. What sayest thou?	230: By the matte = variation of "by the mass", a common oath. hail shot = small scattering shot, as from a shot-gun. ¹ = an equivalent, ie. "what's owed me". ⁵ = lose all, ie. "lose or waste this opportunity." ¹² = miserable people. 3-2: Merygreeke addresses Custance; sirrah , as we have seen, can be used towards women. 8: addressed of course to Roister. 10: Tom is also included in this signal for attack. 12: stage direction suggested by Whitworth; he also posits that Custance's battalion is accompanied by its own drummer; certainly the greater degree to which the servant-armies resemble real armies - they could be accompanied by waving pennants, for example - the greater the absurdity and humour of the scene. 14: once again Roister calls out to his soldiers to align themselves for battle. 16: Merygreeke shouts for the drummer to begin playing again. = an expression of regret. = taken unawares, ie. surprised. ⁵ = acquit. = brave. = successful. = "towards us." Roister's cowardice is coming to the fore.

40	Tibet.	Shall I go <u>fet</u> our goose?	= fetch.
42	Cust.	What to do?	
44	Tibet.	To <u>yonder captain</u> I will turn her loose,	= probably indicating Roister, but Tibet may mean Dobinet - see lines 74-75 below.
46		<u>And</u> she gape and hiss at him, as she doth at me, I durst <u>jeopard my hand</u> she will make him flee.	= if. = "I dare bet my hand".
48	Cust.	On forward!	48ff: the armed bodies approach each other, and begin to brawl.
50	Roist.	They come!	
52	Mery.	Stand!	
54	Roist.	Hold!	
56	Mery.	Keep!	
58	Roist.	There!	
60	Mery.	Strike!	
62	Roist.	Take heed!	
64	Cust.	<u>Well said</u> , Trupenie!	= common phrase for "well done"; Custance responds to an effective blow struck by Tom.
66	Trup.	Ah, whoresons!	
68	Cust.	Well done, indeed.	
70	Mery.	Hold thine own, Harpax! down with them, Dobinet!	
72	Cust.	Now Madge, there Annot! now stick them, Tibet!	
74	Tibet.	All my chief quarrel is to this same little knave, That <u>beguiled</u> me last day – nothing shall him save.	74-75: Tibet approaches Dobinet, her primary target in this fight. beguiled = deceived.
76			
78	Dob.	Down with this little <u>quean</u> , that <u>hath at me</u> <u>such spite</u> ! Save you from her, master – it is a very <u>sprite</u> !	77: quean = originally meaning simply "woman", but at this time transitioning to also mean prostitute or hussy. ^{1,5} He of course refers to Tibet. hath at me = "is coming at me" or "is trying to strike me". such spite = "with such malice." sprite (line 78) = spirit, ie. beyond human.
80	Cust.	I myself will <u>Mounsire Graund Captaine</u> undertake.	80: Custance heads toward Roister, to whom she refers with a mock French title. Mounsire was a contemporary alternate spelling for Monsieur . ¹ Child sees a borrowing here from a verse in Heywood's <i>Proverbs</i> : "Thus be I by this, once le senior de graunde, / Many that command me, I shall commaunde."
82	Roist.	They win ground!	80: Custance's army is beating back Roister's.
84	Mery.	Save yourself, sir, for God's sake!	
86	Roist.	Out, alas! I am slain! Help!	85: Custance has struck Roister. Merygreeke will come to Roister's "rescue".

88	Mery.	Save yourself!	
90	Roist.	Alas!	
92	Mery.	Nay, then, have at you, mistress!	92: Merygreeke fulfills his promise to pretend to try to strike at Custance, but actually lands a harsh blow on Roister.
94	Roist.	Thou hittest me, alas!	
96	Mery.	I will strike at Custance here.	
98	Roist.	Thou hittest me!	
100	Mery.	So I will! –	100: this line is an aside.
		Nay, mistress Custance!	
102	Roist.	Alas! thou hittest me still.	
104		Hold.	
106	Mery.	Save yourself, sir.	
108	Roist.	Help! Out, alas! I am slain!	
110	Mery.	Truce, hold your hands, truce <u>for a pissing while</u> <u>or twain!</u> –	110: <i>for a pissing while</i> = for a short time, a reference to the time it takes to urinate. ¹ <i>or twain</i> = or two.
		Nay, how say you, Custance, for saving of your life, Will ye yield and <u>grant</u> to be this gentman's wife?	110-2: Merygreeke calls for a truce; the two sides pause in their fighting, and Merygreeke, with great ironic cheek, demands to know if Custance will submit! <i>grant</i> = agree. ⁴
114	Cust.	Ye told me he loved me – call ye this love?	
116	Mery.	He loved a while even like a turtle-dove.	
118	Cust.	<u>Gay love</u> , God save it! – <u>so soon hot, so soon cold.</u>	118: <i>Gay love</i> = "ah, joyful and glorious love!" <i>so soon hot, so soon cold</i> = a proverb from Heywood: "soon hot, soon cold."
120	Mery.	I am sorry for you – he could love you yet, so he could.	
122	Roist.	Nay, <u>by Cock's precious</u> , she shall be none of mine!	= elliptically "by Cock's precious potstick" (see Act III.iv.212), but really any attribute - blood, eyelids, wounds, etc. - might be implied. ⁵
124	Mery.	Why so?	
126	Roist.	Come away! by the matte, she is <u>mankine</u> .	= <i>mankine</i> could mean either (1) furious or (2) like a man, ie. masculine; ^{1,3,9} usually written <i>mankind</i> , but altered here for the sake of the rhyme.
		<u>I durst adventure</u> the loss of my right hand, If she did not <u>slee</u> her other husband, – And see if she prepare not again to fight!	= "I would bet". = already obsolete form for "slay". ¹
130	Mery.	What then? Saint George to borrow, <u>our ladies' knight!</u>	= common epithet for St. George, possibly because he was the patron saint of chivalry; ⁴ George saved the life of a princess by slaying the dragon to which she was to be sacrificed.
132			Whitworth, however, suggests that <i>our ladies'</i> should be <i>our Lady's</i> , referring to the Virgin Mary; the original edition has <i>Ladies</i> here, without any punctuation, and <i>lady</i> often appeared in texts as <i>ladie</i> in this era, so that Whitworth's proposition may have merit.

134	Roist. Slee else whom she will, by Gog, she shall not slee me!	
136	Mery. How then?	135: "what should we do then?"
138	Roist. Rather than to be slain, I will flee.	
140	Cust. To it again, my <u>knightesses</u> ! Down with them all!	= unique use of the word, referring to Custance's maids who fight like knights. ¹
142	Roist. Away, away, away! she will else kill us all.	
144	Mery. Nay, stick to it, like an hardy man and <u>a tall</u> .	= brave.
146	Roist. <u>Oh bones</u> , thou hittest me! Away, or else die we shall.	= variation on "by God's bones", an oath.
148	Mery. Away, for the <u>pashe</u> of our sweet Lord Jesus Christ.	= passion.
150	Cust. Away, lout and <u>lubber</u> , or <u>I shall be thy priest</u> .	149: lubber = stupid fellow. ¹ I shall be thy priest = proverbial for "I will kill thee", as a priest kills a living creature at a sacrifice. ⁵
152	[<i>Exeunt om.</i>]	= Roister and his "army" run off the stage.
154	So this field is ours, we have driven them all away.	
156	Tibet. Thanks to God, mistress, ye have had a <u>fair day</u> .	= successful day of battle. ¹
158	Cust. Well, now go ye in, and make yourself <u>some good cheer</u> .	= a celebratory meal with food and drink.
160	Omnes pariter. We go.	
162	[<i>Exit Custance's Amazons.</i>]	161: this humorous stage direction was added by Farmer.
164	Trust. Ah, <u>sir</u> , what a field we have had here!	163: one editor thinks that the use of sir in this line implies the line should belong to Custance; but Whitworth asserts that that Trustie is addressing Custance in her guise as a victorious general.
166	Cust. Friend Tristram, I pray you be a witness with me.	165: Custance asks Trustie to assist her in explaining to Gawyn everything that has happened.
168	Trust. Dame Custance, I shall <u>depose for your honesty</u> , And now fare ye well, <u>except something else ye would</u> .	= "testify on your behalf regarding your faithfulness". = "unless there is anything else you would ask of me."
170	Cust. Not now, but when I need to <u>send</u> I will be bold. I thank you for <u>these pains</u> . And now I will get me in.	= ie. "send for you". = "your efforts."
172	[<i>Exit Trustie.</i>]	
174	Now Roister Doister will no more wooing begin.	
	[<i>Exit.</i>]	
	END OF ACT IV.	

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter Gawyn Goodluck and Sym.

Entering Characters: we finally meet *Gawyn Goodluck*, Custance's affianced. *Sym*, Gawyn's servant, has reported to his master the incident of Act IV.iii between Custance on the one hand and Roister and Merygreeke on the other.

1 *Gawyn.* Sym Suresby, my trusty man, now advise thee well,

= "be well advised".

2 And see that no false surmises thou me tell.
Was there such ado about Custance of a truth?

2: Gawyn wants Sym to tell him everything regarding the events of Act IV.iii, but he wants only facts.

false surmises = incorrect information based on speculation.

Note that Gawyn appropriately addresses his servant with *thou*, while Sym will address his superior with the respectful *you*.

of a truth (line 3) = really, in truth.

4
6 *Sym.* To report that I heard and saw, to me is ruth,
But both my duty and name and property

= ie. what. = ie. "brings me sorrow".⁵

= natural disposition or character;^{3,5} Hazlitt prefers "peculiar place or function".

Warneth me to you to show fidelity.

7: "instruct me that my loyalty (*fidelity*) lies only to you," ie. he knows that he must do what is best for Gawyn by reporting the truth of what he saw, even if it hurts others to whom he would normally be sympathetic.

8 It may be well enough, and I wish it so to be;
She may herself discharge, and try her honesty –

9: "Custance in the end may demonstrate she is guilty of no transgression, and prove (*try*)³ her faithfulness to you."

= ie. Roister and Merygreeke's. = great, ie. persuasive.

10 Yet their claim to her methought was very large,
For with letters, rings and tokens, they did her charge,
12 Which when I heard and saw I would none to you bring.

14 *Gawyn.* No, by Saint Marie, I allow thee in that thing.

= ie. Mary, mother of Jesus. = "I approve of your conduct."^{8,9}

= appropriate form of address to a servant.

16 Ah, sirrah, now I see truth in the proverb old,
All things that shineth is not by and by pure gold!

16: this early variation of a still popular proverb is from Heywood: "All is not gold that glisters."

by and by = necessarily.¹

17: "if there ever has lived an honest woman".

18 If any do live a woman of honesty,
I would have sworn Christian Custance had been she.

20 *Sym.* Sir, though I to you be a servant true and just,
Yet do not ye therefore your faithful spouse mistrust.
22 But examine the matter, and if ye shall it find
To be all well, be not ye for my words unkind.

= affianced.⁵

22-23: "please investigate the matter, and if it turns out that all is as it should be, do not be harsh towards Custance because of what I reported to you."

24
26 *Gawyn.* I shall do that is right, and as I see cause why –
But here cometh Custance forth, we shall know by and by.

= what.

= right away, soon enough.

ACT V, SCENE II.

[Still on Stage: Gawyn and Sym.]

Enter Custance.

Cust. I come forth to see and hearken for news good,
For about this hour is the time of likelihood,
That Gawyn Goodluck by the sayings of Suresby
Would be at home, and lo, yond I see him, I! –
What! Gawyn Goodluck, the only hope of my life!
Welcome home, and kiss me, your true espoused wife.

= listen.

= "based on what Sym told me".

Gawyn. Nay, soft, dame Custance; I must first, by your licence,
See whether all things be clear in your conscience.
I hear of your doings to me very strange.

= wait a minute. = "with your permission".

Cust. What! fear ye that my faith towards you should change?

Gawyn. I must needs mistrust ye be elsewhere entangled,
For I hear that certain men with you have wrangled
About the promise of marriage by you to them made.

= "I am necessarily suspicious as to whether".
= disputed.¹

Cust. Could any man's report your mind therein persuade?

Gawyn. Well, ye must therein declare yourself to stand clear,
Else I and you, dame Custance, may not join this year.

= ie. be married.

Cust. Then would I were dead, and fair laid in my grave! –
Ah, Suresby, is this the honesty that ye have,
To hurt me with your report, not knowing the thing?

= ie. the facts, the truth.

Sym. If ye be honest, my words can hurt you nothing,
But what I heard and saw, I might not but report.

= "had no option but to".

Cust. Ah, Lord, help poor widows, destitute of comfort! –
Truly, most dear spouse, nought was done but for pastance.

= nothing. = except. = ie. the sake of entertainment.

Gawyn. But such kind of sporting is homely dalliance.

= rude, simple, or unbecoming.^{3,11} = sport.¹

Cust. If ye knew the truth, ye would take all in good part.

Gawyn. By your leave, I am not half well skilled in that art.

Cust. It was none but Roister Doister, that foolish mome.

= idiot.

Gawyn. Yea, Custance, better, they say, a bad 'scuse than none.

= "a bad excuse is better than none at all" (a common proverb). Gawyn is not yet persuaded.

Cust. Why, Tristram Trustie, sir, your true and faithful friend,
Was privy both to the beginning and the end.
Let him be the judge, and for me testify.

Gawyn. I will the more credit that he shall verify.
And because I will the truth know e'en as it is,
I will to him myself, and know all without miss. –
Come on, Sym Suresby, that before my friend thou may
Avouch the same words, which thou didst to me say.

= that which.²⁴

= ie. go to. = with certainty.¹

= ie. so that.

= back up, maintain.

[Gawyn and Sym Exit.]

ACT V, SCENE III.

[Still on Stage: *Custance*.]

- 1 **Cust.** O Lord! how necessary it is now of days
2 That each body live uprightly all manner ways,
For let never so little a gap be open,
4 And be sure of this, the worst shall be spoken.

How innocent stand I in this for deed or thought,
6 And yet see what mistrust towards me it hath wrought!
But thou, Lord, knowest all folks' thoughts and eke intents,
8 And thou art the deliverer of all innocents.
Thou didst help the advoutress, that she might be amended,

10 Much more then help, Lord, that never ill intended.
Thou didst help Susanna, wrongfully accused,

12 And no less dost thou see, Lord, how I am now abused.
Thou didst help Hester, when she should have died,

14 Help also, good Lord, that my truth may be tried.
Yet if Gawyn Goodluck with Tristram Trustie speak,

= **now of days** was a variation of "nowadays", the latter first appearing earlier, in the 14th century.
2-4: "every person must live a perfectly blameless life, because if there is even the slightest appearance of impropriety, people will talk about it, and your reputation will suffer accordingly."

= also.

9: allusion to John 8:1-11: Jesus was presented by the Pharisees with an adulteress (**advoutress**)³ to judge; if she were to be convicted, she would have to be stoned to death (it was this point that Jesus famously said "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her"). After scribbling in the dust for a bit, Jesus forgave her, telling her "Go, and now sin no more." (translation of the *Vulgate Bible* from Vulgate.org).

= ie. "she who", meaning herself.

11: allusion to the *History of Susanna*, a story told in Daniel 13 of Roman Catholic Bibles but considered apocryphal by the Protestants.

Susanna, the wife of the rich Jew Joakim in Babylon, was lusted after by two judges, or elders. One day they accosted her in her park, and asked her to sleep with them; if she refused, they would accuse her of adultery. Preferring not to actually sin, she dared them to take the latter course. When she was brought before the people, the elders testified that they had seen her commit adultery with a young man. When Susanna cried to God for help, He inspired a young Daniel to rise up and accuse the elders of bearing false witness. Through his examination of the pair, Daniel convinced the people that the elders were lying, and they were put to death.

13: this third biblical allusion is to the story of **Esther**, who has her own book in the Old Testament. Esther was the queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus. The king's vizier Haman, incensed that Esther's cousin Mordecai had refused to bow to him, had sentenced Mordecai to death and planned to wipe out all the Jews of Persia; Esther convinced the king to save her people, and Haman was executed in Mordecai's place.

Thou didst help Hester = M.G. Easton, in his famous 19th century *Bible Dictionary*, wrote of Esther, "that she was raised up as an instrument in the hand of God to avert the destruction of the Jewish people, and to afford them protection and forward their wealth and peace in their captivity, is also manifest from the Scripture account."

= tested.

16	I trust of ill report the force shall be but weak.	16: "then any stories Gawyn may have heard of my alleged misbehaviour will carry little persuasive force."
18	And lo, yond they come, <u>sadly</u> talking together, I will <u>abide</u> , and not shrink for their coming hither.	= seriously. = "wait (for them)". ¹
ACT V, SCENE IV. [<i>Still on Stage: Custance.</i>]		
	<i>Enter Gawyn Goodluck, Tristram Trusti and Sym Suresby.</i>	
1	Gawyn. And was it none other than ye to me report?	
2		
	Trust. No, and here were ye wished to have seen the sport.	3: "everyone wishes you had been here to see the entertainment."
4		
	Gawyn. <u>Would I had</u> , rather than half of that in my purse!	5: awkwardly, "I would have given half of what is in my wallet to have been here!" would I had = "I wish I had".
6		
	Sym. And I do much rejoice the matter was no worse, And like as to open it I was to you faithful, So of dame Custance' honest truth I am joyful,	8-9: "and to the same degree as I was faithful to you in reporting what had transpired, I am overjoyed that Custance has been found faithful."
8		
	For God <u>forfend</u> that I should hurt her by false report.	= forbid.
10		
	Gawyn. Well, I will no longer hold her in <u>discomfort</u> .	= unease, ie. the suspense of wondering what the outcome will be of Trustie explaining everything to Gawyn.
12		
	Cust. Now come they hitherward, I trust all shall be well.	
14		
	Gawyn. Sweet Custance, neither heart can think nor tongue tell, How much I joy in your <u>constant fidelity</u> ! Come now, kiss me, <u>the pearl of perfect honesty</u> .	= "unwavering faithfulness (to me)." = ie. "you pearl of perfect faithfulness."
16		
	Cust. God let me no longer to continue in life, Than I shall towards you continue a true wife.	
18		
	Gawyn. Well, now to make you for this some part of amends, I shall desire first you, and then such of our friends As shall to you seem best, to sup at home with me, Where <u>at your fought field</u> we shall laugh and merry be.	= ie. on the battlefield.
20		
	Sym. And mistress, I beseech you, <u>take with me no grief</u> ; I <u>did a true man's part</u> , not wishing you <u>reprieve</u> .	= ie. "bear me no ill-will" (Hazlitt). 29: did a true man's part = acted the part of a faithful or honest man or servant. ¹ reprieve = "(to suffer) reproof or reproach". ⁵
22		
	Cust. Though hasty reports, through <u>surmises</u> growing, May of poor innocents <u>be utter overthrowing</u> , Yet because to thy master thou hast a true heart, And I know mine own truth, I forgive thee for my part.	= speculation. = "completely ruin them".
24		
	Gawyn. Go we all to my house, and of this <u>gear</u> no more. – Go, prepare all things, Sym Suresby; hence, run afore.	= matter, business.
26		
	Sym. I go.	
28		
30		
32		
34		
36		
38		
40		
	[<i>Exit.</i>]	

42	Gawyn. But who cometh yond, – Mathew Merygreeke?	
44	Cust. Roister Doister's champion, <u>I shrew his best cheek!</u>	= see the discussion of this imprecation in the note at Act IV.ii.29. We may note the OED cites an example of cursing another's cheek from 1330!
46		Gassner suggests cheek means "impudence", but according to the OED, this meaning for cheek did not appear in the English language for another three centuries!
48	Trust. Roister Doister <u>self</u> , your wooer, is with him too. Surely some thing there is with us they have to do.	= himself.
	ACT V, SCENE V. [Still on Stage: Gawyn, Custance and Trustie.]	
	<i>Enter Merygreeke and Roister Doister.</i>	
1	Mery. Yond I see Gawyn Goodluck, to whom <u>lieth</u> my message;	= the sense is "I am to give".
2	I will first salute him after his long voyage, And then make all thing well concerning your behalf.	3: Merygreeke promises Roister to fix things so that Gawyn will not think badly of him.
4		
6	Roist. Yea, for the <u>pash</u> of God.	= passion. ³
8	Mery. <u>Hence out of sight</u> , ye <u>calf</u> ,	= "in the meantime, hide". = while the use of calf as an epithet was normally insulting, the OED suggests it could also be used as a term of endearment.
10	Till I have spoke with them, and then I will you <u>fet</u> .	= fetch.
12	Roist. In God's name!	
14	<i>[Exit Roister Doister.]</i>	
16	Mery. What, master Gawyn Goodluck, well met! And from your long voyage I bid you right welcome home.	
18	Good. I thank you.	
20	Mery. I come to you from an honest <u>mome</u> .	= fool.
22	Good. Who is that?	
24	Mery. Roister Doister, that <u>doughty kite</u> .	= worthy or valorous. ¹ = a type of falcon, used to describe any person who preys on or rapaciously takes advantage of others. ¹ The two words together - doughty kite - are oxymoronic. ¹²
26	Cust. Fie! I can scarce abide ye should his name recite.	
28	Mery. Ye must take him to favour, and pardon all past; He heareth of your return, and is <u>full ill aghast</u> .	= ie. terrified. ¹
30	Gawyn. I am right well content he have with us some cheer.	
32	Cust. Fie upon him, beast! then will not I be there.	32: unlike Gawyn, Custance is not happy to have Roister attend their dinner.
34	Gawyn. Why, Custance, do ye hate him more than ye love me?	

36	Cust. <u>But for your mind</u> , sir, where he were <u>would I not be</u> .	= "unless you desire it". ³ = "I would rather not be."
38	Trust. He would make us all laugh.	
40	Mery. Ye ne'er had better sport.	
42	Gawyn. I pray you, sweet Custance, let him to us <u>resort</u> .	= come. ¹
44	Cust. To your will I assent.	
46	Mery. Why, such a fool it is, As no man for good pastime would forgo or miss.	
48	Gawyn. Fet him to go with us.	
50	Mery. He will be a glad man.	
52	[Exit.]	
54	Trust. We must to make us mirth, <u>maintain</u> him all we can.	= the sense seems to be "encourage" or "keep him going". ^{1,8}
56	And lo, yond he cometh, and Merygreeke with him.	
58	Cust. At his first entrance ye shall see I will him <u>trim</u> . But first let us <u>hearken the gentleman's wise talk</u> .	= scold. ⁵ = "hear what wise words Roister has to say."
60	Trust. I pray you, mark, if ever ye saw <u>crane so stalk</u> .	= "please note Roister's bearing, and ask yourself if you ever saw a crane stalk in this way." The image of a crane stalking - walking in its deliberate high-stepping manner - was a common one in literature of the era as a symbol for haughtiness.
ACT V, SCENE VI.		
[Still on Stage: Custance, Gawyn and Trustie.]		
<i>Enter Merygreeke and Roister Doister.</i>		
1	Roist. May I then be <u>bold</u> ?	1ff: Roister worries whether he will really be welcome to the fiesta of Gawyn and Custance.
2		bold = sure.
	Mery. I warrant you, on my word, They say they shall be sick, <u>but</u> ye be at their <u>board</u> .	= unless. = table, ie. celebratory feast.
4		
6	Roist. They were not angry, then?	
8	Mery. Yes, at first, and <u>made strange</u> , But when I said your anger to favour should change, And therewith had commended you accordingly, They were all in love with your maship by and by, And <u>cried you mercy</u> that they had done you wrong.	= were reluctant. ¹ = "asked for your forgiveness".
10		
12		
14	Roist. <u>For why</u> no man, woman, nor child can hate me long.	= because.
16	Mery. "We fear," quod they, "he will be avenged one day, Then for a penny give all our lives we may."	
18		
	Roist. Said they so indeed?	
20		
	Mery. Did they? yea, even with one voice – "He will forgive all," quod I. Oh, how they did rejoice!	
22		

24	Roist. Ha, ha, ha!	
26	Mery. "Go fet him," say they, "while he is in good mood, For have his anger who lust, we will not, <u>by the Rood</u> ."	27: "anyone who wants to can be the recipient of his ire, but we will not." by the Rood = an oath; a rood is a crucifix.
28		
30	Roist. I pray God that it be all true, that thou hast me told, And that she fight no more.	
32	Mery. I warrant you, be <u>bold</u> . To them, and salute them!	= sure.
34		
36	Roist. Sirs, I greet you all well!	35: Roister has finally gained enough courage to approach Custance and Gawyn.
38	Omnes. Your mastership is welcome.	
40	Cust. <u>Saving</u> my quarrel – For sure I will <u>put you up</u> into <u>the Exchequer</u> .	= except for. 40: put you up = "formally accuse you", "take you to court". ¹ The Exchequer is the administrative department responsible for the collection and dispersing of the crown's revenue; Farmer describes its primary functions as so: "recover debts due to the king, such as unpaid taxes, &c." Later it took on the role of a law court, in which a petitioner might ask for relief from such a debt. Custance is beginning a rather complicated metaphor which will be explained gradually; for the moment she is hinting that she will take Roister to court over a matter of a "debt" she allegedly owes him. = "why?" ie, "for what cause of action?"
42	Mery. Why so? better nay – <u>wherefore</u> ?	
44	Cust. For <u>an</u> usurer.	44: "for being a usurer;" at the time <i>Roister</i> was written, the controlling statute (the <i>Act Against Usury</i> of 1545, passed during the reign of Henry VIII) limited interest on loans to 10% ("ten pounds in the hundred").
46	Ralph. I am no usurer, good mistress, by His arms!	
48	Mery. When took he gain of money to any man's harms?	46-48: Roister and Merygreeke are naturally confused, since Custance received no loan of money from Roister.
50	Cust. Yes, a foul usurer he is, ye shall see else.	
52	Roist. Didst not thou promise she would pick no <u>mo</u> quarrels?	= Roister, puzzled by Custance's continued hostility, addresses Merygreeke in this aside. mo = more.
54	Cust. He will <u>lend</u> no blows, but he have in recompense Fifteen for one, which is too much of conscience.	54-55: Custance finally explains herself: she has been using usury as a rather strained metaphor for the "unfair" rate of blows she has been exchanging with Roister; for every blow he "lent", or landed, on her, he expected - and received - fifteen in return - an "unconscionable" interest rate of 1400%. The joke is helped by the fact that the verb lend , used by Custance in line 54, was actually commonly used in phrases like "lend a blow to", meaning "to strike another", as well as in the modern sense of "lend money to". ¹

56	Roist. Ah, dame, by the ancient law of arms, a man	57-58: <i>a man...woman</i> = the sense is, "there is no
58	Hath no honour to <u>foil</u> his hands on a woman.	honour for a man to foul or defile his hands by taking arms against a woman," ie. "in laying his hands upon a woman in violence". ¹
		<i>foil</i> = I have adopted the OED's interpretation of "defile", but Farmer thinks <i>foil</i> refers to the tracks left by a deer, so that it suggests "leaving a mark on".
60	Cust. And where other usurers take their gains yearly, This man is angry but he have his <u>by and by</u> .	60-61: The <i>Act Against Usury</i> referred to above banned collecting any interest on loans "for one whole year"; see 37 Henry VIII, c. 9.
		Custance's humorous complaint, therefore, is that, like a transgressing usurer, Roister "demanded" to collect his interest - all of the blows due him - immediately (<i>by and by</i>).
62		
64	Gawyn. Sir, do not for her sake bear me your displeasure.	63: "don't get mad at me just because Custance still holds a grudge against you" - this is perhaps a bit unchivalrous of Gawyn.
	Mery. Well, he shall with you talk thereof more at leisure. Upon your good <u>usage</u> , he will now shake your hand.	= "behaviour" or "treatment of Roister". ¹
66		
68	Roist. And much heartily welcome from a <u>strange</u> land.	= foreign; Roister nods at Gawyn's recent return from his sea voyage.
70	Mery. Be not afeard, Gawyn, to let him shake your <u>fist</u> .	= hand.
72	Gawyn. Oh, the most honest gentleman that e'er I <u>wist</u> . I beseech your maship to take pain to sup with us.	= knew.
74		
76	Mery. He shall not say you nay, and I too, by Jesus, Because ye shall be friends, and let all quarrels pass.	75: always thinking, Merygreeke slyly invites himself to Gawyn's dinner.
78	Roist. I will be as good friends with them as <u>ere I was</u> .	= "I was before."
80	Mery. Then let me <u>fet your quire</u> that we may have a song.	= "fetch your choir", ie. Roister's musicians.
82	Roist. Go.	
84	[Exit Merygreeke.]	
86	Gawyn. I have heard no melody all this year long.	
88	Re-enter Merygreeke [with Dobinet, Harpax and the musicians.]	
90	Mery. Come on, sirs, quickly.	
92		
94	Roist. Sing on, sirs, for my friends' sake.	
96	Dob. Call ye these your friends?	
98	Roist. Sing on, and no <u>mo words</u> make.	= more. = ie. spoken words.
	[Here they sing.]	99ff: it has been long debated whether the song in question refers to the prayer for the sovereign (lines 101-120) immediately below, or whether it pertains to a separate song, lyrics not included, which precedes the prayer. Whitworth is of the former position, Child and Flügel the latter.

100		
102	Gawyn. The Lord preserve our most noble Queen of renown, And her virtues reward with the heavenly crown.	101ff: Flügel and Child believe the prayer is recited by the players while they kneel. The editors do all agree that the recipient of this particular prayer was likely Elizabeth, as it comes from the earliest extant edition of <i>Roister</i> , published in 1566. Hazlitt notes that there may have been a different prayer presented when the play was first staged, assuming one of Elizabeth's predecessors was sovereign at that time. Cooper points out that ancient interludes frequently ended with prayers for the king or queen.
104	Cust. The Lord strengthen her most excellent Majesty, Long to reign over us in all prosperity.	
106		
108	Trust. That her godly proceedings <u>the faith to defend</u> , He may 'stablish and maintain through to the end.	107: the title <i>Defender of the Faith</i> was first bestowed by Parliament on Henry VIII in 1521, and became an official title of all English sovereigns in 1544. ^{1,3}
110	Mery. God grant her, as she doth, the Gospel to protect, Learning and virtue to advance, and vice to correct.	
112		
114	Roist. God grant her loving subjects both the mind and grace, Her most godly proceedings worthily to embrace.	
116	Harp. Her highness' most worthy counsellors, God prosper With honour and love of all men to minister.	
118		
120	Omnes. God grant the nobility her to serve and love, With all <u>the whole commony</u> as doth them <u>behoove</u> . AMEN	= the whole of the nation's people. ¹ = behoove.

Udall's Invented Words

Like all of the writers of the era, Nicholas Udall may have made up words when he felt like it, usually by adding prefixes and suffixes to known words, combining words, or using a word in a way not yet used before. The following is a list of words from *Ralph Roister Doister* that are indicated by the OED as being either the first or only use of a given word, or, as noted, the first use with a given meaning:

aley

anan

His arms (an oath, variation of "God's arms")

the phrase **at all assays** (meaning ready for anything)

avouch (meaning sanction or confirm another's act)

backare

the phrase **to bear with** (meaning to put up with)

begrime

bibbler

blank (meaning unsuccessful)

block (meaning blockhead)

bound (meaning leap)

the phrase **at first bound**

brag (meaning to strut or swagger)

Brute **

calf (as a term of abuse or endearment)

carriage (meaning a figurative burden)

cast (meaning a taste of something)

choir (meaning a body of singers who perform secular music)

collocavit

curried

curtsy (as a verb)

custreling

derry

dub-a dub

dump (meaning a mournful song)

the phrase **up to one's ears**

entwite (meaning to make something the subject of reproach)

exeat

extempore

faith (used alone as an interjection)

in fee (applied figuratively)

ferdegew

foot (meaning to sing - speculative)*

for (meaning conducive to)

fraymaking

gaining (as a noun)

gauding

gentman

Gog's used in an oath (e.g. Gog's arms)

heart of gold **

gosse (euphemism for God)

the phrase **let no grass grow under one's heel** (or foot, etc)

merry Greek

gristle (meaning a delicate person)

heigh ho

hoball

hoddy-doddy

honey (as the first word of a multi-word term of endearment,
e.g. honey-mistress)

hough (for ho)

house wall
ill-shent
jut (as a noun)
kite (describing a rapacious person)
knave (as a term of endearment)
knightess
kock's nownes, ie. Cock's nownes
lad (describing a man of spirit)
lamb (as a term of endearment)
lilburne
lobcock
loutish
lumperdee / clumperdee
by the matte (an oath)
mumblecrust
new-set
nouns (used as or in an exclamation)
nurse (as a form of address)
pissing while
poop (meaning a tooting sound)
potgun (meaning a weak gun or popgun)
pranky
quoth you? (as an interrogative at the end of a quote)
revel-rout
roister-doister
roisting
sauce (as a noun - a vocative - ie. applied to a person)
scribbler
shake up (meaning to rebuke or abuse)
sheep (as an adjective, e.g. sheeps' look)
since (meaning already)
soothe (a verb, meaning to declare something to be true - speculative)*
sporting stock
such a (used as a comparative insult)***
suressby (used as a noun)
the phrase **sweep a blow**
swinge (meaning to beat)
thrum (used as an onomatopoeic sound)
tolerancy
tomboy
toodle-loddle
truepenny
twang
wag (first use as noun, here meaning a mischievous person)
wag-pasty
wedding day **
whisking (as a noun)
worm (used to describe a tender creature)
worried (meaning to treat roughly - speculative)*
wough (for wow)

* three of the words are labeled as "speculative"; this means that either the editor or the OED itself is uncertain that the OED's definition of the word as it was used by Udall is correct.

** the earliest extant edition of *Ralph Roister Doister* dates from 1566; there are three terms (*Brute*, *heart of gold*, and *wedding day*) which appeared in print in English literature before 1566. However, since Roister was certainly written and presented no later than the

period 1552-1555, credit for introducing these terms to English letters can be safely credited to Nicholas Udall.

*** the OED gives Udall credit for being the first to use *such a* as an insult (e.g. "you are such an ass"); however, the OED's discussion of the phrase is quite complex, and there were so many ways to use the expression *such a* even in the early 16th century, that we have perhaps overly-simplified the case for Udall.

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

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