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the Annotated Popular Edition of

The Old Wives' Tale

by George Peele

Written c. 1590-5

First published 1595

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

THE OLD WIVES' TALE

by George Peele

Written c. 1590-5
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Contemporary Characters:
Antic, a Servant.
Frolic, a Servant.
Fantastic, a Servant.
Clunch, a Smith,
Madge, his wife.

Fairy Tale Characters:
Sacrapant, a conjuror.

First Brother, named Calypha, a Prince.
Second Brother, named Thelea, a Prince.
Delia, sister to Calypha and Thelea, a Princess.

Eumenides, a Wandering Knight.
Huanebango, a Knight.
Corebus, a Clown.

Erestus.
Venelia, betrothed to Erestus.

Lampriscus.
Zantippa, daughter to Lampriscus.
Celanta, daughter to Lampriscus.

Wiggen.
Ghost of Jack, a deceased person.
Churchwarden.
Sexton.
Hostess.

Friar, Harvest-men, Furies, Fiddlers, &c.

SCENE I.

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* is a charming, if not weighty, play, and one of the easiest works of the era to read. Its "play-within-a-play", in which a minor plot involving some contemporary English characters frames a larger story, anticipates that of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, but is more interesting than the latter because Peele's English characters regularly comment on the main action, risking breaking the audience's suspension of belief.

Wives' Tale is ultimately a fairy tale, complete with sorcerer, magic disembodied heads, and a kidnapped princess.

NOTE on the PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from Alexander Dyce's 1874 edition of *The Old Wives' Tale*, cited below at #3.

NOTES on the ANNOTATIONS

Mention of Dyce, Gummere, Bullen, Nielson 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. Dyce, Rev. Alexander. *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene and George Peele*. London: George Routledge and Sons: 1874.
4. Gummere, F.B., ed. *The Old Wives' Tale*, pp. 333-383; from *Representative English Comedies*, Charles Mills Gayley, ed. London: MacMillan & Co., 1916.
5. Bullen, A.H. *The Works of George Peele*. London: John C. Nimmo, 1888.
6. Nielson, William Allen. *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911.
7. Whitworth, Charles W. *Three Sixteenth Century Comedies*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1984.

The Woods, Contemporary England.

The Settings: the original 1595 edition of *The Old Wives' Tale* did not provide scene settings, a normal practice of the era. All settings are the suggestion of the editor.

We may also note here that many of the stage directions appearing in this edition are modified, and clarifying, versions of those appearing in the original edition, and are generally adapted from Dyce's suggestions.

Enter Antic, Frolic, and Fantastic.

Entering Characters: ***Antic***, ***Frolic*** and ***Fantastic*** are servants to some unnamed master; they are travelling through the woods, on an unspecified mission related to their employer's love-life, and are lost.

Antic = bizarre, grotesque.[1]
Frolic = merry.
Fantastic = fanciful, imagined.[2]

Antic. How now, fellow Frolic! what, all amort? doth this sadness become thy madness? What though we have lost our way in the woods? yet never hang the head as though thou hadst no hope to live till to-morrow; for Fantastic and I will warrant thy life to-night for twenty in the hundred.

1: ***Frolic*** = the original edition accidentally prints ***Franticke*** here.
amort = downcast, dejected.
1-2: ***doth…madness*** = "does this sad mood fit your normal merry character?"

= suppose, ie. "who cares if".
= ie. "your".

5-6: ***for Fantastic…hundred*** = Antic offers 5-to-1 odds that Frolic will not die or be killed this night.
warrant = assure, guarantee.

Frol. Antic, and Fantastic, as I am frolic franion, never in all my life was I so dead slain. What, to lose our way in the wood, without either fire or candle, so uncomfortable? *O cælum*! *O terra*! *O maria*! O Neptune!

8: ***frolic franion*** = "a merry fellow"; the OED defines ***franion*** as a "gay and reckless fellow", though Dyce alone suggests "idle". Peele uses ***frolic'st franion*** again in Scene VI.56.
8-9: ***never…slain*** = Frolic expects to die in the woods this night, ie. "I am already dead."

= the boys are not only lost, but it is night, and they have no source of light.

11: ***uncomfortable*** = disquieted or inconsolable.[1]
O cælum! = Oh Heaven!
O terra! = Oh earth!
O maria! = Oh sea!
= Roman god of the sea.

Fan. Why makes thou it so strange, seeing Cupid hath led our young master to the fair lady, and she is the only saint that he hath sworn to serve?

14: ***Why…strange*** = "why are you being so difficult".[1]
14-16: ***seeing…serve*** = typical Elizabethan language describing a man in love.

Frol. What resteth, then, but we commit him to his wench, and each of us take his stand up in a tree, and sing out our ill fortune to the tune of "O man in desperation"?

= ie. "remains for us to do". = consign, entrust.[1]
19: ***wench*** = girl or maid; ***wench*** did not necessarily carry any negative connotation.
take…tree = climb or take a position up in a tree.

20: ***ill fortune*** = bad luck.
20-21: ***O man in desperation*** = a popular song of the late 16th century.

Antic. Desperately spoken, fellow Frolic, in the dark: but seeing it falls out thus, let us rehearse the old proverb:

= "this is how things have turned out". = recite.

Three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men be we;
I in the wood, and thou on the ground,
And Jack sleeps in the tree.

26-29: frequently mentioned old song; in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby Belch speaks the words "three merry men be we".

Fan. Hush! a dog in the wood, or a wooden dog! O comfortable hearing! I had even as lief the chamberlain of the White Horse had called me up to bed.

31: Fantastic hears a dog bark; he playfully puns as well: ***wooden*** = dull or stupid,[1] though Dyce prefers "mad".

32: ***comfortable hearing*** = "what a reassuring thing to hear!" - but based on Fantastic's next line, this may be ironic.

32-34: ***I had…to bed*** = "I would just as much prefer, however, that the man in charge of the bedrooms (the ***chamberlain***) at the White Horse tavern had been inviting me to take a bed there for the night."

White Horse = common name for a tavern; the one on Friday Street in London was much frequented by our author George Peele.[16]

Frol. Either hath this trotting cur gone out of his circuit, or else are we near some village, which should not be far off, for I perceive the glimmering of a glow-worm, a candle, or a cat's eye, my life for a halfpenny!

36-37: ***Either…circuit*** = "either this trotting dog has escaped from its enclosure (ie. and hence is lost too)".[1]

trotting = the easy locomotion of a dog was frequently called a ***trot***; indeed, the word ***dogtrot*** itself became popular in the 17th century.[1]

cur = dog, usually used contemptuously.

38-40: ***I perceive…cat's eye*** = Frolic is confident he sees a light in the distance.

39: ***glow-worm*** = firefly.

39-40: ***my life…halfpenny*** = an expression of the confidence Frolic has in his vision, ie. "I bet my life to a halfpenny."

Enter Clunch, a Smith with a lantern and candle.

Entering Character: ***Clunch*** is an elderly blacksmith who lives in a cottage in the woods with his wife Madge. The word ***clunch*** came to be used to describe a clown.[1]

In the name of my own father, be thou ox or ass that appearest, tell us what thou art.

= ie. "even if you are an".
= who.

Clunch. What am I? why, I am Clunch the smith. What are you? what make you in my territories at this time of the night?

= "what are you doing" or "what is your business";[5] Clunch is genuinely surprised and concerned over the unexpected appearance of the three lost lads in the woods, and not, as the words might suggest, expressing hostility.

Antic. What do we make, dost thou ask? why, we make faces for fear; such as if thy mortal eyes could behold, would make thee water the long seams of thy side slops, smith.

51-52: ***What do…fear*** = Antic puns on the word ***make***; the phrase "to make a face", or "to make faces", first appeared in English letters in the early 16th century.[1]

52-54: ***such as…side slops*** = "if you could see the terrified looks on our faces, you would urinate in your trousers".

side slops = long wide breeches or trousers.[3]

Frol. And, in faith, sir, unless your hospitality do relieve us, we are like to wander, with a sorrowful heigh-ho, among the owlets and hobgoblins of the forest. Good Vulcan, for Cupid's sake that hath

= truly.
= likely to keep wandering.
= sigh.[1]

59: ***Vulcan*** = a form of address to the smith: ***Vulcan*** was the Roman blacksmith god.

59-60: ***for Cupid's sake…us all*** = Cupid is the cherubic god of love; Frolic names him as the cause of the lads' predicament, in the sense that they are on their present errand because the god has caused their master to fall in love.

cozened = tricked, deceived.

cozened us all, befriend us as thou mayst; and command us howsoever, wheresoever, whensoever, in whatsoever, for ever and ever.

60-62: ***befriend...and ever*** = briefly, "if you will help us, we will do anything you ask us to do forever", ie. "we will forever be in your debt." Gummere categorizes this line as a parody of the sort of speech a wandering knight might make on entering the territory of a giant or the like.

Clunch. Well, masters, it seems to me you have lost your way in the wood: in consideration whereof, if you will go with Clunch to his cottage, you shall have houseroom and a good fire to sit by, although we have no bedding to put you in.

= sirs.

= Gummere notes the frequency with which characters refer to themselves in the third person in plays of the era.

All. O blessed smith, O bountiful Clunch!

= generous.

Clunch. For your further entertainment, it shall be as it may be, so and so.

= ie. "and so forth".

[*Hear a dog bark*.]

75: the audience is to understand that the characters have reached Clunch's home.

Hark! this is Ball my dog, that bids you all welcome in his own language: come, take heed for stumbling on the threshold. − Open door, Madge; take in guests.

= "listen!"

78-79: ***take heed…threshold*** = "be careful not to trip on the threshold"; ***threshold*** is an ancient word from Old English, referring to the stone or piece of timber at the bottom of a doorway.[1] Whitworth notes it is bad luck to stumble at the entrance.

Enter Madge, an Old Woman.

Entering Characters: the blacksmith Clunch's wife ***Madge*** enters the stage.

Madge. Welcome, Clunch, and good fellows all, that come with my good-man: for my good-man's sake, come on, sit down: here is a piece of cheese, and a pudding of my own making.

= "my husband".[1]

= either a sausage or a sweet baked dish.[1]

Antic. Thanks, gammer: a good example for the wives of our town.

= a vocative expression: old woman, grandma.

Frol. Gammer, thou and thy good-man sit lovingly together; we come to chat, and not to eat

91-92: Frolic basically asks Madge not to put herself to any trouble on their account.

Clunch. Well, masters, if you will eat nothing, take away. Come, what do we to pass away the time? − Lay a crab in the fire to roast for lamb's-wool. − What, shall we have a game at trump or ruff to drive away the time? how say you?

94-95: ***take away*** = "clear the table".[1]

96: ***crab*** = crabapple.

lamb's wool = a popular drink comprised of the pulp of roasted apples and ale.[8]

97: ***trump or ruff*** = names of popular card games, though they may be one and the same.

drive away = pass, wile away.

Fant. This smith leads a life as merry as a king with

= common simile of the period.

Madge his wife. Sirrah Frolic, I am sure thou art not

101: ***Sirrah*** = common familiar form of address.
I am sure…or other = "I am sure you know a song we can sing."
round = a song in which singers sings in turn.

without some round or other: no doubt but Clunch can bear his part.

102-3: ***no doubt…part*** = Fantastic expresses confidence that Clunch can sing his own part in a satisfactory manner. Bullen and Gummere note that in this era, citizens of all ranks were expected to be able to participate in a song with multiple parts.

Frol. Else think you me ill brought up: so set to it when you will.

105-6: "if I did not, you would think I was not raised properly; go ahead and start when you are ready."

[*They sing*.]

SONG.

Whenas the rye reach to the chin,
And chopcherry, chopcherry ripe within,
Strawberries swimming in the cream,
And school-boys playing in the stream;
Then, O, then, O, then, O, my true-love said,
Till that time come again
She could not live a maid.

= when. = a grain.
= a game in which one tries to catch a cherry suspended on a string.[1]

118: she could not stand to remain unmarried.

Antic. This sport does well; but methinks, gammer, a merry winter's tale would drive away the time trimly:

= ie. "this is great fun."
121: ***winter's tale*** = tale of fantasy; the expression predates Shakespeare's play of the same name.
trimly = well, finely.

come, I am sure you are not without a score.

= ie. twenty such stories.

Fant. I'faith, gammer, a tale of an hour long were as good as an hour's sleep.

= truly.

Frol. Look you, gammer, of the giant and the king's

127-8: ***of the giant…daughter*** = Frolic gives a generic example of the type of story he is hoping to hear.

daughter, and I know not what: I have seen the day, when I was a little one, you might have drawn me a mile after you with such a discourse.

128-130: ***I have seen…discourse*** = Frolic recalls how in his childhood, he was so enchanted by such tales, he would have followed a moving story-teller for a mile to keep listening.

Madge. Well, since you be so importunate, my good-man shall fill the pot and get him to bed; they that ply their work must keep good hours: one of you go lie with him; he is a clean-skinned man I tell you, without either spavin or windgall: so I am content to drive away the time with an old wives' winter's tale.

132: ***importunate*** = insistent.
132-3: ***good-man*** = husband.
133: ***fill the pot*** = ie. with ale.
133-4: ***they that...hours*** = ie. "those who work hard must keep regular hours", ie. get enough sleep.
134-5: ***one of you…with him*** = it was normal in this era for individuals of the same sex to share a bed for the night.
135-6: ***he is…windgall*** = Madge assures the lads they should have no fear of catching any untoward disease from the old man.
clean-skinned = free from scabs or other skin-conditions such as leprosy.
spavin or windgall = names for horse maladies, each referring to a tumour or disease caused by a tumour in a horse's leg.

Fant. No better hay in Devonshire; o' my word,

139: I have found no other instances of this proverbial-

140	gammer, I'll be one of your audience.	sounding expression. ***Devonshire*** is noted for the fertility of its land.[16] Our author George Peele was believed to hail from a Devonshire family.[4]
142	***Frol.*** And I another, that's flat.	= ie. "that's settled."[1]
144	***Antic.*** Then must I to bed with the good-man. − *Bona Nox*, gammer. − God night, Frolic.	144-5: ***Bona nox*** = Latin for "good night". = a variation of ***good night*** which appears intermittently in this period.
146	***Clunch.*** Come on, my lad, thou shalt take thy	
148	unnatural rest with me.	= ***unnatural*** presumably because two men will sleep together in a single bed.
150	[*Exeunt Antic and the Smith*.]	150: we may note here that Madge, Frolic and Fantastic remain on stage for the entirety of the play; the actors who play Antic and Clunch are now freed to play other characters.
152	***Frol.*** Yet this vantage shall we have of them in the morning, to be ready at the sight thereof extempore.	= advantage. = ie. over. = something like, "we will be ready (ie. dressed and ready)[1] to move out at once (***extempore***)[1] at the sight (ie. moment) of dawn."
154		
156	***Madge.*** Now this bargain, my masters, must I make with you, that you will say "hum" and "ha" to my tale, so shall I know you are awake.	155-7: Madge wants her audience of two to at least grunt every once in a while as she tells her tale to show her they have not fallen asleep. ***bargain*** = deal.
158	***Both.*** Content, gammer, that will we do.	= "ok".
160	***Madge.*** Once upon a time, there was a king, or a lord,	= here is the earliest appearance in English literature of this still common formula used to open a story (though other permutations, such as ***once on a time*** and ***once upon a day*** had appeared earlier).
162	or a duke, that had a fair daughter, the fairest that ever	= beautiful.
	was; as white as snow and as red as blood: and once	= ***white*** and ***red*** were frequently paired in describing a woman's beauty; pale skin was considered to be most attractive in this period, and ***red*** refers to a healthy ruddy hue.
164	upon a time his daughter was stolen away: and he sent all his men to seek out his daughter; and he sent so	= kidnapped. 165-6: ***he sent so long*** = ie. "he sent out men to find his
166	long, that he sent all his men out of his land.	daughter over such a long period of time".
168	***Frol.*** Who drest his dinner, then?	= prepared.
170	***Madge.*** Nay, either hear my tale, or kiss my tail.	= Madge puns on ***tale*** and ***tail***; this expression first appeared in the 16th century's earlier comedy *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Variants, including ***kiss my behind*** (and ***ar*e*** and ***a*s***) came later.
172	***Fant.*** Well said! on with your tale, gammer.	
174	***Madge.*** O Lord, I quite forgot! there was a conjurer, and this conjurer could do anything, and he turned	= sorcerer or wizard.
176	himself into a great dragon, and carried the king's daughter away in his mouth to a castle that he made of	
178	stone; and there he kept her I know not how long, till at last all the king's men went out so long that her two	

brothers went to seek her. O, I forget! she (he, I would say), turned a proper young man to a bear in the night,

180-1: ***(he…say)*** = "no, I mean *he*".
= handsome. = into.

and a man in the day, and keeps by a cross that parts

182: ***a man*** = ie. into an old man.
keeps = ie. "he dwells".[1]
182-3: ***cross…ways*** = ie. three-way intersection, marked by an actual cross.

three several ways; and he made his lady run mad, −

= ie. the sorcerer. = ie. the sweetheart of the man whom the sorcerer turned into a part-time bear.

Gods me bones, who comes here?

= typical Elizabethan oath, "by God's bones".

SCENE II.

The Play's Scenes: the original edition of *The Old Wives' Tale* was not broken up into Acts or Scenes; for ease of reading, the editor has provided suggested scene breaks.

A Cross-road in England.

Enter the Two Brothers.

Entering Characters: here begins Peele's "play within a play", as Madge's story gets acted out in front of the old lady and her auditors; the ***Two Brothers*** are princes, sons of the king whose daughter was kidnapped by the sorcerer described by Madge. Named ***Calypha*** and ***Thelea***, the young men are searching for their sister.

Frol. Soft, gammer, here some come to tell your tale for you.

= "wait a moment".

Fant. Let them alone; let us hear what they will say.

1st Broth. Upon these chalky cliffs of Albion

6*ff*: unlike the low-brow rustics and pages in the cottage, who only speak in prose, the characters of the fairy tale will frequently speak in verse whenever they employ loftier language.
These chalky…Albion = ***Albion*** was the earliest name for the island of Great Britain[16] (today comprising England, Scotland and Wales). The ***chalky cliffs*** are the White Cliffs of Dover.

We are arrivèd now with tedious toil;

= painstaking effort.

And compassing the wide world round about,

= circling; as will become clear, the princes, and in fact most of the characters, are originally from the Greek district of Thessaly, so that they have indeed travelled widely to find their sister, named Delia.

To seek our sister, seek fair Delia forth,
Yet cannot we so much as hear of her.

= ***Delia*** is stressed on the first syllable; it is sometimes pronounced with two, and sometimes with three, syllables: *DE-lya* or *DE-li-a*.

2nd Broth. O fortune cruèl, cruèl and unkind!
Unkind in that we cannot find our sister,
Our sister, hapless in her cruèl chance. −
Soft! who have we here?

= unfortunate. = very bad luck.
= "hold on!"

Enter Erestus at the cross, stooping to gather.

Entering Character: ***Erestus*** is the young man whom the sorcerer has caused to turn into a bear at night and an old man during the day, and who lives at the intersection marked

by a cross during the day.

Erestus is gathering whatever roots and herbs he can find for food; impoverished characters can frequently be found in Elizabethan drama digging up vegetable or other plant roots to eat.

Erestus is actually identified as ***Senex*** here, and only here, in the original edition.

1st Broth. Now, father, God be your speed! what do you gather there?

= common variation for "God speed", an expression of good wishes.

Erest. Hips and haws, and sticks and straws, and things that I gather on the ground, my son.

= the fruit of the rose and hawthorn respectively; the two words ***hips*** and ***haws*** were frequently paired in old literature.[1]

We may note that Erestus has somehow, in the process of being transformed into both an old man and a bear, gained the powers of prophecy; and as such, has a penchant for speaking in minor rhymes, e.g. ***haws*** and ***straws***.

1st Broth. Hips and haws, and sticks and straws! why, is that all your food, father?

Erest. Yea, son.

2nd Broth. Father, here is an alms-penny for me; and if I speed in that I go for, I will give thee as good a gown of grey as ever thou didst wear.

= a penny given as an act of charity.
= ie. "am successful in (finding) that which".
= traditional habit of a pilgrim.[7]

1st Broth. And, father, here is another alms-penny for me; and if I speed in my journey, I will give thee a palmer's staff of ivory, and a scallop-shell of beaten gold.

36: the 1st Brother promises gifts associated with a pilgrim.

Palmer's staff = a ***palmer*** was a pilgrim who made the long journey to Jerusalem, so-called because of the palm leaf or branch such a pilgrim traditionally carried.

scallop-shell = carried as a badge by a pilgrim; the OED notes that the tradition arose from those pilgrims who, having visited the Shrine of St. James of Compostela in Galicia in north-west Spain, picked up such a shell (which is the symbol of St. James) from the shore there and returned home with it.[1]

Erest. Was she fair?

39: Gummere notes that as an oracle, it is natural that Erestus would know the purpose of the brothers' mission.

2nd Broth. Ay, the fairest for white, and the purest for red, as the blood of the deer, or the driven snow.

41-42: note the reversal of associations: the ***blood***, mentioned before the ***snow***, is compared to the ***red***, which is mentioned after the ***white***.

The association of ***red*** with ***purity*** might seem odd, but the reference here may be to unalloyed gold, which turns ***red***, and hence proves itself ***pure***, when it is heated.[1]

The simile of ***white*** with ***driven snow*** seems to have appeared in English letters first in 1566, in a translation of *Lamentations*.

Erest. Then hark well, and mark well, my old spell: −

44: ***hark*** and ***mark*** are basically synonyms for "listen closely".

my = ie. "to my".

spell = ie. prophecy.

Be not afraid of every stranger;

45-52: note the rhyming couplets and iambic tetrameter (four pairs of beats, or iambs, compared to the five of iambic pentameter) of Erestus' spell.

Start not aside at every danger;

= ie. "do not shy away from"; the phrase ***start aside*** was a common one describing one who steers clear from danger or something frightening.[1]

Things that seem are not the same:
Blow a blast at every flame;

= breath.

For when one flame of fire goes out,
Then come your wishes well about:
If any ask who told you this good,
Say, the white bear of England's wood.

= interestingly, the original name for a polar bear, in use since the 14th century; ***polar bear*** doesn't appear until the mid-17th century.[1]

1st Broth. Brother, heard you not what the old man said?
Be not afraid of every stranger;

55-62: Gummere notes that it would be normal to repeat such a solemn and important spell.

Start not aside for every danger;
Things that seem are not the same;
Blow a blast at every flame;
[For when one flame of fire goes out.

59-60: the original edition of the play, accidentally or not, omits the final two lines of the spell in the 1st Brother's speech.

Then come your wishes well about:]
If any ask who told you this good,
Say, the white bear of England's wood.

2nd Broth. Well, if this do us any good,
Well fare the white bear of England's wood!

= ie. fare well; ***fare*** may be disyllabic for the sake of the meter: *FAY-er*.[3]

[*Exeunt the Two Brothers*.]

Erest. Now sit thee here, and tell a heavy tale,

69*f*: Erestus talks to himself.
heavy = distressing, grave.[1]

Sad in thy mood, and sober in thy cheer:

70: ***Sad*** = serious.
sober in thy cheer = certainly meaning "serious in your demeanor", but could also mean "moderate in your consumption of food".

Here sit thee now, and to thyself relate

258-275: note that Erestus' story is related partially in rhyming couplets, while sometimes a rhyme is found in every other line, and some lines stand unrhymed at all.

The hard mishap of thy most wretched state.

= misfortune.[2]

In Thessaly I lived in sweet content,

= an ancient region of Greece, notorious for the witchcraft which thrived and poisonous herbs and drugs which grew there.[16]

Until that fortune wrought my overthrow;

= "worked my ruin."

For there I wedded was unto a dame,

= actually, Erestus is only engaged to be married; such minor internal inconsistencies were common in Elizabethan drama, though here we can perhaps blame Madge for unintentionally forgetting such occasional details as she tells her story.

That lived in honour, virtue, love, and fame.
But Sacrapant, that cursèd sorcerer,
Being besotted with my beauteous love.
My dearest love, my true betrothèd wife,
Did seek the means to rid me of my life.
But worse than this, he with his chanting spells

= may or may not be short for ***enchanting***.[3,6]

Did turn me straight unto an ugly bear;
And when the sun doth settle in the west.

83-84: he turns into a bear at sunset.

Then I begin to don my ugly hide:

= wear, put on.

And all the day I sit, as now you see,
And speak in riddles, all inspired with rage,

86: ***speak in riddles*** = like those spoken by the oracles of ancient Greece, Erestus' prophecies are usually highly ambiguous in meaning.

all inspired with rage = ie. divinely inspired with prophetic ability.[1]

Seeming an old and miserable man,
And yet I am in April of my age.

= ie. "(actually) a young man."

Enter Venelia his lady mad; and goes in again.

Entering Character: *Venelia* is poor Erestus' fiancée, whom the sorcerer has caused to go mad: she enters, then exits the stage, after passing by but not recognizing Erestus.

See where Venelia, my betrothèd love,
Runs madding, all enraged, about the woods,

= acting in a mad or frenzied manner; the OED files this use of ***madding*** as a verb.

All by his cursèd and enchanting spells. −
But here comes Lampriscus, my discontented neighbour.

Enter Lampriscus with a pot of honey.

Entering Character: Lampriscus is identified a little later by Madge as a beggar who lives on the green.

How now, neighbour! you look toward the ground as well as I: you muse on something.

99-100: ***you look…as I*** = except that Erestus is looking down to find food, while Lampriscus stares at the ground in either sorrow or deep thought.

Lamp. Neighbour, on nothing but on the matter I so often moved to you: if you do anything for charity, help me; if for neighbourhood or brotherhood, help me: never was one so cumbered as is poor Lampriscus; and to begin, I pray receive this pot of honey, to mend your fare.

= ie. "have previously appealed to you regarding."

= encumbered, burdened.

= "please accept". = supplement; Lampriscus hopes that in return for this gift, Erestus will be more willing to help him with his problem.

Erest. Thanks, neighbour, set it down; honey is always welcome to the bear. And now, neighbour, let me hear the cause of your coming.

Lamp. I am, as you know, neighbour, a man unmarried, and lived so unquietly with my two wives, that I keep every year holy the day wherein I buried them both: the first was on Saint Andrew's day, the

= ie. November 30: ***St. Andrew*** was thought to bring good luck to lovers.[5]

other on Saint Luke's.

= ie. October 18, a day thought to be favourable for those who wished to learn of their future spouses: if a seeker of love applied a certain concoction to one's face, and recited a specific formula, one would dream of one's future love.

Bullen notes that the Horn Fair was also held on this day, as ***St. Luke*** was jestingly considered the patron saint of cuckolds (horns were said to grow on the foreheads of husbands whose wives cheated on them), making this, perhaps, an even more poignant day for Lampriscus. The 1886 *Glossaries of South-West Lincolnshire, Kent and Berkshire* confirms such a fair was held on October 18 in Charlton in Kent, and the fair included a tradition of a riotous mob marching in a procession from Cuckold's Point,

wearing horns on their heads, and some of the men even dressing as women.

Erest. And now, neighbour, you of this country say,

= ie. "as you". = ie. England; despite Lampriscus' non-English name, Erestus' comment suggests he is a native of the island.

your custom is out. But on with your tale, neighbour.

= ie. "your obligation to me is paid;" ***custom*** referred to a regular payment of money or in kind by a feudal tenant to a landowner.[1]

Lamp. By my first wife, whose tongue wearied me alive, and sounded in my ears like the clapper of a great bell, whose talk was a continual torment to all that dwelt by her or lived nigh her, you have heard me say I had a handsome daughter.

= near.

= attractive.

Erest. True, neighbour.

Lamp. She it is that afflicts me with her continual clamours, and hangs on me like a bur: poor she is, and proud she is; as poor as a sheep new-shorn, and as proud of her hopes as a peacock of her tail well-grown.

130: ie. Lampriscus' beautiful, but shrewish daughter by his first wife.

= proverbial, perhaps newly-so.

132: the ***peacock*** has ever been proverbial for its ***pride***.

Erest. Well said, Lampriscus! you speak it like an Englishman.

135-6: this speech of Erestus' hints that Lampriscus might be another transplant from Greece after all.

Lamp. As curst as a wasp, and as froward as a child new-taken from the mother's teat; she is to my age, as smoke to the eyes, or as vinegar to the teeth.

= shrewish, quarrelsome.[2] = stubborn.

140: ***she is…teeth*** = that is, highly disagreeable! Lampriscus quotes from Proverbs 10:26: "*As vinegar is to the teeth, as smoke is unto the eyes*" (all Biblical quotes in this play are from the *Bishop's Bible* of 1568).

Erest. Holily praised, neighbour. As much for the next.

= Erestus, with gentle irony, indirectly acknowledges Lampriscus' quote from scripture.

Lamp. By my other wife I had a daughter so hard-favoured, so foul, and ill-faced, that I think a grove full of golden trees, and the leaves of rubies and diamonds, would not be a dowry answerable to her deformity.

145-6: ***hard-favoured…ill-faced*** = a collection of synonyms, all meaning "ugly".

146-8: ***a grove…deformity*** = even if Lampriscus was able to provide untold wealth as a dowry to a prospective husband, his second daughter would still not find anyone to marry her because of her wretched looks.

Erest. Well, neighbour, now you have spoke, hear me speak: send them to the well for the water of life; there shall they find their fortunes unlooked for. Neighbour, farewell.

151: ***well*** = spring or water-hole.

water of life = water possessing supernatural powers: the phrase ***water of life*** comes from Revelations 21:6 ("*I will give him unto him that is a thirst of the well of the water of life freely*) and 22:1 ("*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life*"), and refers to eternal life in Christ.

Lamp. Farewell, and a thousand.

155: "a thousand times farewell" (Dyce).

[*Exit Erestus*.]

157: Whitworth suggests that Erestus may not leave the stage, but just withdraw into the background as he keeps by the cross.

And now goeth poor Lampriscus to put in execution this excellent counsel.

= advice.

[*Exit*.]

SCENE III.

Frol. Why, this goes round without a fiddling-stick: but, do you hear, gammer, was this the man that was a bear in the night and a man in the day?

1: the story is moving along nicely, even without musical accompaniment (Whitworth, p. 231).

Madge. Ay, this is he! and this man that came to him was a beggar, and dwelt upon a green. But soft! who come here? O, these are the harvest-men; ten to one they sing a song of mowing.

ie. Lampriscus.

= reapers.[1]

= cutting the grain, as with a scythe.[1]

Enter the Harvest-men a-singing, with this song double repeated.

Harvest-Men.

All ye that lovely lovers be,
Pray you for me:
Lo, here we come a-sowing, a-sowing,
And sow sweet fruits of love;
In your sweet hearts well may it prove!

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE IV.

The Cross.

Scene IV: it appears that this scene contains numerous allusions to an intense feud which raged in the early 1590's between the playwright Thomas Nashe and poet Gabriel Harvey; the scene and its many specific references to the harsh words that passed between the two authors is discussed in detain at the following site: www.anonymous-shakespeare.com/cms/index.248.0.1.html.

In the interest of not burdening the reader with the minutia of these allusions, we have chosen to mostly omit their discussion.

Enter Huanebango with his two-hand sword, and Corebus the Clown.

Entering Characters: ***Huanebango*** is a mock-errant, or wandering, knight, of the type the Spanish author Cervantes would make famous in his *Don Quixote* about a decade later; Huanebango's Spanish-sounding name is symbolic of the contempt the English held of all things Spanish during the reign of Elizabeth, especially in light of the fact that the English had destroyed the invading Spanish armada so recently (1588).

Huanebango carries a ***two-handed sword***, a large unwieldy instrument that had long been out of date by the late 16th century - another clue to the parodical nature of this character.

Corebus is a country bumpkin (***clown***), who appears also to have visions of acting the errant-knight. ***Corebus*** was the name of the first victor in the first Olympic games.

We note that the original edition refers to Corebus sometimes as ***Booby***; we will stick with ***Corebus***.

Fant. Gammer, what is he?

= who, referring to Huanebango.

Madge. O, this is one that is going to the conjurer: let him alone, hear what he says.

Huan. Now, by Mars and Mercury, Jupiter and

6-8: with an exaggerated oath, Huanebango swears on a multiplicity of Roman gods. Note how he alliteratively pairs the deities.

Mars and Mercury = god of war and the messenger god.

Jupiter and Janus = king of the gods and the two-faced god of doorways.

Sol = the god of the sun, sometimes identified with Apollo.

Saturnus = an ancient king of Italy, often identified with the Greek god Cronus, the father of the Olympian gods.

Venus and Vesta = goddesses of beauty and the hearth.

Pallas = alternate name for Minerva, goddess of wisdom and war.

Proserpina = goddess of vegetation.

Janus, Sol and Saturnus, Venus and Vesta, Pallas and Proserpina, and by the honour of my house,

= ie. family, ancestry.

Polimackeroeplacydus, it is a wonder to see what this

= our knight's family name is even more ridiculous than his given name; Whitworth observes that this name is a close adaptation of a name that actually appears in the ancient Roman dramatist Plautus' play *Pseudolus*, ***Polymachaeroplagides***. This mouthful of a name appears to be a compound of three Greek words, meaning roughly "the son of many blows with a sword."[17] See the note at lines 43-46 below for additional discussion of this name.

9-10: ***what this…adventure*** = "what love will cause foolish (***silly***) men to risk to do"; while it is possible that Huanebango is addressing himself in this speech, it seems more likely he is admonishing Corebus, who apparently has arrived also planning to try to rescue Delia from the sorcerer.

love will make silly fellows adventure, even in the wane of their wits and infancy of their discretion. Alas,

10: ***adventure*** = risk.

10-11: ***even…discretion*** = even in the decline of their intelligences and immaturity of their judgment."

The style of Huanebango's speech is reminiscent of the manner of writing, popularized by the playwright John Lyly in the 1580's, known as ***euphuism***, which was characterized by the heavy use of parallel phrases and alliteration.

my friend! what fortune calls thee forth to seek thy fortune among brazen gates, enchanted towers, fire and brimstone, thunder and lightning? [Her] beauty, I tell thee, is peerless, and she precious whom thou affectest. Do off these desires, good countryman: good friend, run away from thyself; and, so soon as thou canst, forget her, whom none must inherit but he that can monsters tame, labours achieve, riddles absolve,

= brass.

= added by Dyce.

= without equal.

= lovest. = do away with, dispense with.

= ie. "she whom". = take possession of.

19: ***labours achieve*** = great deeds were often performed by errant-knights for their ladies; fairy tales generally also featured noble acts performed by the hero.

absolve = solve.

loose enchantments, murder magic, and kill conjuring, − and that is the great and mighty Huanebango.

20: ***loose*** = ie. remove, free a person from.

murder = ie. put an end to one's ability to use.

Core. Hark you, sir, hark you. First know I have here
24 the flurting feather, and have given the parish the start for the long stock: now, sir, if it be no more but

23*ff*: Corebus' earthy and humorous responses and decidedly less-exalted language are the perfect foils for the inflated language of the self-aggrandizing Huanebango.

Hark you = "listen up".

23-25: ***I have…stock*** = a difficult passage; the best interpretation suggested by past editors is that Corebus is showing off elements of his dress, as a way to demonstrate his equal status to Huanebango. He first points to a decorative feather on his hat, which he describes as ***flurting***, which while not clearly defined in this context in the OED, may mean "erect" or "flaunting", based on a mid-17th century citation; then he gestures toward his ***stockings***, which are fashionably fastened high above the knees.[4]

In saying he has ***given the parish the start***, Corebus means he has run away from his parish; Elizabethan laws proscribing vagabondage give this act significance. Another editor hence suggests that Corebus is actually daring parish officials to catch him if they can and put him into stocks.[4]

Bullen has a different take, suggesting that Corebus is saying "I have been the first beau in the parish to adopt the long stocking of the town-gallants."

Dyce, finally, wonders if by ***stock*** Peele means "sword", so that Corebus is saying, "I have left the parish for the long-sword", ie. to become a knight-errant.

26 running through a little lightning and thunder, and "riddle me, riddle me what's this?" I'll have the wench

27: ***riddle…what's this*** = Gummere notes that the solving of riddles to win a bride or fortune or the like is common in folk-tales.

have = take, ie. rescue.

28 from the conjurer, if he were ten conjurers.

= ie. even if.

30 ***Huan.*** I have abandoned the court and honourable company, to do my devoir against this sore sorcerer

31: ***do my devoir*** = "do my duty" or "take on this task".[1]

sore = troublesome, severe;[1] note the wordplay of ***sore sorcerer***.

32 and mighty magician: if this lady be so fair as she is said to be, she is mine, she is mine; *meus*, *mea*, *meum*,

= the knight lists the masculine, feminine and neutral Latin forms of ***my***, as if he is reciting from a Latin grammar book.

34 *in contemptum omnium grammaticorum*.

= in contempt of all grammar.

36 ***Core.*** *O falsum Latinum*!

36: "oh, false Latin!"

The fair maid is *minum*,

37: faux, and mocking, Latin for ***mine***.

38 *Cum apurtinantibus gibletis* and all.

= "with its appurtenances". = mock Latin for ***giblets***, ie. guts.

40 ***Huan.*** If she be mine, as I assure myself the heavens will do somewhat to reward my worthiness, she shall

= something.

42 be allied to none of the meanest gods, but be invested

= "not even the least of the".

in the most famous stock of Huanebango

43-46: Huanebango exalts his family; Dyce notes that Peele is likely satirizing the lengthy character names used by Plautus in his comedy *Miles Gloriosus*, e.g. Pyrgopolynices and Periplectomenus, but he seems to have missed the fact, as Whitworth points out, that the name of Huanebango's father, ***Pergopolineo***, is actually an adaptation of ***Pyrgopolynices***; the latter was the name of the boastful soldier in *Miles Gloriosus*.

44 Polimackeroeplacydus my grandfather; my father Pergopolineo; my mother Dionora de Sardinia,

46 famously descended.

stock = progenitor of a family line.[1]

A fascinating theory by 19th century drama scholar

Frederick Fleay (as described by Gummere) suggests these names were designed to satirize the lowly background of poet and author Gabriel Harvey (supposedly a favourite sport of his enemies), and specifically to mock Harvey's father for being a mere rope-maker: hence, the names may be understood to read as Grecianized versions of "Polly-make-a-rope-lass" and "Perg-up-a-line-O".

Having shared Fleay's theory, Gummere lets his readers know he himself is not convinced, with this single comment: "Fleay is bold."

Dionora de Sardinia = another invented name by Peele.

Core. Do you hear, sir? had not you a cousin that was called Gusteceridis?

Huan. Indeed, I had a cousin that sometime followed the court infortunately, and his name

= common variation of ***unfortunately***, meaning "without luck".

Bustegusteceridis.

= this name of the knight's kin includes elements of ***bust***, meaning "container", and ***gust***, referring to the sense of taste;[1] the name suggests that this gentleman was a notorious glutton, as the succeeding discussion confirms.

A modern reader might sense the modern phrase "bust a gut" in the name, but the OED suggests the word ***bust*** did not gain its meaning of "burst" for another half-century.

Core. O lord, I know him well! he is the knight of the neat's-feet.

= a popular food, the heel of a cow or ox.[1]

Huan. O, he loved no capon better! he hath oftentimes deceived his boy of his dinner; that was his fault, good Bustegusteceridis.

= castrated cock, another popular food.[1]

59: ***deceived…dinner*** = ie. tricked his servant boy out of his dinner.

fault = weakness, defect.

Core. Come, shall we go along?

Enter Erestus at the Cross.

Soft! here is an old man at the cross: let us ask him the way thither. − Ho, you gaffer! I pray you tell where the wise man the conjurer dwells.

= to there, ie. Sacrapant's castle. = grandfather. = please. = term for a magician or wizard.[1]

Huan. Where that earthly goddess keepeth her abode, the commander of my thoughts, and fair mistress of my heart.

70-72: Huanebango describes Delia.

Erest. Fair enough, and far enough from thy fingering, son.

74-75: ie. "she is truly beautiful enough, and far away enough from your ability to capture her, sonny."

Note the exceptional alliteration in this line, which is continued by Huanebango in the next line, as well as the wordplay of ***fair enough*** and ***far enough***.

fingering = pilfering, laying one's hands on.[1,2]

Huan. I will follow my fortune after mine own fancy, and do according to mine own discretion.

= act.

Erest. Yet give something to an old man before you go.

Huan. Father, methinks a piece of this cake might serve your turn.

83-84: Huanebango contemptuously gestures to some sweetened bread carried by Corebus.

turn = purpose or need.

Erest. Yea, son.

Huan. Huanebango giveth no cakes for alms: ask of them that give gifts for poor beggars. − Fair lady, if thou wert once shrined in this bosom, I would buckler thee haratantara.

[*Exit*.]

Core. Father, do you see this man? you little think he'll run a mile or two for such a cake, or pass for a pudding. I tell you, father, he has kept such a begging of me for a piece of this cake! Whoo! he comes upon me with "a superfantial substance, and the foison of the earth," that I know not what he means. If he came to me thus, and said, “My friend Corebus,” or so, why, I could spare him a piece with all my heart; but when he tells me how God hath enriched me above other fellows with a cake, why, he makes me blind and deaf at once. Yet, father, here is a piece of cake for you, as hard as the world goes.

[*Gives cake*.]

Erest. Thanks, son, but list to me;
He shall be deaf when thou shalt not see.
Farewell, my son: things may so hit,
Thou mayst have wealth to mend thy wit.

Core. Farewell, father, farewell; for I must make haste after my two-hand sword that is gone before.

[*Exeunt severally*.]

88-89: This is not the response one would expect from a supposedly virtuous knight-errant.

89-91: ***Fair lady…haratantara*** = the knight apostrophizes to Delia as he turns his attention to his mission, saying roughly, "beautiful maiden, if you ever become enshrined in my heart, I will defend (***buckler***)[1] you to the death."

Fair lady = describes, and sometimes used as a term of endearment as here for, a woman who is the object of one's love, especially in a chivalrous context.[1]

haratantara = usually written ***taratantara***, an imitative sound of a trumpet.[1]

95-97: ***you think…pudding*** = Corebus notes that Huanebango seems to share the same passion for food as does his gluttonous relative: "you wouldn't believe that he actually would run a mile or two himself for a piece of cake, or that he cares for (***pass for*** = care for) any such savoury desert."

99-100: ***a superfantial…earth*** = Corebus parodies the pompous and high-styled language of the knight.

superfantial = a made-up word; ***fantial*** itself is a nonsense word.

foison = plenty or abundance.[3]

100: "but if he were to come".

= the original edition has ***Booby*** written here; as mentioned earlier, we will, for the sake of consistency, stick strictly with ***Corebus***.

104-5: ***he makes…at once*** = ie. Corebus instantly shuts out Huanebango's pleading for a piece of cake as soon as he begins speaking in his heroic manner.

105-6: ***as hard…goes*** = "cruel as the world is," or "hard as he times are."[5]

110-3: the short rhyming couplets of Erestus' speech are typical of those used as here for prophetic pronouncements.

list = listen.

= ie. turn out.

= "supplement or compensate for your (meager) intelligence."[1]

= ie. hurry.

= ie. Huanebango. = "who has gone ahead."

118: the two men exit the stage in separate directions, Corebus presumably following in Huanebango's footsteps.

SCENE V.

Sacrapant's Castle.

Enter Sacrapant in his study.

Entering Character: we finally meet our play's villain, the sorcerer ***Sacrapant***.

Sacr. The day is clear, the welkin bright and gray,
= sky. = Whitworth suggests ***gray*** means ***blue***.

The lark is merry and records her notes;
= sings, warbles.[2]

Each thing rejoiceth underneath the sky,

But only I, whom Heaven hath in hate,
4: note the alliteration in the line.

Wretched and miserable Sacrapant.

In Thessaly was I born and brought up;

My mother Meroe hight, a famous witch,
= "was called Meroe"; ***Meroe*** was the name of a witch who appeared in the 2nd-century romance *Metamorphoses* (more commonly referred to as *The Golden Ass*), by the African-born Latin writer Apuleius.

And by her cunning I of her did learn
= could mean "knowledge" or "magic". = "from her".

To change and alter shapes of mortal men.

There did I turn myself into a dragon,

And stole away the daughter to the king,
= kidnapped.

Fair Delia, the mistress of my heart;
12: Sacrapant is in love with Delia; she, however, does not reciprocate his feelings.

And brought her hither to revive the man,
13-15: Sacrapant is actually a very old man, but he has used his magic so as to appear to others as a handsome youth.
13: "and brought her here to give life back to the old man, ie. me."

That seemeth young and pleasant to behold,

And yet is agèd, crookèd, weak, and numb.
= the sense seems to be "emotionally dead".

Thus by enchanting spells I do deceive

Those that behold and look upon my face;

But well may I bid youthful years adieu.
18: "but I may as well kiss my youthful looks goodbye": Sacrapant regrets that his appealing appearance does him no good, as Delia has not fallen in love with him.

See where she comes from whence my sorrows grow!
= technically redundant, but common, expression, as ***whence*** alone means "from where".

Enter Delia with a pot in her hand.

Entering Character: Delia is the daughter of the king whom Sacrapant has kidnapped, and whose brothers, among others, are searching for her.
pot = pitcher.

How now, fair Delia! where have you been?

Delia. At the foot of the rock for running water, and gathering roots for your dinner, sir.

Sacr. Ah, Delia,

Fairer art thou than the running water.

Yet harder far than steel or adamant!
= a legendary rock or mineral of great hardness.

Delia. Will it please you to sit down, sir?

Sacr. Ay, Delia, sit and ask me what thou wilt,

Thou shalt have it brought into thy lap.

Delia. Then, I pray you, sir, let me have the best meat from the King of England's table, and the best wine in all France, brought in by the veriest knave in all Spain.

= roast beef, according to Gummere.

= "greatest scoundrel in all of Spain"; as discussed earlier, relations between England and Spain were poor in these years; as Dyce points out, a particular sore point had been the discovery of Spanish involvement in the 1586 Babington Plot, a scheme to kill Elizabeth and replace her with the imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots.

veriest = common superlative of the era, usually applied to a term of abuse; in Shakespeare we find ***veriest varlet***, ***veriest shrew***, and ***veriest hind***.

Sacr. Delia, I am glad to see you so pleasant:
Well, sit thee down. −
Spread, table, spread;
Meat, drink, and bread,
Ever may I have
What I ever crave,
When I am spread:
For meat for my black cock,
And meat for my red.

= droll, in a good mood.

43-49: Sacrapant casts a spell; note the rhyme scheme of the spell, **aabbaca**.

48: most editors delete the first ***For***.

48-49: Gummere notes that this incantation is "less uncanny than usual", as ***cocks*** of various colours held significance in various superstitions; indeed, a little research leads to the discovery that witches were typically believed to have black cocks as familiars (as well as black cats), that black cocks were used frequently in magical incantations, and that in Scotland, a formula for a cure for epilepsy included burying a live black cock;[14] another source describes a Scottish tradition of administering the blood of a red cock for medicinal purposes.[15]

Enter a Friar with a chine of beef and a pot of wine.

= section or joint.[2]

Here, Delia, will ye fall to?

= ie. begin eating.

Delia. Is this the best meat in England?

Sacr. Yea.

Delia. What is it?

Sacr. A chine of English beef, meat for a king and a king's followers.

Delia. Is this the best wine in France?

Sacr. Yea.

Delia. What wine is it?

Sacr. A cup of neat wine of Orleans, that never came near the brewers in England.

70: ***neat*** = undiluted.[1]

Orleans = a number of plays of the era reference this fine wine-growing region.[16]

that never…England = Whitworth explains that ***brewers*** were dealers in wine who diluted it before they sold it (p. 238), though the OED does not support such a meaning.

Delia. Is this the veriest knave in all Spain?

Sacr. Yea.

Delia. What, is he a friar?

Sacr. Yea, a friar indefinite, and a knave infinite.

79: ***indefinite*** = unclear meaning; Whitworth proposes "belonging to no particular order".
infinite = ie. of boundless degree. We may note that hatred and mockery of Catholics was also encouraged during the reign of Elizabeth.

Delia. Then, I pray ye, Sir Friar, tell me before you go, which is the most greediest Englishman?

= who. = double superlatives were common and acceptable.

Friar. The miserable and most covetous usurer.

= money-lender; these were understood to be Jewish.

Sacr. Hold thee there, friar.

86: ie. "maintain that opinion".

[*Exit Friar*.]

But, soft!
Who have we here? Delia, away, be gone!

= ie. "who is this approaching?"

Enter the Two Brothers.

Delia, away! for beset are we. −
But Heaven [n]or hell shall rescue her for me.

= ie. from.

[*Exeunt Delia and Sacrapant*.]

1st Broth. Brother, was not that Delia did appear,

100-6: the two brothers converse briefly in rhyming couplets.

Or was it but her shadow that was here?

= ghost.

2nd Broth. Sister, where art thou? Delia, come again!
He calls, that of thy absence doth complain. −

104: referring to himself.

Call out, Calypha, that she may hear,
And cry aloud, for Delia is near.

105: Calypha is stressed on its second syllable - ***ca-LY-pha***; Dyce suggests adding a word such as "call" after ***Calypha*** to repair the line's meter.

Echo. Near.

108-116: an off-stage echo is heard which repeats the last word spoken by either of the brothers.

1st Broth. Near! O, where? hast thou any tidings?

= news; the brothers respond to the echo under the belief that it is a real person answering them.

Echo. Tidings.

2nd Broth. Which way is Delia, then? or that, or this?

Echo. This.

1st Broth. And may we safely come where Delia is?

Echo. Yes.

2nd Broth. Brother, remember you the white bear of England's wood?
"Start not aside for every danger,
Be not afeard of every stranger;
Things that seem are not the same."

123-4: the 2nd Brother does not exactly repeat Erestus' admonishment: the original prophecy had ***at*** instead of ***for***, and ***afraid*** for ***afeard***, and reverses the order of the first two lines.

1st Broth. Brother,
Why do we not, then, courageously enter?

2nd Broth. Then, brother, draw thy sword and follow me.

Re-enter Sacrapant the Conjurer: it lightens and thunders; the Second Brother falls down.

= ie. flashes lightning.

1st Broth. What, brother, dost thou fall?

Sacr. Ay, and thou too, Calypha.

[*The First Brother falls down.*]

Adestes, daemones!

141: "come, demons!" Latin was the traditional best language with which to communicate with spirits.

Enter Two Furies.

= ie. demons.

Away with them:
Go carry them straight to Sacrapanto's cell,
There in despair and torture for to dwell.

= private room or chamber.
= ie. to.

[*Exeunt Furies with the Two Brothers.*]

149: the Furies carry out the unconscious brothers.

These are Thenores' sons of Thessaly,
That come to seek Delia their sister forth:

151: as a magician, Sacrapant has no trouble recognizing Delia's brothers; ***Thenores*** is presumably the queen of their homeland.

But, with a potion I to her have given,
My arts have made her to forget herself.

= magic.

[*He removes a turf, and shows a light in a glass.*]

156: ***turf*** = ie. a section or slab of grass-covered earth.
light in a glass = a burning flame in a glass case; Gummere refers to this light as an example of what is known as a ***life-index***, an external object whose condition can be used to judge the health or safety of a particular individual.

See here the thing which doth prolong my life,
With this enchantment I do any thing;
And till this fade, my skill shall still endure,

160: ***till this fade*** = ie. "so long as this this light does not go out".
skill = magic, ie. any spell he casts.
still = always, forever.

And never none shall break this little glass.

= double negatives were common and acceptable.

But she that's neither wife, widow, nor maid:

162: another prophecy: the only person who can possibly break the glass and put out the light (which would release any victims from Sacrapant's spells) is a woman who is neither a ***wife, widow, nor maid***.

Then cheer thyself; this is thy destiny,
Never to die but by a dead man's hand.

164: yet another prophecy.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE VI.

The Cross.

Enter Eumenides.

Entering Character: yet another visitor from Greece: ***Eumenides*** is one more errant-knight, but he is the real thing.

Eum. Tell me, Time,

Tell me, just Time, when shall I Delia see?
When shall I see the loadstar of my life?
When shall my wandering course end with her sight,
Or I but view my hope, my heart's delight?

Enter Erestus at the Cross.

Father, God speed! if you tell fortunes, I pray, good father, tell me mine.

= ie. guiding star, meaning Delia.

= expression of good will.

Erest. Son, I do see in thy face
Thy blessèd fortune work apace:
I do perceive that thou hast wit;
Beg of thy fate to govern it,
For wisdom governed by advice,
Makes many fortunate and wise.
Bestow thy alms, give more than all,
Till dead men's bones come at thy call.
Farewell, my son: dream of no rest,
Till thou repent that thou didst best.

12-21: Erestus offers another prophecy, again in rhyming couplets.
= approaching quickly.
= catch-all word for intelligence and cleverness.
= "ask".
18: Erestus advises Eumenides to give all he has to the poor.
19: the meaning of this ominous-sounding prediction will become clear in Scene X.

[*Exit.*]

Eum. This man hath left me in a labyrinth:
He biddeth me give more than all,
Till dead men's bones come at my call;
He biddeth me dream of no rest,
Till I repent that I do best.

= figurative for "in a state of perplexity".
= instructs.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

31: Eumenides has immediately forgotten or ignores Erestus' admonition to ***dream of no rest***!

Enter Wiggen, Corebus, Churchwarden, and Sexton.

Entering Characters: Wiggen's friend ***Jack*** has just died, and he is angrily trying to convince the unwilling ***Churchwarden*** and ***Sexton*** that they should bury him. We note that the Churchwarden has been rather pointlessly given the full name of ***Steeven Loach***.

The ***sexton*** is the officer of the church responsible for digging graves and ringing the bells. The ***churchwarden*** is an elected lay officer who is responsible generally for the maintenance of the church grounds and buildings.

Wigg. You may be ashamed, you whoreson scald Sexton and Churchwarden, if you had any shame in those shameless faces of yours, to let a poor man lie so long above ground unburied. A rot on you all, that have no more compassion of a good fellow when he is gone!

= vile, contemptible;[2] Bullen suggest "scabby".

Church. What, would you have us to bury him, and to answer it ourselves to the parish?

= ie. assume the costs of the burial.

Sext. Parish me no parishes; pay me my fees, and let the rest run on in the quarter's accounts, and put it

45-46: ***pay me…accounts*** = the Sexton only wants his fees, but otherwise doesn't care if the parish bears the other costs of the funeral.[7]

down for one of your good deeds, o' God's name! for I

48 am not one that curiously stands upon merits.

47-48: ***for I…merits*** = the sense is, "as long as I get my money, I don't care about the merits of the case."
= fastidiously.[1]

50 ***Core.*** You whoreson, sodden-headed sheep's face,

50: ***sodden-headed*** = one who appears stupidly as if his head had been soaked in water, with a specific implication of being a drunkard.[1]
sheep's face = having the face of an animal as stupid as a sheep.[1]

shall a good fellow do less service and more honesty

51-52: ***shall a…parish*** = "shall a man like Jack perform so many good deeds for and be so generous to the parish". By ***less service***, Corebus means ***more service*** - as Whitworth points out, Corebus is prone to comically misspeaking.

52 to the parish, and will you not, when he is dead, let him have Christmas burial?

= malapropism for ***Christian***.[4]

54

Wigg. Peace, Corebus! as sure as Jack was Jack, the
56 frolic'st franion amongst you, and I, Wiggen, his sweet

= "quiet".
= merriest fellow; see line 8 of the play's opening scene.

sworn brother. Jack shall have his funerals, or some of

57: ***sworn brother*** = ie. pledged as the closest of companions, as if they were brothers-in-arms.[4]
funerals = ie. funeral rites.[3]
57-58: ***some…for it*** = ie. a threat to kill the church officials if Jack is not buried.

58 them shall lie on God's dear earth for it, that's once.

= "that's flat," or "that's settled once and for all."[3,5]

60 ***Church.*** Wiggen, I hope thou wilt do no more than thou darest answer.

= be held accountable for, take responsibility for.

62

Wigg. Sir, sir, dare or dare not, more or less, answer
64 or not answer, do this, or have this.

63: the frustrated Wiggen mocks the Churchwarden's formulaic responses to his plea.

66 [*Wiggen sets upon the parish with a pike-staff.*]

66: in the original edition, this line is actually printed as part of the Sexton's next speech, but most editors transform it into a stage direction.
parish = ie. the Churchwarden; we note, as did Whitworth, that the OED has no entry confirming the use of the word ***parish*** to refer to an individual.
pike-staff = a walking stick or staff with a metal point at one end.[1]

68 ***Sext.*** Help, help, help!

70 [*Eumenides awakes and comes to them.*]

72 ***Eum.*** Hold thy hands, good fellow.

74 ***Core.*** Can you blame him, sir, if he take Jack's part against this shake-rotten parish that will not bury Jack?

= side.
= the OED says simply, "a term of abuse"; ***rotten*** suggests putridity or corruption.

76

Eum. Why, what was that Jack?

= who.

78

Core. Who, Jack, sir? who, our Jack, sir? as good a
80 fellow as ever trod upon neat's-leather.

= "as ever walked in shoe-leather"; this expression appeared first (verbatim) in an anonymous play, *Misogonus*, which was written in the 1560's or 1570's, and was used also once in one of John Lyly's and twice in Shakespeare's plays.
neat's leather = hide of a cow.

Wigg. Look you, sir; he gave fourscore and nineteen mourning gowns to the parish, when he died, and

= 99.

= ie. gowns given to the church to be worn by the poor to attend Jack's funeral.[7]

because he would not make them up a full hundred, they would not bury him: was not this good dealing?

= ie. good conduct or treatment, fair dealing (ironic).[1]

Wiggen seems to be suggesting that Jack had promised a donation to the church in return for being properly buried, but because Jack did not fulfill the agreement to the letter, the church is reneging on its end of the bargain.

Church. O Lord, sir, how he lies! he was not worth a halfpenny, and drunk out every penny; and now his fellows, his drunken companions, would have us to bury him at the charge of the parish. And we make many such matches, we may pull down the steeple,

= expense. = if.

= contracts, agreements. = ie. "may as well".

sell the bells, and thatch the chancel: he shall lie above

= the Churchwarden means they will have to sell the slate or lead of the roof, and replace it with something cheap like thatch (Shaugnessy, p. 30).[22]

chancel = the end of the church by the alter, usually separated from the rest of the church by a screen or bar.[9]

ground till he dance a galliard about the church-yard, for Steeven Loach.

= an oft-mentioned lively dance.[2]

= the Churchwarden's own full name.

Wigg. *Sic argumentaris, Domine* Loach, − "And we make many such matches, we may pull down the steeple, sell the bells, and thatch the chancel?" − in good time, sir, and hang yourself in the bell-ropes, when you have done. *Domine, opponens præpono tibi hanc*

= "thus you argue, Master Loach"; a phrase from the art of Latin disputation, which was a dominant teaching method in universities of the Renaissance (Taylor, p. 940).[10]

100-1: ***Domine…quæstionem*** = "sir, in opposition, I put before you this question".[19]

quæstionem, whether will you have the ground broken or your pates broken first? for one of them shall be

= ie. into which to bury Jack.

= heads.

done presently, and to begin mine, I'll seal it upon your coxcomb.

103: ***presently*** = immediately.

to begin mine = the editors generally agree Wiggen means, "to begin my argument (with the help of my pike-staff)", though Dyce thinks words are missing here.

I'll seal it = "I'll ratify it"; to ***seal*** something, such as a letter, means to pour wax on it and impress it with one's seal: a metaphor here for giving a beating to.

= head; a ***coxcomb*** was the ridiculous cap sometimes worn by a jester, which had the form of the crest of a cock.

Eum. Hold thy hands, I pray thee, good fellow; be not too hasty.

= please.

Core. You capon's face, we shall have you turned out of the parish one of these days, with never a tatter to your arse; then you are in worse taking than Jack.

109: ***capon's face*** = having the (dull-witted) face of a castrated cock.[1]

109-110: ***turned out of*** = driven out of, banished from.

= not even a shred of clothing.

= "then you will be in even a worse condition or plight than is Jack (who is dead)."

Eum. Faith, and he is bad enough. This fellow does but the part of a friend, to seek to bury his friend: how much will bury him?

= ie. how much money.

Wigg. Faith, about some fifteen or sixteen shillings will bestow him honestly.

= deposit or lodge, ie. bury, him respectably.[1]

Sext. Ay, even thereabouts, sir.

Eum. Here, hold it, then: − [*Aside*] and I have left me but one poor three half-pence: now do I remember the words the old man spake at the cross, "Bestow all thou hast," and this is all, "till dead men's bones come at thy call:" − here, hold it [*gives money*]; and so farewell

= Eumenides begins to hand the necessary money over to the sexton.

= from 1561 to 1582, a silver coin worth three half-pence, or 1½ pence, was minted, allowing half-penny purchases to be made.[20]

Wigg. God, and all good, be with you, sir!

[*Exit Eumenides*.]

Nay, you cormorants, I'll bestow one peal of Jack at mine own proper costs and charges.

132: ***cormorants*** = ***cormorant*** describes a voraciously greedy person, like the sea-bird of the same name with the same insatiable appetite.

I'll bestow…charges = Wiggen will pay a bit of his own money to have the bell rung to mark Jack's passing.

of = on or for.

Core. You may thank God the long staff and the bilbo-blade crossed not your coxcomb[s]. − Well, we'll to the church-stile and have a pot, and so trill-lill.

135-6: Corebus means that the church officials are lucky they did not receive a thrashing from himself with his own weapons.

long staff = the OED suggests either (1) a simple long pole, or (2) such a long pole with a metal tip, which was a common weapon owned by England's rural population.

bilbo-blade = ie. sword; allusion to Bilboa, a Spanish city known for the manufacture there of the high-quality Spanish sword called a "bilbo".

136-7: ***we'll…trill-lill*** = briefly, "let's go grab a drink."

church-stile = the stile at an entrance to a church, where, as Nielson points out, an ale-house often stood. A 1642 poem contains the lines, "*For at every mile, close at the Church stile, / An house is ordain'd for a pot of Good Ale*."

pot = vessel for drinking ale.

trill-lill = onomatopoeic word for the flowing of a liquid.[1]

[*Exit Coreus and Wiggen*.]

Church and Sext. Come, let's go.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE VII.

Fant. But, hark you, gammer, methinks this Jack bore a great sway in the parish.

= listen. = had, exercised.

= influence.

Madge. O, this Jack was a marvelous fellow! he was but a poor man, but very well beloved: you shall see anon what this Jack will come to.

= shortly.

Enter the Harvest-men singing, with women in their hands.

= ie. holding the men's hands (Whitworth, p. 246).

Frol. Soft! who have we here? our amorous harvesters.

= the original edition oddly prints ***harvest starres*** here.

Fant. Ay, ay, let us sit still, and let them alone.

Here the Harvest-men begin to sing, the song doubled.

= sung twice.

SONG.

Lo, here we come a-reaping, a-reaping,
To reap our harvest-fruit!
And thus we pass the year so long,
And never be we mute.

[*Exeunt the Harvest-men*.]

SCENE VIII.

Outside Sacrapant's Castle.

Enter Huanebango.

Frol. Soft! who have we here?

1-5: A continuity error: Frantic and Madge act as if they are meeting Huanebango for the first time.
Soft = "wait a minute!"

Madge. O, this is a choleric gentleman! All you that love your lives, keep out of the smell of his two-hand sword: now goes he to the conjurer.

= ill-tempered.
= ie. reach or range.

Fant. Methinks the conjurer should put the fool into a juggling-box.

= unclear reference; to ***juggle*** is to ***conjure***, so clearly some sort of magician's prop, perhaps a container into which a magician can place a person and cause the individual to "disappear".

Huan. Fee, fa, fum,
Here is the Englishman, −
Conquer him that can, −
Come for his lady bright.
To prove himself a knight,
And win her love in fight.

10: ***Fee, fa, fum*** = early version of the well-known collection of nonsense syllables (***fee-fi-fo-fum!***) chanted by the giant in the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*; an 1877 dictionary of Gaelic terms argues the phrase may be traced back to a very ancient version of the story (told by the native Celts, in which a Celtic giant expresses a desire to eat a Saxon invader), and that the individual syllables actually have meanings, and create a coherent sentence:
fa = *faich*, meaning "see" or "behold".
fe = *fiadh*, meaning "food".
fi = *fiù*, meaning "good to eat".
fo = *fogh*, meaning "sufficient".
fum = *feum*, meaning "hunger".
When you string the words together, you get a sentence that means "Behold food, good to eat, sufficient for my hunger!"[11]
Finally, note the rhyme scheme of Huanebango's little poem (lines 10-15): **abbccc**.

Enter Corebus the Clown.

= rustic.

Core. Who-haw, Master Bango, are you here? hear

19-20: note Corebus' wordplay with ***you here*** and ***hear you***.

you, you had best sit down here, and beg an alms with me.

= better. = for.

Huan. Hence, base cullion! here is he that

23: ***Hence, base cullion!*** = "get out of here, you low-born rogue!"
he that = "he who", meaning himself.

commandeth ingress and egress with his weapon, and will enter at his voluntary, whosoever saith no.

= "decides who enters and who exits".
195: "will enter at his own say-so, regardless of who else might say 'no'."

A Voice. No.

27: Whitworth asserts this is the voice of Sacrapant, who is in hiding.

[*A flame of fire; and Huanebango falls down*.]

Madge. So with that they kissed, and spoiled the edge of as good a two-hand sword as ever God put life in.

31-32: humorous way to describe Huanebango, sword in hand, falling down, where his sword scraped a rock or other surface, dulling its edge.

Now goes Corebus in, spite of the conjurer.

= ie. in spite of.

Enter Sacrapant and Two Furies.

Sacr. Away with him into the open fields,
To be a ravening prey to crows and kites:

38: ***ravening prey*** = ravening means "ravenous" or "voracious";[1] the line presents an arresting example of a figure of speech called a ***hypallage***, in which the adjective ***ravening*** is applied to something other than what it actually is describing - the ***prey*** is not ***ravening***, but the ***crows and kites*** are.
kites = a ***kite*** is a bird of prey.

[*Huanebango is carried out by the Two Furies*.]

And for this villain, let him wander up and down.
In naught but darkness and eternal night.

= ie. Corebus.
= nothing.

[*Strikes Corebus blind*.]

Core. Here hast thou slain Huan, a slashing knight,
And robbed poor Corebus of his sight.

= spirited.
47-48: note Corebus' rhyming couplet.

Sacr. Hence, villain, hence!

= "away!"

[*Exit Corebus*.]

Now I have unto Delia
Given a potion of forgetfulness.
That, when she comes, she shall not know her brothers.
Lo, where they labour, like to country-slaves,

57: "look (***Lo***), there they labour, as if they were rural slaves"; such a reference to ***country-slaves*** might be odd if it had come out of an English character's mouth, but the Greek sorcerer was presumably thinking of actual slaves in his homeland.

With spade and mattock, on this enchanted ground!

= a tool for loosening hard ground; the terms ***spade*** and ***mattock*** were frequently paired in the era's literature.

Now will I call her by another name;
For never shall she know herself again,
Until that Sacrapant hath breathed his last.
See where she comes.

Enter Delia.

Come hither, Delia, take this goad; here hard
At hand two slaves do work and dig for gold:
Gore them with this, and thou shalt have enough.

[*He gives her a goad*.]

Delia. Good sir, I know not what you mean.

Sacr. [*Aside*] She hath forgotten to be Delia,
But not forgot the same she should forget;

But I will change her name. −
Fair Berecynthia, so this country calls you,

Go ply these strangers, wench; they dig for gold.

[*Exit Sacrapant*.]

Delia. O heavens, how
Am I beholding to this fair young man!
But I must ply these strangers to their work:
See where they come.

Enter the Two Brothers in their shirts, with spades, digging.

1st Broth. O brother, see where Delia is!

2nd Broth. O Delia,
Happy are we to see thee here!

Delia. What tell you me of Delia, prating swains?
I know no Delia, nor know I what you mean.
Ply you your work, or else you're like to smart.

1st Broth. Why, Delia, know'st thou not thy brothers here?
We come from Thessaly to seek thee forth;
And thou deceiv'st thyself, for thou art Delia.

Delia. Yet more of Delia? then take this, and smart:

[*Pricks them with the goad*.]

What, feign you shifts for to defer your labour?
Work, villains, work; it is for gold you dig.

2nd Broth. Peace, brother, peace: this vild enchanter
Hath ravished Delia of her senses clean,
And she forgets that she is Delia.

66: ***hither*** = here.

Delia = though the sorcerer just said he would not call Delia by her real name, he does so now, perhaps just to test her.

goad = a rod with a pointed metal end, used to drive cattle and draught animals.[1,9]

66-67: ***hard at hand*** = close by.

75: an unclear line: a possible interpretation is, "but she has not forgotten to call me *sir*, instead of using my given name, a sign that she is not attracted to me."

Gummere suggests ***the same*** means "as much as".

= Sacrapant borrows an alternate name of the goddess Cybele, also called Rhea, who was known as the protector of castles. ***Berecynthia*** was the name of the mountain on which Cybele was worshipped.[12]

= spur, drive.

= beholden. = ie. Sacrapant, as he appears to her.

= undershirts, ie. with their princely outer clothing removed.

= chattering country labourers or rustics.[1]

= ie. "apply yourselves to". = "likely to smart", ie. if she prods them with the goad.

= "dare you concoct false pretexts".

= "be quiet". = vile.

1st Broth. Leave, cruèl thou, to hurt the miserable. −

Dig, brother, dig, for she is hard as steel.

Here they dig,
and descry a light in a glass under a little hill.

2nd Broth. Stay, brother; what hast thou descried?

Delia. Away, and touch it not; it is something that my lord hath hidden there.

[*She covers it again*.]

Re-enter Sacrapant.

Sacr. Well said! thou plyest these pioners well. −

Go get you in, you labouring slaves.

[*Exeunt the Two Brothers*.]

Come, Berecynthia, let us in likewise,
And hear the nightingale record her notes.

[*Exeunt*.]

114: "please stop, you cruel one, hurting the already wretched."
= this still-common expression can be traced back to at least 1560.
= see, spy.
120: "stop".
129: ***Well said*** = common phrase for "well done".
thou plyest = "you are driving".
pioners = diggers, excavators.[2]
= ie. inside.
= go in.
= sing.

SCENE IX.

The Well of Life.

Enter Zantippa, the curst Daughter,
to the Well of Life, with a pot in her hand.

Entering Character: *Zantippa* is Lampriscus' shrewish (***curst***) daughter. Whitworth notes that the name is derived from the philosopher Socrates' famously shrewish wife Xanthippe.
pot = pitcher.

Zant. Now for a husband, house, and home: God send a good one or none, I pray God! My father hath sent me to the well for the water of life, and tells me, if I give fair words, I shall have a husband. But here comes Celanta my sweet sister: I'll stand by and hear what she says.

[*Retires*.]

= ie. a husband.
= flattering or specious words; Zantippa is perhaps sarcastic, resenting that she will have to ask politely or recite an obsequious formula just to get a man.
We may note, however, that Erestus' prophecy did not include an instruction for Lampriscus' girls to say anything specific to get husbands, only that the unlucky father should "send them to the well for the water of life."
8: it was a convention of Elizabethan drama for a character to hide at the approach of another, in order to hear what he or she will say; it was a further convention for the newly-appearing character to conveniently speak his or her thoughts aloud for the hidden individual to hear them.

Enter Celanta, the foul wench, to the well for water with a pot in her hand.

Entering Character: *Celanta* is Lampriscus' ugly (***foul***) daughter.

Cel. My father hath sent me to the well for water, and

he tells me, if I speak fair, I shall have a husband, and none of the worst. Well, though I am black, I am sure

= ie. "not a bad one either." = of swarthy complexion, hence unattractive; in the Elizabethan era, paler skin was viewed as more desirable.

all the world will not forsake me; and, as the old proverb is, though I am black, I am not the devil.

17: "though I am ugly, I am not a bad person." The expression appears verbatim in Elizabethan author Robert Greene's *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*.

Zant. [*Coming forward*] Marry-gup with a murren, I

= common oath. = with a pox, ie. "a plague take you;"[6] an intensifier of the oath.

know wherefore thou speakest that: but go thy ways home as wise as thou camest, or I'll set thee home with a wanion.

= "why you said that."

= with a vengeance or plague.[1,5]

[*Here she strikes her pitcher against her sister's, and breaks them both, and exits*.]

Cel. I think this be the curstest quean in the world: you see what she is, a little fair, but as proud as the devil, and the veriest vixen that lives upon God's earth. Well, I'll let her alone, and go home, and get another pitcher, and, for all this, get me to the well for water.

= "most ill-tempered, impudent woman".[1]
= somewhat attractive.
= greatest shrew, most quarrelsome female.[1]

[*Exit*.]

Enter, out of Sacrapant's cell, the Two Furies carrying Huanebango; they lay him by the Well of Life, and then exeunt.

= living chamber.

35-37: Huanebango is laid behind the well where Zantippa cannot immediately see him.

Re-enter Zantippa with a pitcher to the well.

Zant. Once again for a husband; and, in faith, Celanta, I have got the start of you; belike husbands grow by

41*f*: true to her nature, Zantippa is unhappy to have to moderate her character just to get a husband.

41-42: ***in faith…well-side*** = probably sarcastic: "truly, my sister, I have a head-start over you in the race to get a husband (ie. because I am at the well and you are not); it is very likely (***belike***) that husbands just grow next to the spring."

the start of = ie. an advantage over.

the well-side. Now my father says I must rule my tongue: why, alas, what am I, then? a woman without a tongue is as a soldier without his weapon: but I'll have my water, and be gone.

= control.

Here she offers to dip her pitcher in, and a Head rises in the well.

49-50: here is an opportunity for some fun special effects.

Peele borrowed the idea of the disembodied heads rising out of a well from an old English fairy tale, *The Three Heads of the Well*; the story can be found in Joseph Jacob's collection *English Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1890, pp. 222-28).

offers = starts.

Head. Gently dip, but not too deep,

51*ff*: in the original 1595 edition, the various Heads that rise out of the well speak recite their own poetry, but some editors, including Bullen, assign their speeches to a "Voice", a separate entity, while the Heads themselves remain silent.

Note the rhyme scheme of the Head's verse, ***aabbb***.

52 For fear you make the golden beard to weep.

= the original edition prints ***bird*** here, which is emended usually to ***beard***.

Fair maiden, white and red,
54 Stroke me smooth, and comb my head,
And thou shalt have some cockell-bread.

= ie. of pale skin and healthily ruddy hue.

= bread kneaded a special way and used as a love charm;[1] but Gummere tells us that after having engaged in much research, he concludes the phrase "to have cockell-bread" means simply "to get a lover or husband".

56

cockell = cockle, a field weed, ie. a plant which grows in grain fields.[1]

In Jacob's telling of the fairy-tale, the head recites,

Wash me and comb me,
And lay me down softly.
And lay me on a bank to dry,
That I may look pretty
When somebody passes by.

Zant. What is this?
58 "Fair maiden, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,

59: Zantippa mixes up this line: see line 54 above.

60 And thou shalt have some cockell-bread "?
"Cockell" callest thou it, boy? faith, I'll give you
62 cockell-bread.

61-62: it is unclear as to whether Zantippa is offended by the inferred double *entendre* of ***cockell***.

faith = truly.

64 *She breaks her pitcher upon the Head: then it thunders and lightens;*

= ie. flashes lightning.

66 *And Huanebango, who is deaf and cannot hear, rises up.*
68 .

Huan. Philida, phileridos, pamphilida, florida, flortos:

69-73: at first glance, it seems as if Huanebango is engaging in pronouncing some nonsense words as he tries to adjust to the fact that he can no longer hear; but based on his speech at 86-92 below, he is more likely trying to impress Zantippa with a type of crude verse, known (as Huanebango observes) as ***rim-ram-ruff***, which employs a heavy concentration of alliteration, and comes across, as here, as unsophisticated.

70 Dub dub-a-dub, bounce, quoth the guns, with a sulphurous huff-snuff:

70: Dyce has noted that the three onomatopoetical words in this line - ***Dub dub-a-dub***, ***bounce***, and ***huff-snuff*** - all appeared in widely-dispersed passages in a collection of poetry published in 1582 by Richard Stanyhurst. In 1589, pamphleteer Thomas Nashe took the opportunity to satirize a number of contemporary writers, including Stanyhurst, in his (Nashe's) introduction to Robert Greene's *Arcadia in Menaphon*, and he included references to those passages. No doubt borrowing from Nashe, Peele re-employs these expressions.

Dub dub-a-dub = the sound of a drum.

bounce = bang, the sound of a gun.

quoth the guns = say the guns.

sulphurous huff-snuff = the sulphurous smell of the smoke of a fired weapon.

huff-snuff = the OED defines ***huff-snuff*** as one who brags or hectors; but ***huff*** and ***snuff*** individually have the meaning of a puff or slight blast.

Waked with a wench, pretty peat, pretty love, and my sweet pretty pigsnie,

71: Huanebango uses various terms of endearment to describe Zantippa.
peat = sweetheart, girl.[1]
pigsnie = little pig.[3]

Just by thy side shall sit surnamed great Huanebango:
Safe in my arms will I keep thee, threat Mars, or thunder Olympus.

= ie. he who is surnamed.
73: ***threat Mars*** = even in the face of a threat of violence by the god of war.
thunder Olympus = thunder exploding down from the mountain home of the Olympian gods.

Zant. [*Aside*] Foh, what greasy groom have we here?

75: Note the alliteration of ***greasy groom***.
Foh = expression of disgust.[2]
greasy = term of abuse.[1]
groom = fellow, man.[1]

He looks as though he crept out of the backside of the well, and speaks like a drum perished at the west end.

= "from behind"; but there may be a secondary, and more vulgar meaning, "from out of the buttocks of".
77: ***speaks like a drum*** = referring to Huanebango's drum-like sound effects of line 70 above.
perished...west end = an unclear line, but some editors speculate that it may refer to a drum with its skin broken.

Huan. O, that I might, − but I may not, woe to my destiny therefore! −

79: this line is lifted verbatim from *Encomium Lauri* (*Praise for the Bay Tree*), a silly brief poem written by the once-famous English poet and author Gabriel Harvey. Harvey was a well-known proponent of writing English verse in hexameter, an idea which was widely ridiculed by other poets.[3,5]
79-80: ***O, that...clasp*** = "Oh, if only I could - but I may not!" - the knight concludes the thought in the next line - "kiss the one that I would hold in my arms!"

Kiss that I clasp! but I cannot: tell me, my destiny, wherefore?

80: ***my destiny*** = vocative expression, ie. "you who are my destiny".
wherefore = "why", ie. "why not?" It is unclear why Huanebango is unable to embrace Zantippa; based on his comments in line 90-91 below, he may still be more or less paralyzed as a side-effect of the spell placed on him by Sacrapant.

Zant. [*Aside*] Whoop! now I have my dream. Did you never hear so great a wonder as this, three blue beans in a blue bladder, rattle, bladder, rattle?

= ie. a perfect husband: see lines 93-94 below.
83: ***never*** = ie. ever.
83-84: ***three blue…rattle*** = ***blue beans*** are bullets or shot, which when inserted ***in a bladder*** would produce an effective rattle; Zantippa is comparing Huanebango's babbling to a noisy rattle.[13]

Huan. [*Aside*] I'll now set my countenance, and to her in prose; it may be, this rim-ram-ruff is too rude an encounter. − Let me, fair lady, if you be at leisure, revel with your sweetness, and rail upon that

86-88: ***I'll now…encounter*** = ie. to ***set one's countenance*** means to "make a show (either real or feigned) of one's actions, feelings or intentions";[1] Huanebango thus means he will start all over again, abandoning his ruder poetry (***rim-ram-ruff***) of lines 69-72, which he realizes is not impressing Zantippa, for a simpler declaration of his love in ***prose***; of course, Huanebango, romantic that he is, does not abandon his penchant for alliterative language.

= complain or rant about.[1]

cowardly conjurer, that hath cast me, or congealed me rather, into an unkind sleep, and polluted my carcass.

Zant. [*Aside*] Laugh, laugh, Zantippa; thou hast thy fortune, a fool and a husband under one.

Huan. Truly, sweet-heart, as I seem, about some twenty years, the very April of mine age.

Zant. [*Aside*] Why, what a prating ass is this!

Huan. Her coral lips, her crimson chin,

Her silver teeth so white within,
Her golden locks, her rolling eye,
Her pretty parts, let them go by,

Heigh-ho, have wounded me,
That I must die this day to see!

Zant. By Gogs-bones, thou art a flouting knave: "her coral lips, her crimson chin!" ka, wilshaw!

Huan. True, my own, and my own because mine, and mine because mine, ha, ha! above a thousand pounds in possibility, and things fitting thy desire in possession.

Zant. [*Aside*] The sot thinks I ask of his lands. Lob be your comfort, and cuckold be your destiny! − Hear you, sir; and if you will have us, you had best say so betime.

Huan. True, sweet-heart, and will royalize thy progeny with my pedigree.

[*Exeunt*.]

= solidified, froze.

= "violated or desecrated my body"; Huanebango's high language is absurdly, and hilariously, stylized.

= ie. in one.

96: ***sweet-heart*** = this term of endearment is over seven centuries old, appearing at least as early as 1290.[1]
as I seem = ie. "I am as I appear before you".

= chattering.

101-6: now Huanebango engages in classic Elizabethan era love poetry, in which a woman's various physical attributes are painstakingly listed and described, often compared via metaphors or similes to items of exceptional beauty of the natural world; note also the lines are arranged in rhyming couplets.

104: "her other attractive features (perhaps suggestive), which I will let pass without comment (***go by***)".[1]

= "alas!"

108: ***By Gog's bones*** = an oath; ***Gog's*** was a common euphemism for ***God's***.
flouting = mocking;[1] Zantippa assumes Huanebango is making fun of her.

109: ***ka*** = "quoth he", ie. "says he".[4]
wilshaw = unknown word, with no OED entry; but clearly a term of scorn.

112-3: ***above…possibility*** = Huanebango assures Zantippa of his wealth - he suggests his lands provide him up to 1000 pounds a year in annual rents.

116-7: ***Lob…comfort*** = "take consolation or comfort in that you will be living like a rustic (***Lob***)";[1] but Bullen suggests ***Lob*** is a reference to ***Lob's pound***, an expression normally used as slang for prison, which Bullen proposes here refers to the bondage of "hen-pecked married men."

117: a ***cuckold*** is a husband whose wife cheats on him; Zantippa already is planning to find satisfaction elsewhere.

118-9: ***if you…betime*** = "if you want to marry me, you better propose right away (***betime***)." Note that Zantippa also uses the royal 'we' in referring to herself as ***us***.

= children. = (high-ranking) blood or lineage.

124: and so we say good-bye to our parody of a knight; the marriage of Zantippa and Huanebango gives Madge's listeners a true fairy-tale ending: the hero gets himself an attractive wife, and the shrewish woman gets herself an attractive husband, whose happiness can never be dimmed because he will always be literally deaf to her nagging and other expressions of her ill-temper.

SCENE X.

A Road Somewhere Nearby.

Enter Eumenides.

Entering Character: Eumenides begins the scene by bemoaning his poverty and the apparent failure of his mission to find and rescue Delia.

Eum. Wretched Eumenides, still unfortunate,
Envied by fortune and forlorn by fate,

= hated; note the alliteration in the line, and the repetition in Eumenides' use of ***unfortunate*** and ***fortune***.

Here pine and die, wretched Eumenides,
Die in the spring, the April of my age!
Here sit thee down, repent what thou hast done:
I would to God that it were ne'er begun!

= starve, waste away.[2]

4: Eumenides rues the fact that he will die while still a young man.

my = changed by many editors to ***thy***.

Enter the Ghost of Jack.

Entering Character: the ghost of ***Jack***, the dead man the Sexton had earlier refused to bury, enters the stage.

G. of Jack. You are well overtaken, sir.

10: a greeting a traveler makes to one he has overtaken.[1]

Eum. Who's that?

G. of Jack. You are heartily well met, sir.

14: another greeting; Jack is a most polite spirit.

Eum. Forbear, I say: who is that which pincheth me?

16: ***Forbear*** = "stop it", or "leave me alone".

which pincheth me = ie. "who torments (or) afflicts me";[1,2] but Jack may literally have pinched Eumenides. Elizabethan spirits often pinched their victims.

G. of Jack. Trusting in God, good Master Eumenides, that you are in so good health as all your friends were at the making hereof, − God give you good morrow,

= another expression of good wishes on meeting.

sir! Lack you not a neat, handsome, and cleanly young lad, about the age of fifteen or sixteen years, that can run by your horse, and, for a need, make your mastership's shoes as black as ink? how say you, sir?

21-24 = Jack offers himself as a servant as for Eumenides.

Lack you not = "don't you have a need for"; a peddler or vender of goods usually called out "What lack you?" to passersby as a way to get their attention.

neat = well-spoken, well-dressed, or skillful.[1]

= ie. reference to a footman, a servant who literally runs next to a wealthy man's carriage as he travels about.

Eum. Alas, pretty lad, I know not how to keep myself, and much less a servant, my pretty boy; my state is so bad.

= "how to even provide for my own well-being".
= situation, condition.

26-28: Eumenides does not realize that Jack is a ghost.

G. of Jack. Content yourself, you shall not be so ill a master but I'll be as bad a servant. Tut, sir, I know you, though you know not me: are not you the man, sir, deny it if you can, sir, that came from a strange place in the land of Catita, where Jack-an-apes flies with his tail in his mouth, to seek out a lady as white as snow and as red as blood? ha, ha! have I touched you now?

= does not appear to be a real place. = "the monkey".

= "said something that closely concerns you".

Eum. [*Aside*] I think this boy be a spirit. − How knowest thou all this?

38: Eumenides wonders how Jack knows so much, and speculates he may be a ghost.

G. of Jack. Tut, are not you the man, sir, deny it if

41*ff*: note that Jack, who puts himself in the servant class, correctly addresses Eumenides with the formal and

respectful ***you***, while the knight appropriately addresses his social inferior with ***thou***.

you can, sir, that gave all the money you had to the burying of a poor man, and but one three half-pence left in your purse? Content you, sir, I'll serve you, that is flat.

= "be satisfied".

Eum. Well, my lad, since thou art so impor[tu]nate, I am content to entertain thee, not as a servant, but a copartner in my journey. But whither shall we go? for I have not any money more than one bare three half-pence.

= "you are so insistent".
= hire.
= to where.

G. of Jack. Well, master, content yourself, for if my divination be not out, that shall be spent at the next inn or alehouse we come to; for, master, I know you are passing hungry: therefore I'll go before and provide dinner until that you come; no doubt but you'll come fair and softly after.

53-54: ***if my…not out*** = "unless my guess or prediction is wrong".[2]

= exceedingly. = ahead.

= common expression for "at your own leisure", or "without hurry".[1]

Eum. Ay, go before; I'll follow thee.

G. of Jack. But do you hear, master? do you know my name?

Eum. No, I promise thee, not yet.

G. of Jack. Why, I am Jack.

[*Exit*.]

Eum. Jack! why, be it so, then.

71: Eumenides does not connect his companion's name with that of the dead man of Scene VI.

SCENE XI.

An Inn.

The Setting: Eumenides has not left the stage, but the scene is understood to switch to a tavern where Jack has arranged for the knight to receive dinner. Perhaps a curtain is drawn to reveal the interior of the establishment.

Enter the Hostess and Jack, setting meat on the table; and Fiddlers come to play. Eumenides walks up and down, and will eat no meat.

= food.

Host. How say you, sir? do you please to sit down?

Eum. Hostess, I thank you, I have no great stomach.

= appetite.

Host. Pray, sir, what is the reason your master is so strange? doth not this meat please him?

G. of Jack. Yes, hostess, but it is my master's fashion to pay before he eats; therefore, a reckoning, good hostess.

= habit, custom.
= "give us the bill".

Host. Marry, shall you, sir, presently.

[*Exit*.]

Eum. Why, Jack, what dost thou mean? Thou knowest I have not any money; therefore, sweet Jack, tell me what shall I do?

G. of Jack. Well, master, look in your purse.

Eum. Why, faith, it is a folly, for I have no money. = "that would be foolish to do".

G. of Jack. Why, look you, master; do so much for me.

Eum. [*looking into his purse*]
Alas, Jack, my purse is full of money!

G. of Jack. "Alas," master! does that word belong to this accident? why, methinks I should have seen you cast away your cloak, and in a bravado danced a galliard round about the chamber: why, master, your man can teach you more wit than this.

= Jack notes that an expression of regret like ***alas*** is the opposite of what he would expect from Eumenides at this moment.

= normally meaning "a show of ostentation of courage", but the sense here seems to simply be "a show of joy".

= a lively dance. = room.

= servant. = "to act more smartly".

[*Re-enter Hostess*.]

Come, hostess, cheer up my master.

Host. You are heartily welcome; and if it please you to eat of a fat capon, a fairer bird, a finer bird, a sweeter bird, a crisper bird, a neater bird, your worship never eat of.

= more skillfully prepared.

= "has never eaten before."

Eum. Thanks, my fine, eloquent hostess.

G. of Jack. But hear you, master, one word by the way: are you content I shall be halves in all you get in your journey?

48-49: ***I shall…journey*** = Jack, in return for providing Eumenides with food and money, asks if his companion will agree to split everything they come into possession of during the journey 50-50.

Eum. I am, Jack; here is my hand.

G. of Jack. Enough, master, I ask no more.

Eum. Come, hostess, receive your money; and I thank you for my good entertainment.

[*Gives money*.]

Host. You are heartily welcome, sir.

Eum. Come, Jack, whither go we now?

G. of Jack. Marry, master, to the conjurer's presently. = immediately.

Eum. Content, Jack. − Hostess, farewell. = "that is fine".

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE XII.

The Well of Life.

Enter Corebus, and Celanta, the foul wench, to the well for water.

Core. Come, my duck, come: I have now got a wife: thou art fair, art thou not?

= beautiful; we remember that Corebus has been struck blind.

Cel. My Corebus, the fairest alive; make no doubt of that.

Core. Come, wench, are we almost at the well?

= term of endearment, without negative connotation.

Cel. Ay, Corebus, we are almost at the well now. I'll go fetch some water: sit down while I dip my pitcher in.

A Head comes up with ears of corn, and she combs them into her lap.

= rakes, sweeps.

Head. Gently dip, but not too deep,
For fear you make the golden beard to weep.
Fair maiden, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,
And thou shalt have some cockell-bread.

A Second Head comes up full of gold, which she combs into her lap.

2nd Head. Gently dip, but not too deep,
For fear thou make the golden beard to weep.
Fair maid, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,
And every hair a sheaf shall be,
And every sheaf a golden tree.

= bundle of grain plants.[1]

Cel. O, see, Corebus, I have combed a great deal of gold into my lap, and a great deal of corn!

Core. Well said, wench! now we shall have just enough: God send us coiners to coin our gold. But come, shall we go home, sweet-heart?

34: ***well said*** = "well done".
just = some editors change ***just*** to ***toast***, suggesting that Corebus anticipates turning the grain into bread, just as he would make coins of their new-found gold.

= ie. minters of coins.

Cel. Nay, come, Corebus, I will lead you.

Core. So, Corebus, things have well hit;
Thou hast gotten wealth to mend thy wit.

40-41: Corebus recalls Erestus' prophecy of Scene IV.112-3.
well hit = turned out well.
= supplement.

[*Exeunt.*]

Corebus and Celanta: another happy ending to our tale; like Huanebango before him, Corebus unknowingly benefits from his handicap: being blind, he may live in blissful

ignorance of his wife's unattractiveness, while Celanta, against all odds, has landed herself a husband after all.

SCENE XIII.

Outside Sacrapant's Castle.

Enter the Ghost of Jack and Eumenides.

G. of Jack. Come away, master, come.

Eum. Go along, Jack, I'll follow thee. Jack, they say it is good to go cross-legged, and say his prayers backward; how sayest thou?

4-5: Eumenides describes some superstitious activities that may or may not be associated with good luck: the famous magician Henry Cornelius Agrippa Von Nettesheim (1486-1535) wrote that "to sit cross-legged is Sorcery", while reciting prayers backwards actually is associated with Black Magic, which utilizes all sorts of similar inversions, such as "consecrating obscene or filthy objects", to desecrate the rituals of Christianity.[21]

his = one's.

G. of Jack. Tut, never fear, master; let me alone. Here sit you still; speak not a word; and because you shall not be enticed with his enchanting speeches, with this same wool, I'll stop your ears.

8-10: ***because…your ears*** = in order to protect Eumenides from any charms Sacrapant might cast on him, Jack plugs up the knight's ears with tufts of wool; the interesting implication of this gesture is that the spell's effectiveness is determined by whether the target hears it, and not by the sorcerer's reciting it.

because (line 8) = so that.

[*Puts wool into the ears of Eumenides.*]

and so, master, sit still, for I must to the conjurer.

= get to, go to.

[*Exit.*]

Enter Sacrapant.

Sacr. How now! what man art thou, that sits so sad?
Why dost thou gaze upon these stately trees
Without the leave and will of Sacrapant? −

= permission or intention.

What, not a word, but mum? Then, Sacrapant,

= with wool in his ears, Eumenides cannot hear Sacrapant; in fact, he does not even realize the wizard is present.

Thou art betrayed.

= Sacrapant means he has been found out.

Enter the Ghost of Jack invisible, and takes Sacrapant's wreath from his head, and his sword out of his hand.

= one of the great stage directions; obviously Jack is not invisible to the audience, but only to Sacrapant.

What hand invades the head of Sacrapant?

30: it is interesting that even with his magic powers, Sacrapant cannot protect himself from, nor even see, the specter of Jack.

What hateful Fury doth envy my happy state?

31: the line contains an extra iamb, ie. it contains 12 syllables. Some old editors suggest deleting either ***hateful*** or ***happy***.[3,5]

Then, Sacrapant, these are thy latest days.

= ie. last moments alive.

Alas, my veins are numbed, my sinews shrink.
My blood is pierced, my breath fleeting away.

= ie. his life-giving blood is flowing out.

And now my timeless date is come to end!

= "(what was supposed to be) my unending life".[1]

He in whose life his acts hath been so foul,
Now in his death to hell descends his soul.

36-37: Sacrapant's speech concludes with a rhyming couplet; this was a common occurrence in Elizabethan drama, a way to signal the end of a character's part in a scene, or in this case, the play.

Such a concluding rhyming couplet usually comprises a pithy moral lesson.

We may note that while ***foul*** and ***soul*** do not rhyme in modern English, in the 16th century they would have done so: ***foul*** would have been pronounced with a long *o*, ie. *foh-l*.

acts = the original edition prints ***actions***, changed by most editors to ***acts*** for the meter.

[*He dies*.]

39: Whitworth suggests the Furies enter here and remove the sorcerer's body.

G. of Jack. O, sir, are you gone? now I hope we shall have some other coil. − Now, master, how like you this? the conjurer he is dead, and vows never to trouble us more: now get you to your fair lady, and see what you can do with her. − Alas, he heareth me not all this while! but I will help that.

41-42: ***O, sir…coil*** = ironic.
= fuss, to-do.[1]

[*Pulls the wool out of his ears*.]

Eum. How now, Jack! what news?

50: as suggested above, Eumenides is still completely oblivious to the fact that Sacrapant had been nearby, or that he has died.

G. of Jack. Here, master, take this sword, and dig with it at the foot of this hill.

[*Gives sword*.]

[*He digs and spies a light in a glass*.]

Eum. How now, Jack! what is this?

G. of Jack. Master, without this the conjurer could do nothing; and so long as this light lasts, so long doth his art endure, and this being out, then doth his art decay.

= magic, ie, the spells he has cast. = ie. fail.

Eum. Why, then, Jack, I will soon put out this light.

G. of Jack. Ay, master, how?

Eum. Why, with a stone I'll break the glass, and then blow it out.

G. of Jack. No, master, you may as soon break the smith's anvil as this little vial: nor the biggest blast that ever Boreas blew cannot blow out this little light; but she that is neither maid, wife, nor widow. Master, wind this horn, and see what will happen.

= of breath or wind.
= the god of the north wind.
75: Jack recalls the words of Sacrapant at Scene V.162.
= blow.

[*Gives horn*.]

Eumenides winds the horn.
Enter Venelia, who breaks the glass, blows out the light, and then exits.

81-82: since Venelia is betrothed to Erestus, she satisfies the conditions of line 75 above (the requirement that she not

be a ***maid*** seems to mean that she not be an old maid, or perhaps simply not unattached).

So, master, how like you this? this is she that ran madding in the woods, his betrothed love that keeps the cross; and now, this light being out, all are restored to their former liberty: and now, master, to the lady that you have so long looked for.

= madly, in a state of insanity. = ie. "the fiancée of he who".

= freedom (from Sacrapant's spells).

[*The ghost of Jack draws a curtain, revealing Delia sitting asleep*.]

Eum. God speed, fair maid, sitting alone, − there is once;

93: ***God speed*** = "may you thrive".
there is once = ie. "that is the first time I have recited the magic line."

God speed, fair maid, − there is twice;
God speed, fair maid, − that is thrice.

93-94: Whitworth cites an earlier editor who suggested that ***sitting alone*** should also be repeated after saying ***fair maid***; this would make Delia's next line make more sense.

Delia. Not so, good sir, for you are by.

97: "I am not alone, sir, with you so close by."

G. of Jack. Enough, master, she hath spoke; now I will leave her with you.

[*Exit*.]

Eum. Thou fairest flower of these western parts,
Whose beauty so reflecteth in my sight
As doth a crystal mirror in the sun;
For thy sweet sake I have crossed the frozen Rhine;

= ie. "this most western part of Europe" - we remember that Eumenides comes from Greece - but so does Delia.

107-110: Eumenides reviews the various rivers he has encountered and crossed as a way of portraying how far he has traveled searching for Delia.
the frozen Rhine = the Rhine is frequently described as cold or frozen, in imitation of Roman writers who meditated on the Rhine's location so far to the north relative to Italy (Sugden, p. 430).[16]
A variation of lines 107-110 appear in Robert Greene's roughly contemporaneous play *Orlando Furioso*:
Northeast as far as is the frozen Rhine,
Leaving fair Voya, crossed up Danuby,
As high as Saba, whose enhancing streams
Cut 'twixt the Tartars and the Russians.

Leaving fair Po, I sailed up Danuby,
As far as Saba, whose enhancing streams

= Italy's largest river.
109: the modern ***Sava River***, which flows into the Danube in modern Serbia.
enhancing streams = rising waters.

Cut twixt the Tartars and the Russians:

110: Eumenides, with as little regard for accurate geography as Robert Greene, describes the Sava as flowing north of the Caucus mountain range, separating Tartary (the land of the ***Tartars***, located vaguely somewhere in northern Asia) and Russia.[16]

These have I crossed for thee, fair Delia:
Then grant me that which I have sued for long.

= pleaded for or sought.

Delia. Thou gentle knight, whose fortune is so good
To find me out and set my brothers free,
My faith, my heart, my hand I give to thee.

Eum. Thanks, gentle madam: but here comes Jack; thank him, for he is the best friend that we have.

Enter the Ghost of Jack, with Sacrapant's head in his hand.

122: a sliced-off head was a favourite stage prop, a hearkening back to the old mystery plays, in which the appearance of John the Baptist's head was guaranteed to please the crowd.

How now, Jack! what hast thou there?

G. of Jack. Marry, master, the head of the conjurer.

Eum. Why, Jack, that is impossible; he was a young man.

128-9: the head is that of an old man.

G. of Jack. Ah, master, so he deceived them that beheld him! but he was a miserable, old, and crooked man, though to each man's eye he seemed young and fresh; for, master, this conjurer took the shape of the old man that kept the cross, and that old man was in the likeness of the conjurer. But now, master, wind your horn.

134-136: ***this conjuror…the conjuror*** = Sacrapant - the old conjuror - had taken the form of Erestus, while Erestus, who was actually young, was given the appearance of Sacrapant.

= blow.

Eumenides winds his horn.

Enter Venelia, the Two Brothers, and he that was at the cross.

= ie. Erestus, now appearing as the young man he really is.

Eum. Welcome, Erestus! welcome, fair Venelia! Welcome, Thelea and Calypha both!

= the names of the brothers; it is worth noting this is the only time in the play in which Thelea is identified by name.

Now have I her that I so long have sought;
So saith fair Delia, if we have your consent.

= ***saith*** is a monosyllable. = ie. the two brothers.

1st Broth. Valiant Eumenides, thou well deservest

= note that the brother, a prince, addresses Eumenides, his social inferior, with ***thou***, while the knight addresses the royal brother with ***you***.

To have our favours; so let us rejoice
That by thy means we are at liberty:
Here may we joy each in other's sight,
And this fair lady have her wandering knight

152: the meter is off; Dyce suggests adding ***the*** before ***other's***; note also the rhyming couplet of 152-3.

G. of Jack. So, master, now ye think you have done; but I must have a saying to you: you know you and I were partners, I to have half in all you got.

= ie. "have completed your mission."
= "say something to you."

Eum. Why, so thou shalt, Jack.

G. of Jack. Why, then, master, draw your sword, part your lady, let me have half of her presently.

= immediately.

Eum. Why, I hope, Jack, thou dost but jest: I promised thee half I got, but not half my lady.

G. of Jack. But what else, master? have you not

gotten her? therefore divide her straight, for I will have half; there is no remedy.

= right away.
= ie. "no way out of this."

Eum. Well, ere I will falsify my word unto my friend, take her all: here, Jack, I'll give her thee.

= before.
= ie. "to thee."

G. of Jack. Nay, neither more nor less, master, but even just half.

Eum. Before I will falsify my faith unto my friend, I will divide her: Jack, thou shalt have half.

= "prove my promise to be untrue".

1st Broth. Be not so cruel unto our sister, gentle knight.

2nd Broth. O, spare fair Delia! she deserves no death.

Eum. Content yourselves; my word is passed to him. − Therefore prepare thyself Delia, for thou must die.

= "you must be satisfied."

Del. Then farewell, world! adieu, Eumenides!

[*Eumenides offers to strike, and the Ghost of Jack stays him.*]

= begins.
= stops.

G. of Jack. Stay, master; it is sufficient I have tried your constancy. Do you now remember since you paid for the burying of a poor fellow?

= tested.
= "faithfulness (to your word)."

Eum. Ay, very well, Jack.

G. of Jack. Then, master, thank that good deed for this good turn: and so God be with you all!

= deed.

[*The Ghost of Jack leaps down in the ground.*]

= into; here is another opportunity for some entertaining special effects, as Jack, for example, may disappear through a trap door in a flash of smoke.

Eum. Jack, what, art thou gone? then farewell, Jack!−
Come, brothers, and my beauteous Delia,
Erestus, and thy dear Venelia,
We will to Thessaly with joyful hearts.

= go to.

All. Agreed: we follow thee and Delia.

[*Exeunt all but Frolic, Fantastic, and Madge.*]

Fant. What, gammer, asleep?

= grandma (to Madge).

Madge. By the mass, son, 'tis almost day; and my windows shut at the cock's-crow.

214: ***by the mass*** = an oath.
214-5 ***my windows…cock's crow*** = Madge means her eyes are shut, indeed asleep (her ***windows*** are her eyelids; hence Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*: "*thy eyes' windows fall*").

Frol. Do you hear, gammer? methinks this Jack bore a great sway amongst them.

= influence.

Madge. O, man, this was the ghost of the poor man that they kept such a coil to bury; and that makes him to help the wandering knight so much. But come, let us in: we will have a cup of ale and a toast this

= made such a fuss over. = caused.

223: ***in*** = go in; one may wonder when the group actually exited the cottage, especially if Madge was asleep.

morning, and so depart.

Fant. Then you have made an end of your tale, gammer?

Madge. Yes, faith: when this was done, I took a piece of bread and cheese, and came my way; and so shall you have, too, before you go, to your breakfast.

[*Exeunt*.]

FINIS.

a cup of ale = a normal morning drink.
a toast = to use as a sop.
= ie. part.[3]

Postscript: Erestus' Prophecies: the reader may wish to review Erestus' various prophecies, which would have had no meaning to the reader when he or she first read them:

1. Scene II.49-50 (to the Brothers):
   For when one flame of fire goes out,
   Then come your wishes well about.
2. Scene II.151-2 (to Lampriscus):
   ...send them to the well for the water of life; there shall they find their fortunes unlooked for.
3. Scene IV.111 (to Corebus):
   He shall be deaf when thou shalt not see.
4. Scene VI.18-19 (to Eumenides):
   Bestow thy alms, give more than all,
   Till dead men's bones come at thy call.

George Peele's Invented Words

Like all of the writers of the era, George Peele 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 *The Old Wives' Tale* 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:

booby
cockle-bread
long-staff
madness (meaning enthusiasm or excitement)
palmer-staff
rot (used in an imprecation, e.g. "a rot on you all")
run (or **go**) **madding**
shake-rotten

Additional phrases which research suggests originated in The Old Wives' Tale

once upon a time (to start a story, though the formula **once on a time** and **once upon a day** had appeared earlier)

as ever (went) on neat's leather*
duck (as a term of endearment)
fee fa fum (predecessor to the more familiar **fee fi fo fum**)
have a saying* = to say something
lamb's wool* (referring to the drink)

* = those terms marked with an asterisk likely originated with Peele, if he indeed wrote his play, as has been speculated, before 1593.

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

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