ElizabethanDrama.org
presents
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.

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THE OLD WIVES' TALE
by George Peele
Written c. 1590-5
First Published 1595

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.

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.

SCENE I.
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.

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. *Frolic* = merry. *Fantastic* = fanciful, imagined.

1: *Frolic* = the original edition accidentally prints *Franticke* here.

2: *amort* = downcast, dejected.

1-2: *doth...madness* = "does this sad mood fit your normal merry character?"

3-6: *for Fantastic...hundred* = Antic offers 5-to-1 odds that Frolic will not die or be killed this night. *warrant* = assure, guarantee.

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."

10: way in the wood, *without either fire or candle*, so uncomfortable? *O cœlum! O terra! O maria! O Neptune!*

12: *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: *Frolic.* 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"?

19: *wench* = girl or maid; *wench* did not necessarily carry any negative connotation.

20: *ill fortune* = bad luck.

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

1: *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 tomorrow; for Fantastic and I will *warrant* thy life to night for twenty in the hundred.

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

14: *Why...strange* = "why are you being so difficult"?

14-16: *seeing...serve* = typical Elizabethan language describing a man in love.

19: *take...tree* = climb or take a position up in a tree.
Three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men be we;
In the wood, and thou on the ground,
And Jack sleeps in the tree.

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.

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!

Enter Clunch, a Smith with a lantern and candle.

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

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?

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.

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

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.

All. O blessed smith, O bountiful Clunch!

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

[Hear a dog bark.]

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.

Enter Madge, an Old Woman.

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.

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

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

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?

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

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.

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.

= sirs.

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

= generous.

= ie. "and so forth".

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

= "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. Whitworth notes it is bad luck to stumble at the entrance.

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

= "my husband".

= either a sausage or a sweet baked dish.

= a vocative expression: old woman, grandma.

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

94-95: take away = "clear the table".

96: crab = crabapple.

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

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

drive away = pass, wile away.

= common simile of the period.
Madge his wife. Sirrah Frolic, I am sure thou art not without some round or other: no doubt but Clunch can bear his part.

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

[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.

Antic. This sport does well; but methinks, gammer, a merry winter's tale would drive away the time trimly:
come, I am sure you are not without a score.

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

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

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.

Fant. No better hay in Devonshire; o' my word,
gammere, I'll be one of your audience.

Frol. And I another, 

that's flat.

Antic. Then must I to bed with the good-man. — Bona Nox, gammer. — God night, Frolic.

Clunch. Come on, my lad, thou shalt take thy unnatural rest with me.

[Exeunt Antic and the Smith.]

Frol. Yet this vantage shall we have of them in the morning, to be ready at the sight thereof extempore.

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.

Both. Content, gammer, that will we do.

Madge. Once upon a time, there was a king, or a lord,
or a duke, that had a fair daughter, the fairest that ever was; as white as snow and as red as blood; and once upon a time his daughter was stolen away: and he sent all his men to seek out his daughter; and he sent so long, that he sent all his men out of his land.

Frol. Who drest his dinner, then?

Madge. Nay, either hear my tale, or kiss my tail.

Fant. Well said! on with your tale, gammer.

Madge. O Lord, I quite forgot! there was a conjurer, and this conjurer could do anything, and he turned himself into a great dragon, and carried the king's daughter away in his mouth to a castle that he made of 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 sounding expression. Devonshire is noted for the fertility of its land. Our author George Peele was believed to hail from a Devonshire family.

= ie. "that's settled."

144-5: Bona nox = Latin for "good night". = a variation of good night which appears intermittently in this period.

= unnatural presumably because two men will sleep together in a single bed.

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.

= advantage. = ie. over.

= something like, "we will be ready (ie. dressed and ready) at move out at once (extempore) at the sight (ie. moment) of dawn."

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.

= "ok".

= 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).

= beautiful.

= 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.

= kidnapped.

165-6: he sent so long = ie. "he sent out men to find his daughter over such a long period of time".

= prepared.

= 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.

= sorcerer or wizard.
brothers went to seek her. O, I forget! she (he, I would say), turned a proper young man to a bear in the night, and a man in the day, and keeps by a cross that parts three several ways; and he made his lady run mad, —

Gods me bones, who comes here?

SCENE II.


Enter the Two Brothers.

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

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

6 1st Broth. Upon these chalky cliffs of Albion

We are arrivèd now with tedious toil;

And compassing the wide world round about,

To seek our sister, seek fair Delia forth,

Yet cannot we so much as hear of her.

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?

Enter Erestus at the cross, stooping to gather.

180-1: (he...say) = "no, I mean he".

182: a man = ie. into an old man.

keeps = ie. "he dwells".

182-3: cross...ways = ie. three-way intersection, marked by an actual cross.

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

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

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.

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.

We are arrivèd now with tedious toil;

And compassing the wide world round about,

To seek our sister, seek fair Delia forth,

Yet cannot we so much as hear of her.

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?

Enter Erestus at the cross, stooping to gather.

6ff: 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 (today comprising England, Scotland and Wales). The chalky cliffs are the White Cliffs of Dover.

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

= unfortunate. = very bad luck.

= "hold on!"

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?

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

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.

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.

Erest. Was she fair?

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

Erest. Then hark well, and mark well, my old spell: —
Be not afraid of every stranger;

Start not aside at every danger;
Things that seem are not the same:
Blow a blast at every flame;
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.

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

[Exeunt the Two Brothers.]

Erest. Now sit thee here, and tell a heavy tale,
Sad in thy mood, and sober in thy cheer:
Here sit thee now, and to thyself relate
The hard mishap of thy most wretched state.
In Thessaly I lived in sweet content,
Until that fortune wrought my overthrow;
For there I wedded was unto a dame,
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
Did turn me straight unto an ugly bear;
And when the sun doth settle in the west.
Then I begin to do\textit{\textbf{r}} my ugly hide:
And all the day I sit, as now you see,
And speak in riddles, all inspired with rage.

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

\textit{Enter Venelia his lady mad; and goes in again.}

See where Venelia, my betro\textit{\textbf{h}}èd love,
Runs madding, all enraged, about the woods,
All by his cursed and enchanting spells. –
But here comes Lampriscus, my discontented neighbour.

\textit{Enter Lampriscus with a pot of honey.}

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

\textit{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.

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

\textit{Lamp.} I am, as you know, neighbour, a man unmarried, and lived so unequally 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 other on Saint Luke's.

83-84: he turns into a bear at sunset.
= wear, put on.

86: \textit{\textbf{speak in riddles}} = like those spoken by the oracles of ancient Greece, Erestus' prophecies are usually highly ambiguous in meaning.
\textit{all inspired with rage} = ie. divinely inspired with prophetic ability.$^1$
= ie. "(actually) a young man."

\textbf{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.

= acting in a mad or frenzied manner; the OED files this use of \textit{madding} as a verb.

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

99-100: \textit{\textbf{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.
= 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.

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

\textit{Lamp.} I am, as you know, neighbour, a man unmarried, and lived so unequally 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 other on Saint Luke's.

= ie. November 30: St. Andrew was thought to bring good luck to lovers.$^5$
= 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 \textit{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,
And now, neighbour, you of this country say, your custom is out. But on with your tale, neighbour.

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.

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

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.

Holily praised, neighbour. As much for the next.

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 dowry answerable to her deformity.

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.

Farewell, and a thousand.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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?

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 Janus, Sol and Saturnus, Venus and Vesta, Pallas and Proserpina, and by the honour of my house, Polimackeroplaycydus, it is a wonder to see what this love will make silly fellows adventure, even in the wane of their wits and infancy of their discretion. Alas, 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, loose enchantments, murder magic, and kill conjuring, — and that is the great and mighty Huanebango.

= who, referring to Huanebango.

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.

= 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, Polymachaeoplagides. 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.

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.

= brass.
= added by Dyce.
= without equal.
= loos. = 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.

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 the flurting feather, and have given the parish the start for the long stock: now, sir, if it be no more but

running through a little lightning and thunder, and "riddle me, riddle me what's this?" I'll have the wench from the conjurer, if he were ten conjurers.

Huan.  I have abandoned the court and honourable company, to do my devoir against this sore sorcerer and mighty magician: if this lady be so fair as she is said to be, she is mine, she is mine; meus, mea, meum, in contemptum omnium grammaticorum.

Core.  O falsum Latinum!
The fair maid is minum, Cum apurtinantibus gibletis and all.

Huan.  If she be mine, as I assure myself the heavens will do somewhat to reward my worthiness, she shall be allied to none of the meanest gods, but be invested in the most famous stock of Huanebango Polimackeroeplacydus my grandfather; my father Pergopolineo; my mother Dionora de Sardinia, famously descended.

23ff: 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.

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.
= ie. even if.

31: do my devoir = "do my duty" or "take on this task".1
sore = troublesome, severe;1 note the wordplay of sore sorcerer.

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

36: "oh, false Latin!"
37: faux, and mocking, Latin for mine.
= "with its appurtenances". = mock Latin for giblets, ie. guts.
= something.
= "not even the least of the".

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.

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.

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

= this name of the knight's kin includes elements of bust, meaning "container", and gust, referring to the sense of taste; 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.

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

= castrated cock, another popular food.

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

fault = weakness, defect.

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

70-72: Huanebango describes Delia.

74-75: "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.

= act.

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.]
SCENE V.

Sacrapant's Castle.

Enter Sacrapant in his study.

Sacr. The day is clear, the welkin bright and gray.
The lark is merry and records her notes;
Each thing rejoiceth underneath the sky,
But only I, whom Heaven hath in hate,
Wretched and miserable Sacrapant.
In Thessaly was I born and brought up;
My mother Meroe hight, a famous witch,
And by her cunning I of her did learn
To change and alter shapes of mortal men.
There did I turn myself into a dragon,
And stole away the daughter to the king,
Fair Delia, the mistress of my heart;
And brought her hither to revive the man,
That seemeth young and pleasant to behold,
And yet is aged, crookèd, weak, and numb.
Thus by enchanting spells I do deceive
Those that behold and look upon my face;
But well may I bid youthful years adieu.

See where she comes from whence my sorrows grow!

Enter Delia with a pot in her hand.

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!
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.

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.

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

Here, Delia, will ye fall to?

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?


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.

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

Friar. The miserable and most covetous usurer.

Sacr. Hold thee there, friar.

[Exit Friar.]

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

Enter the Two Brothers.

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

[Exeunt Delia and Sacrapant.]

1st Broth. Brother, was not that Delia did appear, Or was it but her shadow that was here?

2nd Broth. Sister, where art thou? Delia, come again! He calls, that of thy absence doth complain. – Call out, Calypha, that she may hear, And cry aloud, for Delia is near.

Echo. Near.

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

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."

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.

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

Sacr. Ay, and thou too, Calypha.

[The First Brother falls down.]

Adestes, daemones!

[Enter Two Furies.]

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

[Exeunt Furies with the Two Brothers.]

These are Thenores' sons of Thessaly,
That come to seek Delia their sister forth:
But, with a potion I to her have given,
My arts have made her to forget herself.

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

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,
And never none shall break this little glass.

But she that's neither wife, widow, nor maid:
Then cheer thyself; this is thy destiny,
Never to die but by a dead man's hand.

[Exit.]

SCENE VI.
The Cross.

Enter Eumenides.

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.

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.

[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.

[Lies down and sleeps.]

Enter Wiggen, Corebus, Churchwarden, and Sexton.

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!

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

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

= ie. guiding star, meaning Delia.

= expression of good will.

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.

= figurative for "in a state of perplexity".

= instructs.

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

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.

= vile, contemptible;^2 Bullen suggest "scabby".

= ie. assume the costs of the burial.

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 am not one that curiously stands upon merits.

Core. You whoreson, sodden-headed sheep's face, shall a good fellow do less service and more honesty to the parish, and will you not, when he is dead, let him have Christmas burial?

Wigg. Peace, Corebus! as sure as Jack was Jack, the frolic'st franion amongst you, and I, Wiggen, his sweet sworn brother. Jack shall have his funerals, or some of them shall lie on God's dear earth for it, that's once.

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

Wigg. Sir, sir, dare or dare not, more or less, answer or not answer, do this, or have this. [Wiggen sets upon the parish with a pike-staff.]

Sext. Help, help, help! [Eumenides awakes and comes to them.]

Eum. Hold thy hands, good fellow.

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

Eum. Why, what was that Jack?


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: 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

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.

= malapropism for Christian.⁴

= "quiet".

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

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.

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

= be held accountable for, take responsibility for.

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

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

= side.

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

= who.

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

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, sell the bells, and thatch the chancel: he shall lie above ground till he dance a galliard about the church-yard, for Steeven Loach.

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 praepo tibi hanc quæstionem, whether will you have the ground broken or your pates broken first? for one of them shall be done presently, and to begin mine, I’ll seal it upon your coxcomb.

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

[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.

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.

Enter the Harvest-men singing, with women in their hands.
**Frol.** Soft! who have we here? our amorous harvesters.

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

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

**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.*

_E Enter Huanebango._

**Frol.** Soft! who have we here?

**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.

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

**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.*

[Exeunt the Harvest-men.]

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

---

1-5: A continuity error: Frantic and Madge act as if they are meeting Huanebango for the first time.

Soft = "wait a minute!"

= ill-tempered.

= ie. reach or range.

= 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”.

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_ = *fiu*, 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!”

Finally, note the rhyme scheme of Huanebango’s little poem (lines 10-15): _abbcc_.

= rustic.

19-20: note Corebus’ wordplay with _you_ here and _hear you_.

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

**Huan.** Hence, base cullion! here is he that

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

**A Voice.** No.

[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.

Now goes Corebus in, spite of the conjurer.

*Enter Sacrapant and Two Furies.*

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

[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.

[Strikes Corebus blind.]

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

**Sacr.** Hence, villain, hence!

[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,

With spade and mattock, on this enchanted ground! 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 vile enchanter  
Hath ravished Delia of her senses clean,  
And she forgets that she is Delia.
1st Broth. Leave, cruel 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.]

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

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IX.

The Well of Life.

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

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.]"please stop, you cruel one, hurting the already wretched."

= this still-common expression can be traced back to at least 1560.

= see, spy.

= stop".

120: "stop".

129: Well said = common phrase for "well done".

thou plyest = "you are driving".
pioners = diggers, excavators.²

= ie. inside.

= go in.

= sing.

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.

= 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.

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

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

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

**Zant.** [Coming forward] Marry-gup with a murren, I know wherefore thou speakest that: but go thy ways home as wise as thou camest, or I'll set thee home with a wanion.

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

**Cel.** I think this be the curtest 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.

*[^Exit.]*

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

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 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.

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

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

Zant. What is this?
"Fair maiden, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,
And thou shalt have some cockell-bread"?
"Cockell" callest thou it, boy? faith, I'll give you cockell-bread.

She breaks her pitcher upon the Head:
then it thunders and lightens;
And Huanebango, who is deaf and cannot hear,
rises up.

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

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

Note the rhyme scheme of the Head's verse, aabb.

= the original edition prints bird here, which is emended usually to beard.
= ie. of pale skin and healthily ruddy hue.
= bread kneaded a special way and used as a love charm; 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".
cockell = cockle, a field weed, ie. a plant which grows in grain fields.
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.

59: Zantippa mixes up this line: see line 54 above.
61-62: it is unclear as to whether Zantippa is offended by the inferred double entendre of cockell.

faith = truly.

She breaks her pitcher upon the Head:
then it thunders and lightens;
And Huanebango, who is deaf and cannot hear,
rises up.

59: Zantippa mixes up this line: see line 54 above.
61-62: it is unclear as to whether Zantippa is offended by the inferred double entendre of cockell.
faith = truly.

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: 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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?

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

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

= 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.

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

= "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.

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!"

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.

= 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

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 impressive 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. = solidified, froze.

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

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! = chattering.

Huan. Her coral lips, her crimson chin, = her other attractive features (perhaps suggestive), which I will let pass without comment (go by).

Zant. By Gog's bones, thou art a flouting knave: "her By Gog's bones = an oath; Gog's was a common euphemism for God's.

flouting = mocking; Zantippa assumes Huanebango is making fun of her.

109: ka = "quoth he", ie. "says he". = "alus!"

wilshaw = unknown word, with no OED entry; but clearly a term of scorn.

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.] = 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.

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

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!

Enter the Ghost of Jack.

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

Eum. Who's that?

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

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

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, 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?

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

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?

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

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

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

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

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

my = changed by many editors to thy.

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

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

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

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

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

= another expression of good wishes on meeting.

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.

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

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

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

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

= "said something that closely concerns you".

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

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

**Eum.** Well, my lad, since **thou art so importunate**, 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.

**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.

**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.

**SCENE XI.**

*An Inn.*

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.

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

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

**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.

**Host.** Marry, shall you, sir, presently.
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.

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.

[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.

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?

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.

[Give money.]

Host. You are heartily welcome, sir.

Eum. Come, Jack, whither go we now?

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

Eum. Content, Jack. − Hostess, farewell. [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?  
Cel. My Corebus, the fairest alive; make no doubt of that.

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

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.

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?
Cel. Nay, come, Corebus, I will lead you.
Core. So, Corebus, things have well hit: Thou hast gotten wealth to mend thy wit.

[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
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?

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.

[Puts wool into the ears of Eumenides.]

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

[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? —

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

Thou art betrayed.

Enter the Ghost of Jack invisible,

and takes Sacrapant's wreath from his head,
and his sword out of his hand.

What hand invades the head of Sacrapant?

What hateful Fury doth envy my happy state?

Then, Sacrapant, these are thy latest days.

Alas, my veins are numbed, my sinews shrink.

My blood is pierced, my breath fleeting away.

And now my timeless date is come to end!
He in whose life his acts hath been so foul,
Now in his death to hell descends his soul.

[He dies.]

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.

[Pulls the wool out of his ears.]

Eum. How now, Jack! what news?

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.

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.

[Gives horn.]

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

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

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

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

Delia. Not so, good sir, for you are 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;
Leaving fair Po, I sailed up Danuby,
As far as Saba, whose enhancing streams
Cut twixt the Tartars and the Russians:
These have I crossed for thee, fair Delia:
Then grant me that which I have sued for long.

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.
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.*

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.

**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.

*Eumenides winds his horn.*

*Enter Venelia, the Two Brothers,*

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

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

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

**1st Broth.** Valiant Eumenides, *thou* well deservest 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

**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.

**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.

**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

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.

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

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.

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

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

= ie. "have completed your mission."

= "say something to you."

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

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

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.

Del. Then farewell, world! adieu, Eumenides!

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

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?

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!

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

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.

All. Agreed: we follow thee and Delia.

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

Fant. What, gammer, asleep?

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

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

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

= right away.
= ie. "no way out of this."
= before.
= ie. "to thee."
= "prove my promise to be untrue".
= "you must be satisfied."
= begins.
= stops.
= tested.
= "faithfulness (to your word)."
= deed.
= 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.
= go to.
= grandma (to Madge).

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").

= influence.
= 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.

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:
1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.