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the Annotated Popular Edition of

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare

Written c. c. 1594-6

Earliest Extant Edition: 1600

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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THIS EDITION of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
is for readers who wish to truly understand
– even luxuriate in –
Shakespeare's language,
without constantly interrupting their reading
to hunt for word meanings and explanations
in footnotes or the opposite page.

Here, all annotations are integrated
directly next to the lines they illuminate,
providing a seamless, smooth-flowing, and
deeply pleasurable experience
reading Elizabethan drama.

Our notes are immersive and educational,
written to be easily understood,
while offering a wealth of information and insight
into the play itself
and the language of Shakespeare.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare

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DRAMATIS PERSONS

Theseus, Duke of Athens.

Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

Philstrate, Master of the Revels to Theseus.

Egeus, Father to Hermia.

Hermia, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.

Lysander, in love with Hermia.

Demetrius, in love with Hermia.

Helena, in love with Demetrius.

Quince, a carpenter,

Snug, a joiner.

Bottom, a weaver.

Flute, a bellows-mender.

Snout, a tinker.

Starveling, a tailor.

Fairies:

Oberon, King of the Fairies.

Titania, Queen of the Fairies.

Puck, or Robin Goodfellow.

Pease-blossom.

Cobweb.

Moth.

Mustardseed.

Other fairies attending their King and Queen.

Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE: Athens, and a wood near it.

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY.

In his book *Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy*,* literary critic Thomas McFarland called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "the happiest of Shakespeare's plays, and very possibly the happiest work of literature ever conceived." An entire fairy universe forms the backdrop to the play, which features most memorably, among its human characters, a group of hilariously clumsy and inept craftsmen preparing and presenting a classical play of their own to the Duke of Athens.

The purported primary characters – the duke and his accompanying nobles – are in fact the least important, and frankly least interesting, figures on the stage. One may also wish to note some of the darker elements that are never far below the surface in any Elizabethan play: a forced marriage, enchantment-induced hallucinations, and – dare we say? – a strong hint of bestiality.

* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1972.

NOTES ON THE TEXT.

Our text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was initially adopted from O.J. Stevenson's 1918 edition of the play, which is based on the 1600 Quarto.

The play was then carefully compared directly to the 1600 Quarto. Consequently, much of the original wording, punctuation and spelling from this earliest printing of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been reinstated.

NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS.

Mention in the annotations of various editors refers to the notes supplied by these scholars for their editions of this play.

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. Ridley, M.R., ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, LTD., 1942.

4. Durham, Willard H., ed., *A Midsummer Night's Dream. The Yale Shakespeare*. New Haven: Yale University

Press, 1918.

5. Stevenson, O.J., ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Toronto: The Copp Clark Company Limited, 1918.

6. Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare-Lexicon*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 (originally published 1902).

7. Bourus, Terri, ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The New Oxford Shakespeare, Complete Works*, edited by Gary Taylor *et al.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

9. Furness, Horace H. *Midsommer Nights Dreame. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895.

NOTES.

A. Shakespeare Invents the Modern Conception of the World of Fairies.

In his primer on Shakespeare (entitled simply, *Shakspeare*), Edward Dowden wrote of the Bard's Fairy Land,

"No such fairy poetry existed anywhere in English literature before Shakspeare. The tiny elves, to whom a cowslip is tall, for whom the third part of a minute is an important division of time, have a miniature perfection which is charming" (p. 72, 1895 edition).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare brings together in one work many of the quaint defining characteristics and quirks traditionally associated with fairies. In no particular order, these include the following: fairies

1. are tiny;
2. can become invisible;
3. can change their form and appearance;
4. like to dance in circles;
5. can travel at immense speed;
6. are mischievous, enjoying playing pranks;
7. typically possess great beauty;
8. will sometimes steal babies or small children, replacing them with inferior ones ("changelings"); and
9. will perform helpful deeds to those who believe in them.

B. The Earliest Texts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Two quartos of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are known to have been published before the great Folio of Shakespeare's plays appeared in 1623:

- (1) a 1600 quarto, printed "**for Thomas Fisher**"; and
- (2) a quarto printed "**for James Roberts**", in which the date 1600 appears on the title page; however, scholarship has determined that this edition was actually printed in 1619. Why the Roberts Quarto claimed the earlier date can only be surmised.

The play was next published in 1623 in the Folio. Interestingly, this version was based on the Roberts Quarto.

The edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* you have before you is based on the 1600 Fisher Quarto, which Ridley and others consider authoritative. Happily, the differences between the Fisher Quarto and Folio are minimal.

In general, the wording appearing in the main text will be that of the Fisher Quarto. Individual substantive discrepancies between the Folio and Fisher Quarto are discussed in the annotations. In the few cases in which the wording in the Folio is generally agreed to be superior to that of the Fisher Quarto, the wording of the Folio is adopted, and is identified as so in the notes.

In our annotations, references to "the Quarto" mean the Fisher edition. From this point on, there will be no mention of the Roberts Quarto.

C. Punctuation.

Until the 1590s, the primary full-stops used in literature were the period and colon, the colon functioning much like a modern semicolon.

In the mid-1590s, English writing began to adopt the semicolon more regularly, but the transition was gradual and would take decades to complete. As a result, texts produced in the early or middle stages of the transition often appear, punctuation-wise, to be a jumble of undifferentiated full-stops.

The Fisher Quarto, on which our text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is based, remained largely rooted in the colon era, though a good number of semi-colons are scattered throughout without any evident rule or pattern.

As was typical for the era, commas were added by the compositors (the men who set the type) with great generosity; a comma seems to have been inserted into most sentences to divide them into the smallest integral clauses possible.

Our edition of the play retains the majority of the punctuation of the Fisher Quarto. Punctuation has been added, removed, or modified only when the original punctuation obscured the meaning of the text. In other words, we changed the punctuation only when needed to facilitate comprehension.

D. Rhyming.

A substantial proportion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is written in rhyming verse, though the specific rhyme schemes used vary throughout the play.

The most common rhyme pattern employed, unsurprisingly, is the rhyming couplet. There are also instances of two rhyming octets, and even a rhyming dactyl – eight and ten consecutive rhyming lines respectively!

Another frequent scheme consists of alternating rhyming lines arranged in quatrains (four lines), following the familiar *abab* pattern.

The annotations point out many of the rhyming schemes to look out for, though not at every occurrence. Readers may therefore wish to occasionally pause and consider or identify the rhyming patterns as they make their way through the play.

E. Scene Breaks, Settings, and Stage Directions.

Our edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a faithful reproduction of the 1600 Fisher Quarto, but with the spelling generally modernized. In other words, as is usual for all the plays found on our website, we lean towards adhering to the wording of the original text as much as possible.

Words or syllables which have been added to the original text to clarify the sense or repair the meter are surrounded by hard brackets [], and will be found mostly to have been borrowed from the Folio version of the play. A director who wishes to remain truer to the original text may of course omit any of the supplementary wording.

The Fisher Quarto divides the play into neither numbered Acts nor Scenes; nor does it provide settings. Our division into Acts and Scenes follows the conventional separation employed by most modern editions. Suggestions for scene locations are those of Stevenson.⁵

Stage directions in Elizabethan-era published plays are often minimal in number and confusing in quality. Hence, it is generally thought acceptable to healthily supplement a play's stage directions to give clarity to the action. As such, we adopt the stage directions suggested by the aforementioned Stevenson.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare

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Earliest Extant Edition: 1600

ACT I

SCENE I

Athens: The Palace of Theseus.

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate,
and Attendants.*

Entering Characters: *Theseus* is the Duke of Athens; *Hippolyta* is the Queen of the Amazons; and *Philostrate* is Theseus' "Master of the Revels", meaning he is responsible for organizing and supervising court entertainment.¹ During the Elizabethan period, the *Master of the Revels* was most well-known for his power over regulation and censorship of stage performances.¹⁰ Needless to say, "Master of the Revels" was a distinctly English title, with no foundation in Greek history or mythology.

Theseus, the legendary founder of Athens, is one of the great heroes of Greek mythology. He is perhaps most famous for slaying the Minotaur, a fearsome half-man, half-bull creature that dwelled at the heart of the labyrinth on the island of Crete. The labyrinth was so intricate that no one could escape once inside. Theseus, however, cleverly unraveled a ball of thread as he ventured into its winding passages, using it to trace his way back out after killing the Minotaur.

Hippolyta (sometimes called Antiope) was a Queen of the famed all-female warrior society of ancient legend.

1-6 (below): in the play's opening speech, Theseus bemoans how slowly time is passing: he must wait four long days before he can marry Hippolyta.

= stressed on the second syllable: *hip-PO-ly-ta*. = marriage.

2: *Draws on apace* = approaches quickly.

2-3: *four happy...moon* = the new moon (*Another moon*) will appear in four days.

4: *old moon* = the moon in its final phases before it disappears; a common collocation. Note the linguistic-astro-nomical connection: the *new moon* succeeds the *old moon*.

wanes = decreases in size or disappears.

she lingers my desires = the moon delays the fulfillment of Theseus' desires – specifically the longed-for pleasures of his wedding night!

5-6: Theseus compares his agony to that of an impatient

- 1 *Thes.* Now fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
- 2 Draws on apace: four happy days bring in
Another moon: but oh, methinks, how slow
- 4 This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
- Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,

6	Long <u>withering out</u> a young man's revenue.	young heir forced to wait for his inheritance, while his stepmother (<i>step-dame</i>) or widowed mother, holding a life interest in her husband's estate, lives on and gradually consumes it. <i>dowager</i> = a widow with a surviving interest in her husband's property. ¹ <i>withering out</i> = wasting away. ¹
8	<i>Hippol.</i> Four days will quickly <u>steep</u> themselves in night; Four nights will quickly dream away the time;	8-9: ie. the four days will pass quickly, in part because they will be swallowed up by night. <i>steep</i> = to "bathe" in sleep; ¹ Shakespeare likely borrowed this conceit from Edmund Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> (1590): " <i>indeed in sleep the slothful body, that doth love to steep his lustless limbs.</i> "
10	And then the moon, like to a silver bow	10-11: <i>the moon...Heaven</i> = description of the moon in its crescent shape compared to the curved form of a bow being pulled (<i>bent</i>) ¹ as it is prepared to release an arrow. The inconsistency of the expected appearance of the moon on the couple's wedding night has been noted: Hippolyta's prediction that the moon will be in crescent form in four nights contradicts Theseus' earlier suggestion that the moon will be new, or dark. <i>Now bent</i> (line 11) = now curved, in order to fire an arrow; ¹ <i>Now bent</i> appears in both the 1600 Quarto and the 1623 Folio, but is generally emended to " <i>New-bent</i> ", ie. newly taking on its crescent shape. There is evidence that the emendation to <i>new-bent</i> is in fact correct: beginning in 1600, we see Elizabethan authors use the term <i>new-bent</i> to describe a curved bow.
12	Now bent in Heaven, shall <u>behold</u> the night Of our <u>solemnities</u> .	= see, witness. ¹ = (wedding) ceremony. ¹ 14-18 (below): to ease himself out of his self-imposed gloom, Theseus resolves to seek entertainment and lively company to while away the time until his wedding.
14	<i>Thes.</i> Go, Philostrate,	= pronounced as <i>th' Athenian</i> .
16	Stir up <u>the Athenian</u> youth to merriments, Awake the <u>pert</u> and <u>nimble</u> spirit of mirth;	16: Theseus wants a spirit of joy and playfulness to be brought to bear. <i>pert</i> = lively. ⁴ <i>nimble</i> = keen. ¹
	Turn melancholy forth to funerals:	17: "gloom such as I have belongs at funerals."
18	<u>The pale companion</u> is not for our <u>pomp</u> . –	18: <i>The pale companion</i> = a personification of Theseus' gloom and melancholy; a <i>pale</i> face was considered sickly and undesirable. The term <i>companion</i> was often used, as here, with a sense of contempt. ^{1,9} <i>pomp</i> = ceremony or celebration. ¹
20	[Exit Philostrate.]	20: Philostrate actually doesn't get to speak until Act V.
22	Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, And won thy love, doing thee injuries:	22-23: Shakespeare alludes to the mythological backstory of Theseus and Hippolyta. When Hercules set out to seize Hippolyta's golden girdle (a sign of her queenly rank) as one of his famous Twelve Labours, the Amazons rose in arms and waged war against his band of warriors, which, in some

24 But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

26

28 *Enter Egeus, his daughter Hermia,
Lysander, and Demetrius.*

30 **Egeus.** Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

32 **Thes.** Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

34 **Egeus.** Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia. –
36 Stand forth, Demetrius. – My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her. –
38 Stand forth, Lysander: – and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child. –

40 Thou, thou Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,

And interchanged love-tokens with my child;
42 Thou hast, by moonlight, at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love,

44 And stol'n the impression of her fantasy;

With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,

46 Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats (messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth),

48 With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
50 To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so, she will not here, before your Grace,
52 Consent to marry with Demetrius,

versions of the story, included Theseus. During this conflict, Theseus captured Hippolyta and brought her to Athens – where, according to some accounts, he later married her; but see the note after Act II.i.94 below for an alternate version of the myth.

= tone, ie. a celebratory manner, rather than a somber one.
25: with pageantry, festive or public celebration,¹ and merriment.

Entering Characters: **Egeus**, an Athenian noble, wants his daughter **Hermia** to marry **Demetrius**, one of her suitors. However, Hermia loves **Lysander** and wishes to marry him instead.

= **Egeus** is stressed on its second syllable: *e-GE-us*.

= distressed.¹

= the line begins with **This** stressed.

40: Egeus, furious at Lysander, addresses him with the insulting **thou**, rather than the polite **you**.
given her rhymes = written (love) poetry for her; **given** should be pronounced in a single syllable, the *v* elided: *gi'en*.

= exchanged small tokens of their love.⁵

43: **With feigning voice** = singing softly,¹ perhaps to escape detection.⁴
feigning love = dissembled or pretended true love.¹

44: Lysander has secretly imprinted himself onto Hermia's imagination (**fantasy**).^{3,4,9}
the impression = pronounced as *th' impression*.

45: **of** = made from.
gawds = fancy or gaudy articles or ornaments.^{1,4}
conceits = trinkets.¹

46: **knacks** = knick-knacks.⁴
trifles = toys, baubles.¹
nosegays = small bouquets of flowers.¹
sweetmeats = sweet treats, such as sugared nuts or candied fruits, etc.¹
46-47: **messengers...youth** = these traditional tokens of courtship easily sway young girls who are inexperienced (**unhardened**)¹ in love.

= stolen, pilfered.¹

49: converted Hermia's duty to obey her father.

51: ie. "then, if she will not, right here, in your presence..."

54	I beg the ancient privilege of Athens: As she is mine, I may <u>dispose of her</u> :	53-54: Egeus appeals to the Athenian tradition that gives a father the right to decide his daughter's fate; dispose of her suggests that Egeus sees Hermia as no different than any other personal property he owns.
56	Which shall be, either to this gentleman, Or to her death; according to our law, <u>Immediately</u> provided, in that case.	55-57: Egeus is prepared to give Hermia two options: either marry Demetrius, or be executed, as permitted by law! Immediately = specifically, expressly. ^{3,4}
60	Thes. What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid: To you, your father should be as a god; <u>One that composed your beauties</u> : yea, and one	= ie. like a god, Egeus "created" Hermia, and as such "gave" Hermia her beauty; composed = fashioned. ²
62	To whom you are but as a form in wax, <u>By him imprinted</u> , and within his power To <u>leave</u> the <u>figure</u> , or <u>disfigure</u> it:	62-64: Hermia is like a figure of wax, whose form (figure) ¹ Egeus may preserve (leave) or mar (disfigure) ¹ at his pleasure. By him imprinted = Egeus is the one who has imparted to Hermia her form and character. ¹
66	Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.	
68	Herm. So is Lysander.	
70	Thes. In himself he is: But <u>in this kind</u> , <u>wanting</u> your father's <u>voice</u> , The other must be held the worthier.	69: Theseus does not disagree that Lysander is a good man. = as a suitor, ³ or "in this respect". ⁴ = lacking. = approval. ³
72	Herm. I <u>would</u> my father <u>looked but with my eyes</u> .	= wish. = ie. "saw things as I see them."
76	Thes. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.	75: Hermia must conform her vision of things to Egeus'.
78	Herm. I do entreat your Grace to pardon me. I know not by what <u>power</u> I am made bold;	77-80: Hermia apologizes for speaking her mind, when she knows she ought to be more submissive. power = pronounced as a single-syllable word.
80	Nor how it may <u>concern</u> my modesty, <u>In such a presence</u> , here to plead my thoughts: But I beseech your Grace, that I may know The worst that may befall me in this case, If I refuse to wed Demetrius.	= befit. ⁴ = ie. "in the presence of one such as your highness."
86	Thes. Either to <u>die the death</u> , or to <u>abjure</u> , Forever, the society of men.	85-86: Hermia must either die or join a convent. die the death = be executed, a common euphemistic expression. ¹ abjure = renounce.
88	Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires, Know of your youth, examine well your <u>blood</u> ,	87-88: Theseus advises Hermia to consider (1) what she really wants, (2) her youth and lack of experience, and (3) the need to control her passion (blood), before deciding to defy her father.
90	Whether (if you yield not to your father's choice) You can endure the <u>livery</u> of a nun, <u>For aye</u> to be in shady cloister <u>mewed</u> , To live a <u>barren</u> sister all your life,	= distinctive dress or uniform, ⁹ referring to a nun's habit. ³ = forever. = shut up. ⁴ = childless. ¹
	Chanting <u>faint</u> hymns to the cold <u>fruitless</u> moon.	93: faint = feeble, ^{1,2} perhaps suggesting "unenthusiastic". fruitless = "averse to love"; ⁶ fruitless also conveys a

94 Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage:

96 But earthlier happy is the rose distilled,
98 Than that, which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

100 **Herm.** So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up

102 Unto his lordship, whose unwishèd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

104 **Thes.** Take time to pause, and by the next new moon,

106 The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,

For everlasting bond of fellowship,
108 Upon that day either prepare to die,
For disobedience to your father's will,
110 Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,

Or on Diana's altar to protest,

112 For aye, austerity and single life.

sense of sterility, as Theseus rams home the point that Hermia will never have relations with men or bear children if she chooses to enter a convent.

94-95: Theseus praises those women who choose to master their passions (**blood**, again) and follow a lifelong path of chastity in the pursuit of religious devotion.

thrice-blessed = especially virtuous or fortunate;¹ **thrice** was a common intensifier.

maiden pilgrimage = journey of virginity.

96-98: metaphorically, even though a life of religious chastity is admirable, Hermia would be happier with a life of love and marriage.

Theseus compares a rose from which its essential oils have been extracted (**distilled**),¹ creating perfume, transforming the rose into something beautiful and fruitful (symbolizing a woman's role as a wife and mother) to one that is left to rot on its stem (hence, **withering**); note Theseus' description of the flower as remaining on a **virgin thorn**, once again emphasizing the emptiness of a life without marriage.

earthlier happy = meaning, that Hermia would be more contented and satisfied in her earthly life by marrying and raising children than by joining a convent.

in single blessedness = leading a virtuous, but lonely, life.

101: **ere** = before.

virgin patent = Hermia's right to remain a virgin; **patent** suggests an exclusive legal grant, implying that only she has the authority to decide to whom she shall give herself – and it will not be Demetrius!¹

102-3: using the common Elizabethan metaphor describing marriage as a **yoke** – an undesired (**unwished**) burden irrevocably tying two people together – Hermia announces that she has no intention of giving up control of her life (**sovereignty**) to Demetrius (**his lordship**).

= ie. consider.^{1,2} = ie. in four days.

106: **sealing-day** = wedding day, viewed as a contract being finalized by being imprinted with a seal.² This compound word appears to have been an invention of Shakespeare's, and was quickly adopted by other authors in the 17th century.

betwixt = between.

= ie. "as your father wishes".

111: "or to take your vow to enter a convent".

Diana's alter = allusion to the virgin goddess **Diana**, symbolizing one's dedication to a life of chastity.

protest = vow.¹

= forever. = self-denial, rigorous abstinence.¹

114 **Demet.** Relent, sweet Hermia: – and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazèd title to my certain right.

116
118 **Lysan.** You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

120 **Egeus.** Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love:
And what is mine, my love shall render him.

122 And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

124
126 **Lysan.** I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possessed; my love is more than his;

My fortunes every way as fairly ranked

128 (If not with vantage) as Demetrius';
And (which is more than all these boasts can be)
130 I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
132 Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
134 And won her soul; and she (sweet lady) dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
136 Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

138 **Thes.** I must confess that I have heard so much;
And, with Demetrius, thought to have spoke thereof:
140 But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. – But, Demetrius, come,
142 And come, Egeus; you shall go with me:
I have some private schooling for you both. –

144 For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will;
146 Or else, the law of Athens yields you up
(Which by no means we may extenuate)

148 To death, or to a vow of single life. –
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love? –
150 Demetrius and Egeus, go along:

I must employ you in some business
152 Against our nuptial, and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

= unsound.⁴ = fixed or assured claim.^{1,2}

= typical Elizabethan imperative form: **do you** = "you".

= contemptuous, derisive.¹ = ie. Demetrius.

121: ie. "because I love him, I will surrender to him that
which is mine."

122-3: Egeus continues to speak of Hermia as if she were a
piece of his own personal property.

estate = make over, bestow.^{3,4}

= as well descended, ie. from as good a family.

= endowed,⁴ ie. wealthy. = ie. love for Hermia.

127: **fortunes** = good or ill luck in life,^{2,6} though there is a
possible interpretation of **fortunes** to mean "status."

as fairly ranked = equal to.

= more.¹

= anyone else here.

= loved by.

= pursue.³ = rightful claim.

= assert, confirm.¹ = to his face.¹

= wooed, played the suitor to.

= worships or idolizes (Demetrius).¹

= morally stained or blemished.¹ = fickle, changeable.¹

139: and had intended to speak with Demetrius about this.

140: "but having been occupied with my own affairs".⁵

= "it slipped my mind."

143: Theseus wishes to speak to Demetrius and Egeus
privately – to Demetrius to rebuke him for his attentions to
Helena, and to Egeus to counsel him to mitigate his harsh
attitude towards Hermia's prospects.

schooling = can mean both "reprimands"¹ and "advice".²

= prepare.¹

= "adjust your whims".

147: Theseus claims to have no right to mitigate (**exten-
uate**)¹ Hermia's sentence, should she continue to refuse
to marry Demetrius.

we = "I"; Theseus employs the royal "we".

= ie. life as a nun.

= "how are you?"

= ie. come.

151-3: Theseus seems to let Demetrius and Egeus save face
by making it appear he wants to speak with them privately
about his own upcoming wedding, while downplaying the

154		fact that he really wants, as he made clear in lines 141-3 above, to discuss their respective relations with Hermia. <i>Against</i> = in preparation for. ⁴ <i>nearly that</i> = that closely. ⁴
156	Egeus. With duty and desire, we follow you.	
158	[<i>Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.</i>]	
160	Lysan. How now my love? why is your cheek so pale? How chance the <u>roses</u> there do fade so fast?	= a metaphor for the blush or healthy pinkish hue of her cheek.
162	Herm. <u>Belike</u> , for <u>want</u> of rain: which I could well <u>Beteem</u> them, from the <u>tempest</u> of my eyes.	162-3: Hermia extends Lysander's floral metaphor, picking up on his image of her cheeks as withering roses: she suggests that her emotional state is such that she could begin crying tears which could serve as the rain needed to water the roses that are her cheeks. <i>Belike</i> = likely. <i>want</i> = lack. <i>Beteem</i> = grant, allow, ^{1,4} hence "pour upon". ³ <i>tempest</i> = storm.
164		
166	Lysan. <u>Ay me!</u> for aught that I could ever read, Could ever hear by tale or history, The <u>course of true love</u> never <u>did run</u> smooth:	165-7: Lysander has never read or heard of any love story in which the <i>course of true love</i> ever flowed (<i>did run</i>) without obstacles; note the stream metaphor in <i>course</i> and <i>did run</i> . <i>Ay me!</i> = expression of frustration. ¹ This clause is omitted from the Folio. The Quarto prints " <i>Eigh me</i> ", <i>eigh</i> being a seldom-used variant of "ay".
168	But either it was different in <u>blood</u> , –	168-188 (below): Lysander lists the various ways the course of love can be thwarted.
170	Herm. O <u>cross!</u> <u>too high</u> to be <u>enthralled to love</u> .	168: "but there was either a difference in social class or rank (<i>blood</i>)" ⁷ – at which point, Hermia interrupts Lysander. 170: "oh, how unlucky (<i>cross</i>), ¹ that someone should be born with such high status (<i>too high</i>) that they should be above becoming enslaved or ruled (<i>enthralled</i>) by love!" <i>to love</i> = appears in both the Quarto and Folio; however, many editors emend " <i>to love</i> " to " <i>too low</i> ". If this reading is adopted, Hermia's focus shifts to emphasizing how a difference in social rank – a nobleman in love with a common maid, for example – can act as a barrier to marriage, which makes for a more logical response to Lysander's point of line 168.
172	Lysan. Or else <u>misgraffèd</u> , <u>in respect of</u> years, –	172: <i>misgraffed</i> = literally, unsuitably grafted, ³ hence "badly mismatched". ⁴ <i>in respect of</i> = in regards to. ⁹
174	Herm. O <u>spite!</u> too old to be engaged to young.	174: "what cruel fortune! that a man should be considered too old to marry a much younger woman." <i>spite</i> = suggests a malicious thwarting of true love.
176	Lysan. Or else, it stood upon the choice of <u>friends</u> , –	176: another reason love can be thwarted is that a match may not be approved by one's relatives (<i>friends</i>), ² such as a parent. The Folio prints, " <i>it stood upon the choice of merit</i> ", which suggests that one's mate may be chosen by others

		based on the suitor's objectively-determined or deserved qualities. ⁹
178	Herm. O hell, to choose love by another's eyes.	178: this obstacle may be more personal to Hermia, since she is being forced to view her own suitors through her father's eyes.
180	Lysan. Or, if there were a <u>sympathy</u> in choice, War, death, or sickness, <u>did lay siege to it</u> ,	180-1: ie. even if love is mutual, external factors will inevitably foil a happy ending. <i>a sympathy</i> = accord. ² <i>did lay siege to it</i> = a military metaphor for any of the external forces which test the strength and endurance of a couple's love.
182	Making it <u>momentary</u> as a sound, <u>Swift as a shadow</u> , short as any dream;	182-4: the course of true love is fleeting. <i>momentary</i> = momentary, ie. ephemeral; stressed on its first syllable. A common word in the 16th and 17th centuries, <i>momentary</i> is distinct from <i>momentary</i> ; according to the OED, the former is a borrowing from French, the latter directly from Latin. <i>Swift as a shadow</i> = the simile comparing something that passes quickly or swiftly to a shadow was proverbial in contemporary literature.
184	Brief as the lightning in the <u>collied</u> night, That (<u>in a spleen</u>) <u>unfolds</u> both <u>Heaven</u> and earth;	184-7: An extended simile comparing true love to lightning – both fleetingly brilliant, lasting only a moment before darkness returns. <i>collied</i> = blackened; ⁴ a <i>collier</i> was a supplier of coal. ¹ 185: ie. lightning, in a sudden impulse (<i>in a spleen</i>), ² briefly reveals (<i>unfolds</i>) ¹ both the sky and earth. <i>Heaven</i> = here and everywhere going forward, pronounced as a monosyllable, the medial <i>v</i> elided: <i>Hea'n</i> .
186	And, <u>ere</u> a man hath power to say "Behold!" The jaws of <u>darkness</u> do devour it up:	186: and before (<i>ere</i>) a man can say, "Look!" 187: note the intense but brief metaphor of <i>darkness</i> as a greedy eater.
188	So <u>quick</u> bright <u>things</u> come to <u>confusiōn</u> .	= ie. quickly. = ie. like love and lightning. = ruin. ⁴
190	Herm. If then true lovers have been <u>ever crossed</u> , It stands as an <u>edict</u> , in <u>destiny</u> :	190-1: if it is true that genuine lovers have always been thwarted (<i>ever crossed</i>), ^{1,4} then it must be a fixed law (<i>edict</i>) ¹ of fate (<i>destiny</i>) ¹ that makes it so. <i>edict</i> = often stressed on its second syllable, as here.
192	Then let us teach <u>our trial</u> patiēce: Because it is a <u>customary cross</u> ,	192-3: "then we should face this test of our love (<i>our trial</i>) with patience, since hardship is the usual adversity (<i>customary cross</i>) ¹ that true lovers must bear."
194	As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs, Wishes, and tears, <u>poor fancy's followers</u> .	194-5: (because such usual obstacles) are as much a part of true love as are dreams, etc. <i>poor fancy's followers</i> = alliteratively describes sighs, tears, <i>et al</i> , as the usual emotions, thoughts and acts which accompany love (<i>fancy</i>).
196	Lysan. <u>A good persuasion</u> : therefore, hear me, Hermia:	= Lysander agrees with Hermia that they should practice patience in order to preserve their love. <i>persuasion</i> = conviction, belief. ^{1,2}

198	I have a widow aunt, a <u>dowager</u> , Of great <u>revénue</u> , and she hath no child:	= a widow with a property interest in her deceased husband's estate. ¹ = income; revenue was usually stressed, as here, on the second syllable.
200	From Athens is her house <u>remote</u> <u>seven</u> <u>leagues</u> ;	200: remote = distant; the Folio prints " <i>removed</i> ", also acceptable. seven = pronounced as a monosyllable: <i>se'en</i> . leagues = a league was about 3 miles, or 5 kilometers. ¹
202	And she <u>respects</u> me as her only son: There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee; And to that place, the <u>sharp</u> Athenian law	= considers, regards. ^{1,7} = harsh, severe. ¹
204	Cannot pursue us. If thou <u>lov'st</u> me, then	= the Quarto has the disyllable lovest here, which ruins the line's meter; the Folio employs the correct single-syllable form, lov'st , which we adopt.
206	Steal forth <u>thy</u> father's house, to-morrow night; And in the wood, a <u>league without</u> the town, (Where I did meet thee once with Helena,	= ie. from thy. = ie. "three miles outside".
208	To do observance to a morn of May), There will I <u>stay</u> for thee.	208: to take part in the customary games and celebrations of May Day, the popular holiday observed annually on May 1. = wait.
210	Herm. My good Lysander,	211-221: Hermia offers an elaborate vow to meet in the woods as Demetrius asks, swearing by a series of living and non-living emblems of love.
212	I swear to thee, by <u>Cupid's</u> strongest bow, By his <u>best arrow</u> , with the <u>golden</u> head,	= Cupid is the cherubic boy-god who mischievously fires his arrows at his victims, causing them to fall in love. 213: when Cupid struck one with a golden -tipped arrow, he or she would fall strongly in love (the god used an arrow with a lead tip to cause his victim to hate another person); the golden-tipped arrow is thus the best arrow . The conceit originated in Book 1 of Ovid's <i>Metamorphosis</i> .
214	By the <u>simplicity</u> of Venus' <u>doves</u> , By <u>that</u> which <u>knitteth</u> souls, and prospers loves,	214f: Hermia suddenly switches to speaking in rhyming couplets: the effect is to heighten the emotional intensity of the speech, infusing her words with a sense of ceremony and formality. The pattern of rhyming couplets will continue, with one minor break and a couple of irregularities, to the end of the scene. simplicity = sincerity, guilelessness. ¹ doves = a commonly alluded-to attribute of Venus, the famed goddess of love.
216	And by that fire which burned the <u>Carthage</u> queen, When the <u>false Trojan</u> under sail was seen,	215: Hermia swears by the power (that) which joins (knitteth) souls and makes love prosper. 216-7: when the Trojan (Trojan) prince Aeneas fled Troy after its capture and destruction by the Greeks, he eventually came to Carthage , where he and Queen Dido fell in love. When fate compelled Aeneas to leave Carthage and continue his journey, Dido, desperate in her love for the prince, built a funeral pyre in which she took her own life by setting it on fire.

		<i>false</i> = unfaithful, inconstant. ²
218	By all the vows that ever men have broke, (In number more than ever women spoke),	218-9: Hermia's secondary point – that men are much more likely to break their vows of love than are women – is a touch cynical; but we may note that men are usually the pursuers in love, so that many more avowals will come from men than from the ladies.
220	In that <u>same</u> place thou hast appointed me,	= ie. self-same.
222	Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.	
224	<i>Lysan.</i> Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.	223: this line breaks away from the rhyming couplet pattern.
	<i>Enter Helena.</i>	Entering character: We finally meet <i>Helena</i> , previously identified as the daughter of the nobleman Nedar (who does not appear in the play). In lines 133-4 above, we learned that Demetrius had courted Helena even while he was engaged to Hermia, leading Helena to fall desperately in love with him.
226	<i>Herm.</i> <u>God speed fair</u> Helena! <u>whither away</u> ?	227: with the utterance "God speed", Hermia signals that she intends to part here from Lysander, but the contentious Helena will cause Hermia to remain for a short while longer. <i>God speed</i> = a general wish for success to another person, typically stated upon parting. ¹ <i>fair</i> = attractive, beautiful. <i>whither away</i> = where are you going?
228		= take back.
230	<i>Helena.</i> Call you me "fair"? that "fair" again <u>unsay</u> . Demetrius loves your <u>fair</u> : O <u>happy fair</u> !	230: <i>fair</i> = ie. fairness. <i>happy fair</i> = ie. "how fortunate (<i>happy</i>) to possess such fairness!" ⁹
		231-241 (below): with some admiration but a lot of envy, Helena elaborates on how attractive Hermia is to men.
	Your eyes are <u>lode-stars</u> , and your <u>tongue's sweet air</u>	231: <i>lode-stars</i> = guiding stars; Hermia's eyes are captivating. <i>tongue's sweet air</i> = Hermia's melodious and pleasing (<i>sweet</i>) ¹ manner of speaking and expression (<i>air</i>). ¹
232	More <u>tuneable</u> than lark to shepherd's ear, When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.	232-3: more musical and harmonious (<i>tuneable</i>), ¹ and hence more delightful, than a lark's song would be to a shepherd in the springtime, a season of renewal and vitality.
234	Sickness is catching: O, were <u>favour</u> so!	234: just as literal illness may be contagious, Helena wishes that Hermia's good looks (<i>favour</i>) ⁵ were catching too! Furness poses that <i>favour</i> might also mean "favour in the eyes of Demetrius, which Helena would also like to acquire". ⁹
	<u>Your words I'd catch</u> , fair Hermia, <u>ere</u> I go;	235: <i>Your words I'd catch</i> = "I would then catch your words". The Folio emends the Quarto's " <i>Your words I catch</i> ", which doesn't really make sense. Some editors emend this to "Yours would I catch", referring to Hermia's <i>favour</i> of the previous line. <i>ere</i> = before.

236	My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye, My tongue should catch your tongue's <u>sweet melody</u> .	= by listening carefully to Hermia, Helena hopes to "catch," or acquire, the musical and charming style of her speech. = pleasing song-like quality." Note how Helena in lines 235-7 refers back to all of Hermia's specific attractive attributes – her magnetic eyes and pleasing voice and speech – mentioned in lines 231-2 above. 236-7: Shakespeare neatly rotates through the organs of sight and sound – the ear, eye, and tongue.
238	Were the world mine, Demetrius being <u>bated</u> , The rest <u>I'll</u> give to be to you <u>translated</u> .	236-7 (above): those who read Shakespeare or Elizabethan poetry regularly are typically aware that pronunciation in modern English differs from that of four centuries ago; hence, word pairs like <i>move</i> and <i>love</i> , for example, are easy to accept as genuine 16th or 17th century rhymes, even if failing to rhyme today. But what about pairings such as that found in lines 236-7: could <i>eye</i> and <i>melody</i> have really rhymed? The modern scholarship of David and Ben Crystal and Paul Meier sheds light on the issue: in both <i>melody</i> and <i>eye</i> , the last syllable would have been sounded with a muted long <i>i</i> , sounding something like "uhhy"; Meier describes the vowel sound as a diphthong, beginning with a schwa, "or neutral vowel." The reader who is interested to hear what Elizabethan words might have sounded like may consult Meier's website: https://www.paulmeier.com/OP.pdf .
240	O, teach me <u>how you look</u> , and with what <u>art</u>	238-9: "if I owned the whole world, I would give you everything in it, Demetrius excepted (<i>bated</i>)." ³ Helena's desperate longing for Demetrius is made clear. <i>I'll</i> = both the Quarto and Folio print <i>I'll</i> , which is often emended to "I'd" in modern texts. <i>translated</i> = transferred. ³
242	You <u>sway the motion of</u> Demetrius' heart!	240: <i>how you look</i> = ie. "how to use your eyes so expressively". <i>art</i> = technique, skill. = steer the direction of, ie. control, influence.
244	Herm. I frown upon him; yet he loves me still.	243: Hermia discourages Demetrius' advances, yet he continues to love her.
246	Helena. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!	245: if only the smiles Helena bestows on Demetrius had the same effect on him as do Hermia's frowns! Helena continues the teacher-student motif she introduced in her previous speech.
248	Herm. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.	= stir, excite. ¹
250	Helena. O that my prayers could such affection <u>move</u> !	251-7 (below): you may wish to consider the degree to which these lines form pairs of rhyming couplets; Strictly speaking, the endings employ repetition (<i>me/me</i> and <i>mine/mine</i>) rather than true rhyme, but the echoing does create a pseudo-rhyme effect. Shakespeare appears to have felt it was more important to emphasize parallel phrasing in lines 251/253 and 255/7 than to force distinct rhyming word-

252 **Herm.** The more I hate, the more he follows me.

254 **Helena.** The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Herm. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

256 **Helena.** None but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

258 **Herm.** Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;

260 Lysander and myself will fly this place.

262 Before the time I did Lysander see,

264 Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turned a Heaven unto a hell!

266 **Lysan.** Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:

Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold

268 Her silver visage in the watery glass,

Decking, with liquid pearl, the bladed grass,

270 (A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

272 **Herm.** And in the wood, where often you and I,

274 Upon faint primrose-beds, were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms, of their counsel swelled,

pairs onto the end of the lines.

= should be **Helen** to fit the meter.

The Folio prints, "*His folly, Helena, is none of mine*," which seems a bit less defensive and sharp.⁹ This version may be more likely to be the "correct" one, given Helena's response, "*None but...*"⁹

257: Hermia's beauty is in fact to blame for Demetrius' foolish pursuit of her; if only that beauty (**would that fault**) belonged to Helena!

= flee.

261: ie. "before I met Lysander".

263-4: "how charming must Lysander (**my love**) be, that I have let him turn my happy life into a hellish one" – because now that Hermia is desperate to marry Lysander, she can no longer remain in Athens, where this would be impossible (since her father insists she marry Demetrius).

= ie. thoughts. = reveal.

267-8: **when Phoebe...glass** = poetically, when the moon is out and shining.

Phoebe = a Titan goddess, **Phoebe** has been identified with the moon from the earliest Greek myths.

behold = see.

visage = face; the appearance of the moon was frequently described as **silver**.

watery glass = bodies of water imagined as mirrors reflecting the moon's face (**glass** = mirror).

269: poetically, causing dew to appear on the grass.

decking = adorning.¹

= night always (**still**) hides eloping lovers from view.

flights = acts of fleeing or running away.¹

= planned to sneak.

274: **faint** = likely meaning "light coloured" or "pale"; a 1578 plant guide describes various flowers as being "*faint blue*", "*faint yellow*", and "*faint red*"; and in a 1593 sonnet, Thomas Lodge wrote of "*a faint and fading flower*."

wont = accustomed.

275: ie. "revealing our secrets, innermost thoughts and plans (**counsel**) to each other". The metaphoric image is of the ladies' hearts being so overfilled (**swelled**) with private thoughts that they needed to relieve the pressure by sharing them with one another.

The Quarto and Folio both print **swelled**. In his early 18th

		century edition of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , scholar Lewis Theobald emended <i>swelled</i> to <i>sweet</i> to rhyme with <i>meet</i> in line 276, thus preserving the pattern of rhyming couplets in this section of the scene, and modern editions generally adopt this change. We may note that there are plenty of 16th century examples of <i>counsel</i> being described as <i>sweet</i> . ⁹
276	There my Lysander and myself shall meet, And thence from Athens, turn away our eyes,	277: metaphorically, "and leave Athens".
278	To seek new friends and <u>strange companiöns</u> .	= foreign companions; Theobald here too dares to emend the text to <i>stranger companies</i> ("the company of strangers or foreigners"), noting that Shakespeare regularly used the word <i>company</i> to mean "companion". ⁹ See the note after line 237 above for an explanation of how <i>eyes</i> and <i>companies</i> would have likely rhymed in Shakespeare's day.
280	Farewell, sweet <u>playfellow</u> : pray thou for us: And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius! –	= playmate. ¹ 280: ie. "may good fortune help you win Demetrius' love!"
282	<u>Keep word</u> , Lysander: we must starve our sight From lovers' food till <u>morrow deep midnight</u> .	281: Keep word = "keep your promise" (ie. to meet in the woods); this is a good example of Shakespeare's far-reaching effect on the English language: while the expression "keep one's word" was very common throughout the 16th century, Shakespeare here abbreviates the expression to "keep word" to help him preserve the line's meter; keep word was thereafter used by a number of other authors throughout the 17th century. 281-2: we must...midnight = Hermia and Lysander must refrain from seeing each other until they meet the next night. The lines use a neat, tightly-woven metaphor comparing the spiritual nourishment they gain from each other's sight to the sustenance of food. morrow = tomorrow. deep midnight = ie. the deepest or darkest part of the night, roughly around midnight. The collocation "deep night" was common in the 16th century; Shakespeare appears to have modified it to "deep midnight" to satisfy the rhythmic demands of iambic pentameter. Later 17th-century writers adopted this collocation of Shakespeare's as well.
284	Lysan. I will, my Hermia.	
286		[Exit Hermia.]
288	Helena, adieu: As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!	289: "may Demetrius love you as much as you love him!"
290		
292		[Exit Lysander.]
	Helena. How <u>happy</u> some <u>o'er other</u> some can be!	293: "how fortunate (<i>happy</i>) some people are compared to others!" o'er other some = over some others; ¹ <i>other some</i> was actually a single word – <i>othersome</i> – though it was often broken into two.
294	Through Athens, I am thought as fair as she. But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so:	

296	He will not know what all but he do know.	296: Demetrius refuses to recognize what everyone else knows – that she is as attractive as Hermia.
298	And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, So I, <u>admiring</u> of his <u>qualities</u> .	297-8: Helena's erroneous judgment in valuing or esteeming (<i>admiring</i>) ¹ Demetrius parallels Demetrius's own fault in idolizing Hermia. <i>qualities</i> = characteristics. ²
300	Things base and vile, <u>holding no quantity</u> , Love can transpose to <u>form</u> and dignity.	299-300: because love is unable to keep a proper sense of proportion (<i>quantity</i>), ³ it causes those in love to believe that objects which are lowly and contemptible possess (an attractive) appearance (<i>form</i>) ² and nobility. <i>holding no quantity</i> = the expression <i>to hold quantity</i> , meaning "to have a proper sense of proportion", appears to be unique to Shakespeare. He repeated the conceit in <i>Hamlet</i> :
	Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind:	<i>For women's fear and love holds quantity, In neither aught, or in extremity.</i>
		301: a variation on the common conceit that "love is blind".
		302-8 (below): as was common in Elizabethan poetry, Cupid is portrayed as personified <i>Love</i> ; Helena's critiques of Cupid are therefore meant metaphorically to shine light on the irrationality, and hence unfairness, of love in general.
302	And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.	302: Cupid causes people to fall in love by shooting them with a golden arrow; his <i>blindness</i> symbolizes the fact that we do not choose whom we love, so that love may seem irrational or illogical.
	Nor hath <u>Love's</u> mind of any judgement taste:	= ie. Cupid, as personified love.
304	Wings, and no eyes, <u>figure unheedy haste</u> :	304: Cupid's possessing wings but no sight represents how love can strike a person quickly and impulsively, without rational judgment. <i>figure unheedy haste</i> = represent heedless haste (Stevenson, p. 77). ⁵
	And therefore is Love said to be a child,	305: Cupid is usually portrayed as a little boy to symbolize his, and therefore love's, lack of mature judgment.
306	Because, in choice, he is so oft beguiled.	306: because he is so often deceived in choosing whom to strike with his arrows (Stevenson, p. 77). ⁵
308	<u>As waggish</u> boys, <u>in game</u> , themselves <u>forswear</u> , So the boy, Love, is <u>perjured</u> everywhere.	307-8: Helena compares Cupid's fickleness and trickery to mischievous (<i>waggish</i>) children who make playful promises which they never intend to keep. <i>As</i> = ie. just as. <i>in game</i> = in jest. ¹ <i>forswear</i> = renounce or falsely swear an oath. ¹ <i>perjured</i> = deceitful. ¹
310	For, ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's <u>eyne</u> , He hailed down oaths, that he was only mine;	309-310: before Demetrius ever saw Hermia, he had repeatedly pledged his love to Helena. <i>eyne</i> = archaic form of "eyes"; ² rhymes with <i>mine</i> of the next line. line 310: Helena begins a meteorological metaphor

		which extends through line 312.
312	And when this <u>hail</u> some <u>heat</u> , from Hermia, felt, So he <u>dissolved</u> , and showers of oaths did melt.	311-2: Helena compares Hermia's amorous influence on Demetrius to a blast of heat which has melted (dissolved) the hail which represents his vows of love to Helena.
	I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:	313: Helena will reveal to Demetrius Hermia's plan to elope with Lysander.
314	Then, to the wood, will he, tomorrow night,	314-5: Then to...her = she expects Demetrius will appear in the woods himself at the appointed time to stop the couple's escape.
316	Pursue her: and for <u>this intelligence</u> , If I have thanks, it is <u>a dear expense</u> :	315-6: and for...expense = Helena knows that by informing Demetrius of Hermia's elopement, she will pay dearly for his thanks (if she gets any), because she will be helping him pursue her rival. ^{3,4} this = the Folio prints "his". intelligence = information. ⁴ a dear expense = at great cost (to her).
318	But herein mean I to <u>enrich my pain</u> , To have his sight <u>thither</u> , and back again.	317-8: but Helena won't mind the extra suffering, since she will at least be able to see Demetrius again, even if only briefly. enrich my pain = ie. "add to my own hardship or wretchedness". ¹ Line 318: to see Demetrius both when he goes to the forest and when he returns from it. thither = to there.
	[Exit Helena.]	
	ACT I, SCENE II	
	<i>A Room in Quince's House.</i>	
	<i>Enter Quince the carpenter; Snug the joiner; Bottom the weaver, Flute the bellows-mender; Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor.</i>	Entering Characters: we now meet some of the most delightful members of all the Shakespearean canon, the craftsmen of Athens. These skilled labourers have gathered to rehearse a short play that they will present for Duke Theseus' wedding to Hippolyta. Quince the carpenter seems to have been assigned the role of manager and director of the production, though he will be quite accommodating to the whims and predilections of his cast. Bottom the weaver is the most forward and eager of the troupe, and also – for better or for worse – the most talented. The "mechanicals", as the manual workers are called, are, from the beginning, clearly out of their depth in attempting so earnestly to stage a bit of classical theatre for the nobility. As such, they serve as the larger play's comic relief; but Shakespeare's humorous treatment of the struggling men is gentle and affectionate, never mean-spirited or cruel.
1	Quin. Is all our company here?	
2	Bottom. <u>You were best</u> to call them <u>generally</u> ,	3: You were best = "it would be best if you were". ⁵ generally = "all together", as opposed to "one at a time"; ¹ several editors point out that this is Bottom's first malapropism, since he appears to mean something like

		"severally" ⁷ or "particularly", ⁹ meaning "individually".
4	<u>man by man</u> , according to the <u>scrip</u> .	4: man by man = one at a time; ¹ a common expression. scrip = usually means "short written document", but the OED asserts that in this case, scrip refers to a written list. ¹
6	Quin. Here is the <u>scroll</u> of every man's name, <u>which</u>	= list of names. ¹ = who. ⁵
8	is thought <u>fit</u> , through all Athens, to play in our	= suited, ie. qualified. ²
10	<u>interlude</u> before the duke and the duchess, on his	= light dramatic entertainment. ^{1,3}
12	wedding-day at night.	
	Bottom. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play	11-12: say...treats on = ie. "tell us what the play is about".
	treats on; then read the names of the actors: and so	The common expression "to treat on" was primarily used in the period to mean (1) "speak on" or "address", e.g., " <i>then lise</i> (cease) ¹ <i>they not to treat on earnest affayres</i> " (1577); or (2) "negotiate" or "raise", e.g. " <i>the king of Fraunce sent his Ambassadors to the Emperour, to treat on the marriage betwene her and his eldest Sonne</i> " (1588).
	<u>grow to a point</u> .	= the OED suggests "come to a conclusion".
14	Quin. <u>Marry</u> , our play is, "The Most Lamentable	15: Marry = a common oath, derived from the name of the Virgin Mary.
16	Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and	15-16: The Most Lamentable Comedy = this muddled title is meant to be humorously incongruous, since the term comedy in this period was used to describe a lightly entertaining play with a happy ending (not necessarily a "funny" play).
	<u>Thisbe</u> ."	= the Quarto and Folio generally spell the name as <i>Thisby</i> , but we will use the modernized spelling, <i>Thisbe</i> , still a two-syllable word.
18		Digression on Pyramus and Thisbe. Source and Influence: the story of these "star-crossed lovers" appeared in Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> , the most famous and influential edition of which was Arthur Golding's 1567 translation. This brief tragedy was the primary source and inspiration for Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , which the Bard might have been working on in the same period as <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> . The Story: briefly, Pyramus and Thisbe were lovers whose parents forbade them to meet. Speaking through a crack in a wall separating their two families' properties, they planned a secret rendezvous under a mulberry tree. Arriving first, Thisbe fled when a lion appeared, dropping her veil, which the lion tore and bloodied. When Pyramus found the veil, he thought Thisbe had been killed, and in despair stabbed himself. Thisbe returned, saw him dying, and killed herself in turn. The Title: the expression " The Lamentable ..." had been used in other Elizabethan-era plays (e.g., <i>The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second</i> , etc., by Christopher Marlowe (1590); and <i>The Spanish Tragedy, Containing the Lamentable End of Don Horatio and Bel-imperia</i> , by Thomas Kyd (1580s)); however, " The Most Lamentable " made its first and only appearance in Shakespeare's own The Most Lamentable Romaine

20 **Bottom.** A very good piece of work, I assure you,
and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your

actors, by the scroll. – Masters, spread yourselves.

22 **Quin.** Answer, as I call you. – Nick Bottom, the
24 weaver?

26 **Bottom.** Ready. Name what part I am for, and
28 proceed.

30 **Quin.** You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

32 **Bottom.** What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

34 **Quin.** A lover that kills himself most gallant[ly] for
love.

36 **Bottom.** That will ask some tears in the true
38 performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look
to their eyes: I will move storms: I will condole

in some measure. To the rest yet, my chief humour

40 is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part

to tear a cat in, to make all split:

Tragedie of Titus Andronicus (1594).

It thus seems that Shakespeare was borrowing from, and perhaps parodying, firstly himself by inserting *The Most Lamentable* into the title of the craftsmen's play, and secondly and more broadly the grandiose titles given to plays in this period by publishers.

= Bottom's description of the drama as amusing and gay comically belies his utter ignorance of its subject matter.

Shakespeare seems to have been the first to describe something as "*a merry*" without an object; this usage was adopted by other authors in the 17th century.

21: *by the scroll* = ie. from the list of names.¹

Masters = vocatively, a familiar term of respect.¹

spread yourselves = spread out,⁵ but Schmidt suggests, "line up", ie. get in a row.⁶

23ff: the names of the craftsmen humorously and explicitly evoke their trades.

Bottom = a *bottom* was a technical term for a ball of yarn, or a core around which to wind thread.^{1,5}

= ruffian, villain.¹

= ie. "heroically";¹ the Quarto prints *gallant*, emended in the Folio to "gallantly".

36-39: *that will...measure* = Bottom is confident his acting will be moving enough to bring his audience to tears.

ask = require, demand.⁵

move storms = create rainstorms of tears.

condole = lament, grieve; the word *condole* was brand new in English, its first appearance in literature being in 1588.

38: *in some measure* = to a certain degree.

39-40: *my chief...tyrant* = Bottom prefers to play a swaggerer.

humour = inclination.

40-41: *Ercles* = ie. Hercules, commonly played as a blustering character;⁵ this is not necessarily a malapropism, as "Hercles" was a common spelling of the hero's name.

rarely = excellently.

41: *tear a cat in* = rant and rave;^{1,5} first appearance of this expression in literature.

make all split = cause all to come apart or go to pieces; the expression was used in a nautical context to describe ships broken up in a storm or on rocks^{1,5} (see Bottom's following poetic lines). Another expression first found in Shakespeare, and adopted by others.

- 44 *The raging rocks,
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks*
- 46 *Of prison-gates;
And Phibbus' car*
- 48 *Shall shine from far,
And make and mar*
- 50 *The foolish Fates.*
- 52 This was lofty. Now, name the rest of the players.
This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein: a lover is more
- 54 condoling.
- 56 **Quin.** Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?
- 58 **Flute.** Here, Peter Quince.
- 60 **Quin.** Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.
- 62 **Flute.** What is Thisbe? a wandering knight?
- 64 **Quin.** It is the lady that Pyramus must love.
- 66 **Flute.** Nay, faith, let not me play a woman: I have a
beard coming.
- 68
- 70 **Quin.** That's all one: you shall play it in a mask: and
you may speak as small as you will.

Bottom might also be suggesting that his acting could cause everyone to break out in joyous laughter: the conceit "*laugh till we split*" appears frequently after 1595.

43-50 (below): Stevenson describes Bottom's poetic recitation as "a burlesque imitation of the senseless rant that was found in many plays" (p. 78).⁵ However, it is also more specifically a parody of a pair of passages from John Studley's 16th century translation of *Hercules Oetaeus*, a play written by the Roman philosopher Seneca:

1. lines 43-46 of Bottom's speech find their source in these lines from Studley:

*The **roaring rocks** haue quaking sturd...
Hell gloummy **gates I haue brast oape** [burst open]...*

2. line 47 derives from the play's opening lines:

*O Lord of Ghostes whose fyrye flashe...
Doth cause the trembling Lodges twain
of **Phoebus carre** to quake...*

44: shattering or splintering violent blows or collisions.^{2,6}

47: **Phibbus** is Phoebus, an epithet for Apollo as the sun god; he was frequently depicted driving his chariot (**car**), ie. the sun, across the sky, drawn by four horses. Bottom's mispronunciation of the god's name is meant to be comic.

49-50: "and destroy the foolish Fates." The **Fates** were three sister deities who controlled the destinies and lifespans of all humans. It was generally understood that the Fates were not subject to the will of, much less vulnerable to be hurt by, other gods and goddesses.

= characteristic style.¹

= moving, affecting.²

56: the **bellows** were the part of an organ through which air was admitted; **flute** seems to have been a synonym of sorts with the pipes of an organ, e.g., "*as all the pipes and flutes of a pair of organs...*" (1594).

= ie. a knight-errant, or medieval-style knight who sought adventures and engaged in deeds of chivalry.¹

64ff: women's parts were all played by men or boys in this era.

= it's all the same.

= high-pitched.^{1,2}

72 **Bottom.** And I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe
too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice; "Thisne;

74 Thisne." "Ah Pyramus, my lover dear, thy Thisbe dear,
and lady dear!"

76 **Quin.** No, no: you must play Pyramus: and, Flute,
78 you Thisbe.

80 **Bottom.** Well, proceed.

82 **Quin.** Robin Starveling, the tailor?

84 **Starv.** Here, Peter Quince.

86 **Quin.** Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's
mother. Tom Snout, the tinker?

88

90 **Snout.** Here, Peter Quince.

92 **Quin.** You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisbe's father:
94 Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here
is a play fitted.

96 **Snug.** Have you the lion's part written? pray you,
if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

98 **Quin.** You may do it extempore: for it is nothing but
100 roaring.

102 **Bottom.** Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I
will do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar,
that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let
104 him roar again."

106 **Quin.** And you should do it too terribly, you would
fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would
108 shrike; and that were enough to hang us all.

= if.

73: **monstrous** = very.¹

Thisne = this may not necessarily be a comical mispronunciation of **Thisbe**: some commentators have wondered if Bottom's intention was to use the real word "thisne", a variation of the word "thissen", meaning, "in this way" or "in this manner".^{3,4} Bottom may have been trying to say *thissen*, and either mispronounced it or conflated it with *Thisbe*. All of this, however, may be unconvincing, since there is no evidence of either *thissen* or *thisne* appearing in literature before the mid-17th century.

Bourus suggests that **Thisne** is meant to be an affectionate nickname for Thisbe.⁷

= starving, perpetually hungry, or emaciated;¹ in this era, tailors were typically depicted as cowardly, weak, and poor, hence the man's name.

87: a **tinker** was a mender of metal pots and other such utensils; **snout** refers to the spout or beak of a household vessel.¹

92-93: a **joiner** was a wood-worker who made furniture and other wooden items. He would have been skilled in making sure that the pieces of wood he put together would join **snugly**, or closely, hence the character's name. Quince further puns on Snug's name when he expresses hope that Snug is **fitted** for, or well-matched to, the part of a lion.

= common expression for "please".

= ie. "is written". = ie. to memorize.¹

98-99: Quince may or may not actually intend to be humorous here, but his suggestion that Snug could improvise his "lines", which are comprised of nothing but lion's roars, is itself comical.

103-4: Bottom imagines that the duke would be so impressed with his acting that he would call for an encore!

= if. = ie. roar in too terrifying a manner.¹

108: **shrike** = shriek, but pronounced to rhyme with "like".¹ **hang us all** = ie. "get us all hanged." As is typical of

		Elizabethan plays set in foreign lands or ancient times, the concerns of the characters are strictly English.
110	All. That would hang us, <u>every mother's son</u> .	= everyone, ¹ ie. "each of us"; a common expression.
112	Bottom. I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more	113-4: they would...hang us = Bottom's syntax is muddled, but he seems to mean that, should the men overly-frighten the ladies, the latter would have no alternative but to hang them all. In Elizabethan English, discretion (line 114) could also bear a legal sense, meaning a judgment, sentence, or remedy. Bottom may thus be trying to say, "they could pronounce no sentence other than hanging." Stevenson further points out that only the duke, not the ladies, would have the authority to pronounce judgment on the men. ⁵
114	discretion, but to hang us: but I will <u>aggravate</u> my	= intensify; ¹ Bottom once again misspeaks, as he clearly intends to say that he will moderate his roars instead. ⁵ Mistress Quickly misuses aggravate in exactly the same way in Shakespeare's <i>Henry IV, Part II</i> , when she says, " <i>Good Captain Peesel, be quiet; 'tis very late, i' beseek you now, aggravate your choler.</i> "
116	voice so, that I will <u>roar you</u> as gently as any <u>sucking</u> dove; I will roar you, <u>and 'twere</u> any nightingale.	115-6: I will roar...nightingale = Bottom's comparison of the roar of a lion to the coo of a dove or song of a nightingale is comical; his biology is also inaccurate, as birds will not be found to be suckling (sucking) ¹ their young. roar you = ie. roar; a common Elizabethan construction. and 'twere = as if it were. ⁴
118	Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus: for	119-120: a proper...day = Shakespeare almost certainly borrowed this linguistic conceit from John Lyly, who wrote in his play " <i>Mother Bombie</i> " (1594), " <i>he is as goodly a youth as one shall see in a summer's day.</i> " The use of "as one shall see on a summer's day" became proverbial. proper = handsome. ⁴
120	Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a <u>proper</u> man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely,	
122	gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.	
124	Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?	
126		
128	Quin. Why, <u>what you will</u> .	= ie., "whichever you like."
		129-132 (below): Bottom's speech alludes to the fashion of dyeing one's beard, ⁹ which is referred to frequently in 16th-17th century literature.
	Bottom. I will <u>discharge</u> it in either your straw colour	= perform. ⁵
130	beard, your <u>orange-tawny</u> beard, your <u>purple-in-grain</u>	130: orange-tawny = yellowish-brown; ¹ actually a common compound word or collocation. purple-in-grain = fast-dyed purple. ¹ Bottom's enthusiasm leads him to consider this absurd colour for a beard.
	beard, or your <u>French crown colour</u> beard, your	= the colour of a French gold coin. ¹

132 | perfit yellow.

134 | **Quin.** Some of your French crowns have no hair at
all; and then you will play barefaced. – But masters,

136 here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request
you, and desire you, to con them by tomorrow night:

140 town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse: for if we
meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company,
and our devices known. In the mean time, I will

144 *Bottom.* We will meet, and there we may rehearse
146 most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be

perfit: adieu.

Bottom. Enough: hold, or cut bow-strings.

[*Exeunt.*]

= perfect, a common alternate form; the Folio reads "*perfect*".

134-5: *Some of...all* = Quince makes the inevitable joke about the baldness caused by syphilis. The English often mocked the French for the supposed prevalence of venereal disease in France (a result of French licentiousness, as the English saw it). The word “crown” adds a pun, referring to both a coin (a *French crown*) and, of course, the head.

you will play barefaced = "you would play the part with no beard at all."

= memorize.

138: *palace wood* = royal forest, ie. woods belonging to the duke.

without = outside.

a mile without the town = this is inconsistent with Lysander's earlier suggestion that the woods are a league, or three miles, outside of town; see Act I.i.206 above.⁹

140-1: *we shall...known* = Quince wants the craftsmen to rehearse in secret, so as to keep the character of the play a surprise.

dogged = followed closely.⁵

devices = plans, intentions.²

= prepare a list of stage equipment.^{3,5} = lacks, ie. needs.

146: **obscenely** = obvious malapropism; editors have posited that Bottom's intended word may have been "obscurely" or "seemly".^{5,9} Shakespeare repeated the erroneous use of **obscenely** in *Love's Labour's Lost* – the only times the word appears in Shakespeare's works.

Take pains = make an effort, work hard.

= perfect, as at line 132 above; the Folio reads "perfect".

= "be there without fail" (Durham, p. 150),⁴ or "hold to the agreement at all costs" (Ridley, p. 95).³

An early editor suggested a complex origin for the phrase from archery, but it is not worth reproducing here.⁹ Other commentators have agreed that the expression seems to have been proverbial, but I can find no other examples appearing in early English literature.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A wood near Athens.

*Enter a Fairy at one door,
and Puck (Robin Goodfellow) at another.*

Entering characters: we now meet the play's third set of characters, those of the supernatural world.

at one door = through one of the stage-doors.⁴

The first **Fairy** to appear tells us explicitly in her opening speech that she is an attendant of Titiana, the Fairy Queen.

The character **Puck**, a mischievous household spirit, also goes by the name **Robin Goodfellow**.

Traditionally, a "**puck**" was a generic name for a class of malevolent spirits. Before Shakespeare, the word had usually been spelled *pooke* or *pouke* (probably pronounced to rhyme with "duke").⁹

Shakespeare may have also coined the name **Puck** by shortening the word "puckerel", or "puckrel", another word meaning imp that appears occasionally in the late 16th century.

The name **Robin Goodfellow** appears frequently in 16th century literature, usually as a generic name for a goblin. For instance, John Florio's *A World of Words* (1598) defines a scazzambrello as "*a hobgoblin, a robin good fellow*."

1 **Puck.** How now spirit! whither wander you?

1. **How now** = how is it now, ie. how goes it.¹

whither wander you = alliteratively, "to where (**whither**) have you wandered?"

2 **Fairy.** Over hill, over dale,

3-6 (below): the first four lines (3-6) of the Fairy's speech each consist of pairs of the metrical foot known as the *amphimacer*, a three-syllable foot in which the unstressed syllable falls between two stressed syllables.¹

Note the rhyming pattern of the first four lines: *abab*; then, starting from line 7, the Fairy shifts into rhyming couplets with varying meters.

3: **dale** = valley.¹

Over hill, over dale = "*over hill and dale*" had been a common expression since the days of Geoffrey Chaucer; Shakespeare, however, was the first to write **over hill, over dale**, which much later became the famous first words of *The Caissons Go Rolling Along*, a marching song written in 1908 for the U.S. Field Artillery:

*Over hill, over dale,
As we hit the dusty trail,
And those caissons go rolling along.*

4 Thorough bush, thorough brier,

4: **Thorough** = ie. through, a common disyllabic alternate form.

brier = thorny shrubs or bushes.¹
= fenced in or enclosed area.¹

6 Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire:
I do wander everywhere,
8 Swifter than the moon's sphere;

= in the ancient Ptolemaic view of the cosmos (a model widely adopted by Elizabethan poets in their plays and

		verse), the Earth stood at the center of the universe, surrounded by a series of concentric crystalline spheres; in the sphere closest to the Earth was imbedded the moon (beyond the moon, the sun and each planet had its own sphere). As these spheres independently revolved, they carried the heavenly bodies with them, causing them to appear to circle the Earth.
		Line 8 seems metrically short, with an unstressed syllable missing between <i>moon's</i> and <i>sphere</i> . When faced with a situation such as this, editors have almost universally resorted to one of two expedients: (1) insert an additional word; or (2) force an extra syllable into one of the existing words.
		Here, the most common "solution" is to insist that <i>moon's</i> should be pronounced as a disyllable: <i>MOON-es</i> .
		The difficulty with this claim is that in both the Quarto and Folio, <i>moon's</i> is spelled – " <i>moons</i> ". If Shakespeare had intended a disyllabic pronunciation, one would expect the spelling <i>moones</i> .
		H.H. Furness proposes a simpler explanation: the speaker may allow the extra unstressed beat to arise naturally through a slight pause between <i>moon's</i> and <i>sphere</i> . As Furness has written, who can be certain that this was not how the line was delivered in contemporary performance? And, if other analogous situations were treated the same way, editors might finally be kept in check from "correcting" the Bard's work by inserting their own invented language unnecessarily! ⁹
10	And I serve the Fairy Queen, To <u>dew</u> her <u>orbs</u> upon the <u>green</u> .	10: <i>dew</i> = sprinkle with dew, water. ^{1,5} <i>orbs</i> = ie. fairy-rings; rings or circles of grass which appeared in fields and pastures, <i>orbs</i> were believed to be created by fairies as they danced in a ring or otherwise went about their duties. ^{2,4,5} <i>green</i> = grassy ground. ¹
	The <u>cowslips</u> tall her <u>pensioners</u> be,	11: ie. the Fairy Queen's pensioners are cowslips. <i>cowslips</i> = common wild plant producing yellow flowers, hence the <i>gold coats</i> of line 12. ¹ <i>pensioners</i> = bodyguards; Queen Elizabeth was assigned a company of bodyguards made up of tall and attractive men, called her <i>Pensioners</i> . ⁴
12	In their gold coats, <u>spots</u> you see: <u>Those</u> be rubies, <u>fairy favours</u> :	= a large reddish spot appears in the middle of each yellow petal of the cowslip. 13: <i>Those</i> = ie. the <i>spots</i> of line 12. <i>fairy favours</i> = gifts from the fairies (to the cowslips for doing their jobs). ⁵
14	In those <u>freckles</u> , live their <u>savours</u> .	14: in the red spots (<i>freckles</i>) of the cowslips' petals, the flowers' fragrance or scent (<i>savours</i>) will be found. ⁵ In <i>Henry V</i> too, Shakespeare refers to the " <i>freckled cowslip</i> ".
16	I must go seek some dewdrops here, And hang a <u>pearl</u> in every cowslip's ear. –	16: a <i>pearl</i> was common metaphor for a dewdrop; here Shakespeare extends the image by comparing a dewdrop clinging to a cowslip's petal to a piece of jewelry hanging

	Farewell, thou <u>Lob</u> of spirits: I'll be gone.	from an ear.
18	Our queen and all her elves <u>come here anon</u> .	= bumpkin, lout; ¹ the Fairy alludes to the traditional view of a "puck" as a coarser type of hobgoblin, rather than the unintrusive spirit of folklore. ⁵
20	Puck. <u>The king doth keep his revels</u> here tonight. <u>Take heed</u> the queen come not within his sight:	= will be here shortly. 20: The king = Oberon, the Fairy King. doth keep his revels = holds a festive celebration. ¹ 21: be careful (Take heed) not to let the Fairy King see the Fairy Queen.
22	For Oberon is <u>passing fell and wrath</u> ,	= exceedingly angry (fell and wrath are synonyms for irate).
24	Because that she as her attendant, hath A lovely boy, <u>stol'n</u> from an Indian king: She never had so sweet a <u>changeling</u> .	23-29 (below): the Fairy King is upset because the queen has taken into her care a beautiful child whom the king wants for himself, but the queen refuses to give him up. = ie. kidnapped. = fairies were said to sometimes steal a child and leave an inferior one – a changeling – in exchange; here, however, Puck uses the word changeling to refer to the abducted child. ^{1,4} Note that changeling is trisyllabic: <i>CHANGE-e-ling</i> .
26	And jealous Oberon <u>would</u> have the child	= wishes to.
28	<u>Knight of his train</u> , to <u>trace</u> the forests wild; But she, <u>perforce</u> , withholds the <u>lovèd</u> boy, Crowns him with <u>flowers</u> , and makes him all her joy.	= a knight in his retinue or group of followers. = cross. ⁴ = forcibly. ⁵ = beloved. = pronounced in a single syllable.
30	And now, <u>they</u> never meet in grove or green, By <u>fountain</u> clear, or <u>spangled starlight sheen</u> ,	= ie. the Fairy King and Queen. 31: fountain = spring. spangled starlight sheen = literally, starlight appearing as bright specks of light; in context, meaning "at night, outside". starlight sheen = starlight and sheen (meaning "bright") each could be used either as a noun or an adjective. ¹ Which is which here? Take your pick. It was common in the 16th century to describe the night sky as <i>spangled</i> with <i>stars</i> .
32	But they do <u>square</u> , <u>that</u> all their elves, <u>for</u> fear,	= quarrel. ⁴ = ie. so that. ⁴ = out of.
34	Creep into acorn cups, and hide <u>them</u> there.	= ie. themselves.
36	Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and <u>making</u> quite, Or else you are that <u>shrewd</u> and <u>knavish sprite</u> ,	35: ie. "either I am mistaken in who you look like". making = form. ⁴ 36: shrewd = mischievous. ⁵ knavish = roguish. ¹ sprite = common monosyllabic alternate form of <i>spirit</i> .
38	Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he That <u>frights</u> the maidens of the <u>villagery</u> ?	37-42: Are not you...harm = the Fairy lists some of Puck's pranks in order to solidify his role as a troublemaker and trickster. = ie. frightens. = collection of villages. ¹

	<u>Skim milk</u> , and sometimes <u>labour in the quern</u> ,	39: Skim milk = remove the desired cream from milk by skimming it off the top. ¹ labour in the quern = work in the quern (a hand mill for grinding grain) to cause it to malfunction. ^{3,6}
40	And <u>bootless</u> make the <u>breathless</u> housewife churn,	40: and cause the housewife to work to churn butter in vain (bootless = uselessly or unsuccessfully) until she is exhausted (breathless = out of breath). ¹
	And sometime make <u>the drink</u> to bear no <u>barm</u> ,	41: "And sometimes you cause the ale (the drink) to fail to rise or ferment." drink = note the use of drink as a generic word standing for a specific reference – ale. barm = yeast-froth; ^{3,4} barm is the fermenting agent of beer or ale. ¹
42	<u>Mislead night-wanderers</u> , laughing at their harm?	= leading night-wanderers astray. 39-42 (above): the verb forms in these lines seem, at first glance, to be incorrect: shouldn't Shakespeare have written <i>Skims, labours, makes</i> , and so on, to match <i>frights</i> in line 38? But no; rather, the clauses are meant to be read with an implied "you", or "do you not", as a lead-in: " you skim milk", or " do you not sometimes labour", and so forth.
44	Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck, You do their work, and they shall have good luck.	43-44: for those who acknowledge him (line 43), Puck can be a beneficent spirit, performing helpful services. These lines reflect a conventional belief about fairies, that they would do good deeds for those who believed in them. ¹⁹
46	Are not you he?	
48	Puck. Thou speak'st aright; I am that merry wanderer of the night. I <u>jest to</u> Oberon, and make him smile,	= ie. amuse. Shakespeare seems to have been the first to use the construction, to "jest to" someone.
50	When I a <u>fat</u> and <u>bean-fed</u> horse <u>beguile</u> , Neighing, in likeness of a <u>filly foal</u> ;	50-51: when Puck neighs in imitation of a young mare, or female horse (filly foal), tricking a stallion into pursuing the phantom filly. fat = suggests a horse fed an ample diet. bean-fed = contemporary works suggest that a diet of beans and oats was ideal for horses used in hard service, keeping them healthy and strong: e.g. " <i>for your horse for service in the wars, or the horse kept for highway travelling, or long journeys, your best provender is beans and oats well kiln-dried and mingled together</i> " (1607). beguile = catch the attention of, divert. ¹ filly foal = the Folio prints " <i>silly foal</i> ", also acceptable. Pre-Shakespeare, however, only <i>filly foal</i> appears elsewhere in the written record.
52	And sometime lurk I in a <u>gossip's bowl</u> ,	= a sweet drink of spiced ale, traditionally used at christenings. ⁴ gossip = common name for a sponsor, ie. godfather or godmother, at a christening.
	In very likeness of a roasted <u>crab</u> ,	= ie. crab apple, another ingredient of the gossip's bowl .
54	And when she drinks, against her lips I <u>bob</u> ,	54-55: as the gossip drinks, Puck, disguised as one of the

	And on her <u>withered dewlap</u> pour the ale.	ale's crab apples, bounces (bob = bounce or jerk) ¹ up against her lips, causing her to spill the drink onto her neck. withered dewlap = indicates the gossip is an old woman, with a sagging dewlap (the fold of loose skin under the neck); the term <i>dewlap</i> was originally applied only to animals, but later humorously, as here, to a person; ¹ <i>dewlop</i> was an occasional variant spelling.
56	The wisest <u>aunt</u> , telling the <u>saddest</u> tale,	= old woman. ¹ = soberest, most serious. ⁴
	Sometime, for three-foot stool, mistaketh me:	
58	Then slip I from her bum, down topples she, <u>And "tailor" cries</u> , and falls into a cough;	= why she would cry out "Tailor!" has never been understood or fully explained.
60	And then the whole <u>quire</u> hold their hips, and <u>loffe</u> ;	60: quire = company. ⁴ loffe = ie. laugh; a possibly unique variant, used here by Shakespeare to indicate a rhyme with cough , spelled " <i>coffe</i> " in the texts.
	And <u>waxen in their mirth</u> , and <u>neeze</u> , and swear	61: waxen in their mirth = wax, or grow, in amusement, ie. laugh louder and louder. ^{1,4} neeze = sneeze; <i>neeze</i> was the original word for <i>sneeze</i> , <i>sneeze</i> itself not emerging until the very early 16th century. ¹ There seems in this period to have been an association between sneezing and laughter: for example, in Ben Johnson's <i>Every Man in His Humour</i> (1598), we find " <i>I was at supper with him, and he neezed at every jest, as if the very laughter had struck his nose.</i> "
62	A merrier hour was never <u>wasted</u> there. – But <u>room</u> , fairy! – here comes Oberon.	= spent. ¹ = ie. "make room!", a common cry upon the arrival of an important personage in a crowd. Line 63 seems to be short a syllable; however, the pause between the line's two clauses is sufficient to provide the missing beat or syllable; ⁹ see the note after line 8 above.
64	Fairy. And here, my mistress! Would that he were gone!	65: "And here comes the Fairy Queen! I wish Oberon were elsewhere!" The Fairy is distressed, knowing that the Fairy King and Queen have been fighting, and she fears a confrontation.
66		
68	<i>Enter Oberon <u>at one door</u>, with his <u>train</u>; Titania, at another, with hers.</i>	Entering Characters: Oberon is the Fairy King, Titania the Fairy Queen. at one door = through one stage door. train = followers, attendants. Shakespeare borrowed the name of his Fairy King from <i>The Faerie Queene</i> (1590), in which Edmund Spenser wrote, " <i>when with king oberon he came to fary land</i> ".
70	Ober. <u>Ill met</u> by moonlight, proud Titania.	70: Ill met = a contrast to the usual friendly greeting, "well met"; Oberon is not pleased to run into Titania. Titania = stressed on its second syllable: <i>ti-TA-ni-a</i> .
72	Titan. <u>What, jealous Oberon?</u> – Fairies, <u>skip hence</u> :	72: What, jealous Oberon? = ie. "hey, is that the suspicious (jealous) ² Oberon I see?" Titania is not speaking to Oberon here, but rather indicating irritation at running into him. skip hence = ie. "let us get away or hasten (skip) ¹

	I have <u>forsworn</u> his bed and company.	from here."
74	Ober. <u>Tarry</u> , <u>rash</u> <u>wanton</u> . Am not I <u>thy lord</u> ?	= sworn to do without.
76		75: Tarry = "wait a moment". rash = impetuous or overhasty. ^{2,6} wanton = obstinate one. ² thy lord = Titania's master or ruler; as king, Oberon implies that Titania owes him complete obedience.
78	Titan. Then I must be thy lady: but I know When thou hast <u>stol'n away from</u> Fairy Land, And in the shape of <u>Corin</u> sat all day,	77-86 (below): Titania is piqued over Oberon's infidelities. Her tone throughout the speech is sarcastic and accusatory. = stealthily or secretly left.
80	Playing on <u>pipes of corn</u> , and <u>versing</u> love,	79-81: in the shape...Phillida = Titania imagines Oberon as disguising himself as a rustic in his attempts to seduce his maiden victims. Corin = conventional name for a shepherd. ⁴
82	To amorous <u>Phillida</u> . Why art thou here, Come from the farthest <u>steppe</u> of India?	80: pipes of corn = ie. a wind instrument comprised of a reed or cornstalk. Both Chaucer and Spenser wrote of " <i>pipes made of green corn</i> ". Compare <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> , in which Shakespeare writes, " <i>When shepherds pipe on oaten straws...</i> " versing love = writing or reciting love poetry. ⁴ = conventional name for a shepherdess. ⁴
	But that, <u>forsooth</u> , the <u>bouncing</u> <u>Amazon</u> ,	82: Titania expresses amazement that Oberon is not far away somewhere chasing girls. steppe = vast plains; ¹ steppe is from the Quarto; the Folio has steepe , ie. steep, meaning a "precipitous place" ¹ or "mountain range" ⁴ – quite the opposite meaning. Succeeding writers adopted Shakespeare's steep of India, and not the steppe , suggesting steep to be the "correct" word here.
84	Your <u>buskined</u> mistress, and your warrior love,	83-86: Titania mockingly suggests that the only reason Oberon has returned from his amorous escapades is to attend the wedding of Hippolyta (the Amazon) to Theseus, and not to see her. forsooth = in truth. bouncing = hefty, vigorous, strapping. ^{1,2,6}
86	To Theseus must be wedded; and you come, To give their bed joy and prosperity.	84: Titania implies that Oberon has flirted with Hippolyta. buskined = wearing a high-heeled hunting boot. ^{3,4} 86: ie. to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.
88	Ober. How canst thou thus <u>for shame</u> , Titania,	88-94 (below): Oberon fires back, accusing Titania of hypocrisy, since she has, in her turn, had a real affair with Theseus. = probably meaning, "without shame". Although the OED does not list such a sense for <i>for shame</i> , multiple examples from the 16th century suggest it was used this way: e.g., " <i>dare we for shame our stained faces</i> "

	<u>Glance at my credit</u> with Hippolyta,	<i>shew?"</i> (1590).
90	Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?	89: "make even the slightest hint at or attack on (<i>Glance at</i>) ¹ my standing or reputation (<i>credit</i>) ² with Hippolyta".
	Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night	91-94 (below): Oberon accuses Titania of having pursued Theseus in the past, leading the Greek hero into ending his relationships with his various paramours; see the explanatory note after line 94 below.
92	From Perigenia, whom he <u>ravishèd</u> ?	= violated. ¹
94	And make him with fair <u>Ægles</u> <u>break his faith</u> With Ariadne, and Antiopa?	93: <i>Ægles</i> = the Quarto and Folio both print <i>Eagles</i> here, a humorous typographer's error. 93-94: <i>break...Ariadne</i> = betray his oath to be faithful to Ariadne (Theseus' wife at the time).
		92-94 (above): Shakespeare has borrowed the various women mentioned here from the chapter on Theseus in Plutarch's <i>Lives</i> . <i>Lives</i> was available to Shakespeare thanks to Sir Thomas North's popular translation of 1579 (all quotes below are from North's edition). 1. <i>Perigenia</i> = the beautiful daughter of Sinnis, a cruel robber slain by Theseus. After Theseus found Perigenia hiding behind a bush, he convinced her to come out, after which she " <i>lay with him</i> ." Shakespeare's use of <i>ravished</i> suggests a more violent and coercive violation of the lady's virtue. 2. <i>Ægles</i> = a " <i>nymph</i> " whom Theseus " <i>loved</i> ". 3. <i>Ariadne</i> = daughter of Minos, King of Crete. She fell in love with Theseus and fled Crete with him after he slew the Minotaur. Plutarch notes that some believed Ariadne " <i>had two children by Theseus</i> ." Plutarch also opined that Theseus was much to blame for leaving " <i>his wife Ariadne for the love of Ægles</i> ." 4. <i>Antiopa</i> = Plutarch believed that Theseus likely went to see the Amazons alone (and not with Hercules, as described in the note at Act I.i.23 above), and took her prisoner on his own. As mentioned earlier, there is no consistent account of Theseus' relationships with Hippolyta and Ariadne: the ancient sources offer overlapping and contradictory details about his exploits against the Amazons.
96	Titan. These are the forgeries of jealousy:	96: Oberon's accusations are the inventions of a suspicious mind. ⁵
98	And never, since <u>the middle summer's spring</u> , Met we on hill, in <u>dale</u> , forest, or <u>mead</u> ,	= the beginning (<i>spring</i>) ⁴ of midsummer, with obvious pun. = valley. = meadow.
	By <u>pavèd fountain</u> , or by <u>rushy brook</u> ,	99: <i>paved fountain</i> = spring whose bottom is covered with pebbles. ^{1,4} <i>rushy brook</i> = stream filled with rushes.
100	Or <u>in the beachèd margent of the sea</u> ,	= ie. on the beach which comprises the margin (<i>margent</i>), or edge, of the sea. ^{1,5}

	To dance our <u>ringlets</u> to <u>the whistling wind</u> ,	101: <i>ringlets</i> = round or circular dances. ^{3,4} <i>the whistling wind</i> = ie. the sound or music of the wind. ⁴
102	But with thy <u>brawls</u> thou hast disturbed our <u>sport</u> .	102: <i>brawls</i> = squabbling; ¹ possible pun, as <i>brawl</i> also referred to a French dance. ¹ <i>sport</i> = recreation, amusement. ²
	Therefore the winds, <u>pipng to us in vain</u> ,	= figuratively, playing music for no purpose (since the fairies can no longer dance, due to Oberon's persistent interference).
104	As in revenge, have <u>sucked up</u> , from the sea, <u>Contagious</u> fogs: which, <u>falling in</u> the land,	= drawn up. ¹ = noxious, full of pestilence. ^{4,5} = ie. descending upon.
106	Hath every <u>pelting</u> river made so <u>proud</u> ,	106: <i>pelting</i> = trifling, insignificant. ^{3,5} The Folio prints "petty" here, also acceptable. <i>proud</i> = turbulent, swollen. ^{1,2}
	That they have <u>overborne their continents</u> .	= overflowed their banks; ⁵ <i>continents</i> = enclosures. ¹
		108-115 (below): <i>The ox...undistinguishable</i> = Titania evokes (with some hyperbole) the ecological and agricultural disasters which have unfolded as a result of the flooding she mentioned in line 107.
108	The ox hath therefore <u>stretched</u> his yoke <u>in vain</u> , The <u>ploughman</u> <u>lost his sweat</u> , and the green <u>corn</u>	= strained (to pull). ¹ = ie. because the crop has failed. ⁵ 109: <i>ploughman</i> = one who drives a plough, ie. farm labourer. ¹ <i>lost his sweat</i> = ie. toiled in vain. ⁵ <i>corn</i> = grain in general. ⁵
110	Hath rotted, <u>ere his youth attained a beard</u> :	= ie. the sense is, "before (<i>ere</i>) the grain reached maturity." The <i>beard</i> is another name for certain grains' awns, the sharp prickles (Samuel Johnson's definition) or bristles that grow on barley, oat and some grasses. ¹ The clause does punning double-duty, as it brings to mind the image of a man not yet old enough to grow facial hair.
	The <u>fold</u> stands empty in the drownèd field,	111: livestock can no longer graze in their pens because the latter are covered with water. <i>fold</i> = pen or enclosure, especially for sheep. ¹
112	And crows are fatted with the <u>murrion</u> flock;	112: the crows have a plentiful food supply in the numerous dead livestock. <i>murrion</i> = diseased, especially of plague; alternate form of <i>murrain</i> . ^{1,4,5}
	The <u>nine men's morris</u> is filled up with mud:	= a marked area on the ground where people played the outdoor board game "nine men's morris". ^{2,3}
114	And the <u>quaint mazes</u> , in the <u>wanton</u> green, For <u>lack of tread</u> , are undistinguishable.	114-5: the clever and intricate (<i>quaint</i>) ^{1,3} network of paths (<i>mazes</i>) ² laid out on the village green have become overgrown, and are now indistinguishable because people no longer walk on them (<i>lack of tread</i>). ⁵ <i>wanton</i> = luxuriant; the grass grows unchecked. ^{3,5}
		116-129 (below): Titania discourses on how seasonal patterns have been severely disrupted as a result of

		the discord in her relationship with Oberon.
116	The human mortals <u>want</u> their winter here, No night is now with hymn or carol <u>blest</u> .	116-7: the exact meaning of this pair of lines has long puzzled editors. One interpretation is, "ie. winter no longer arrives as it should; as a result, the usual outdoor singing, such as of the carols sung at Christmas time, is absent." ^{5,9} <i>want</i> = lack. <i>blest</i> = ie. blessed.
118	<u>Therefore</u> the moon (the governess of floods) <u>Pale in her anger, washes all the air,</u>	118: the moon has long been recognized for its influence on the tides (<i>floods</i>). <i>Therefore</i> = ie. as a result of the quarrels between Oberon and Titania; this " <i>Therefore</i> " acts in parallel with the one that begins line 103 above. 119: <i>Pale in her anger</i> = a pale countenance was frequently associated with anger. <i>washes all the air</i> = saturates the air with moisture. ¹
120	That <u>rheumatic diseases</u> do abound. And, <u>thorough this distemperature</u> , we see	= cold-like illnesses; ⁴ <i>rheumatic</i> is stressed on its first syllable. = ie. on account of this quarrel of ours", ⁵ or "on account of this unwholesome weather"; <i>distemperature</i> has two applicable senses here, and past editors have favoured either: (1) a "disturbance of mind or temper", and (2) "deranged atmospheric conditions" (OED). ¹ <i>thorough</i> = ie. through, a disyllabic variant.
122	<u>The seasons alter: hoary-headed</u> frosts Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,	122: <i>The seasons alter</i> = the normal progression of the seasons has changed. 122-3: <i>hoary-headed...rose</i> = winter is now encroaching on spring. The compound word <i>hoary-headed</i> typically was used to refer to the white hair of an older man (thus creating a linguistic connection to <i>Hiem's crown</i> in line 124 below); here it simply means "white". ⁵
124	And on old <u>Hiëms' chin</u> and icy crown,	124-126: <i>And on...set</i> = metaphorically, "and buds appear in winter."
126	<u>An odorous chaplet</u> of sweet summer buds Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,	<i>Hiëms'</i> = <i>Hiems</i> was a common personification of winter; <i>hiems</i> is Latin for winter. <i>chin</i> = appears in both the Quarto and Folio; usually emended to " <i>thin</i> ". The idea of a chaplet adorning <i>Hiëms' chin</i> has puzzled commentators for centuries. Shakespeare referred to the " <i>thin and hairless scalps</i> " of old men in <i>Richard II</i> , suggesting <i>thin</i> is correct. <i>An odorous</i> = a fragrant. ¹ <i>chaplet</i> = wreath or garland, as of flowers. ¹
		122-6 (above): <i>hoary-headed...set</i> = it is worth noting the richness of the parallelism in Shakespeare's metaphors for the crossed seasons in these lines: not only do we have the contrast of the <i>frosts</i> of winter appearing on the <i>roses</i> of spring on the one hand, and <i>summer buds</i> growing on personified winter on the other; but the Bard inserts a symbolic anatomical contrast as well, of the <i>lap</i> of the roses and the <i>crown</i> of old man winter.

	The <u>childing</u> autumn, angry winter <u>change</u>	127-8: <i>The childing...liveries</i> = autumn and winter exchange (<i>change</i>) their accustomed (<i>wonted</i>) uniforms, ie. take on each other's appearance; <i>liveries</i> are the uniforms worn by servants. <i>childing</i> = fertile or fruitful, ¹ ie. the season when crops reach maturity. The literal meaning of <i>childing</i> is "that bear or is capable of bearing a child or children" (OED).
128	Their wonted liveries: and the <u>mazèd</u> world, By <u>their increase</u> , now knows not <u>which is which</u> :	= bewildered, confused. ^{2,4} 129: <i>their increase</i> = the product of the seasons, ¹ ie. the growth and proliferation of buds and other plant life (appearing in the wrong seasons). <i>which is which</i> = ie. which is winter and which is autumn. ⁹
130	And this <u>same progeny</u> of evils <u>comes</u>	130-2: and the source (<i>original</i>) of the unnatural disorder of the seasons is the discord between Oberon and Titania.
132	From our <u>debate</u> , from our dissensiön; We are their parents and <u>original</u> .	<i>same</i> = self-same. <i>progeny of evils</i> = figurative offspring (<i>progeny</i>) in the form of seasonal and agricultural calamities (<i>evils</i>). ¹ <i>comes</i> = stems. <i>debate</i> = wrangling, quarreling. ¹
134	<i>Ober.</i> <u>Do you amend</u> it then: it lies in you.	= an imperative: ie. "you should remedy the situation".
136	Why should Titania <u>cross</u> her Oberon?	= thwart (the wishes of).
138	I do but beg a little changeling boy, To be my <u>henchman</u> .	= high-ranking servant, page of honour. ^{1,4}
140	<i>Titan.</i> <u>Set your heart at rest</u> : The Fairy Land buys not the child of me.	139-140: "be assured, I would not part with the child for the whole realm of fairies." ⁵ <i>Set your heart at rest</i> = an ironic rebuke, not a line of comfort: "do not bother any longer trying to think of ways to convince me to relent."
	His mother was <u>a votress of my order</u> :	= a woman who had taken vows to serve as one of Titania's devoted followers or attendants. ³ <i>votress</i> = disyllabic variant of <i>votaress</i> . ¹ <i>order</i> = suggestive of an organized religious fraternity or social class. ¹
142	And, in the <u>spicèd Indian air</u> , by night, Full often <u>hath she gossiped by my side</u> ,	= air fragrant with the rich spices of India. ^{1,5} = ie. have Titania and the Indian woman sat in close and intimate talk. In this period, the verb <i>gossip</i> did not necessarily refer to idle discussion about others' affairs. ¹
144	And sat with me on <u>Neptune's yellow sands</u> ,	= poetically, the beach or seashore; <i>Neptune</i> was the Roman god of the sea.
		145-152 (below): a spectacularly intricate extended metaphor comparing the Indian child's mother to trading ships at sea: (1) Titania first recalls how she and the mother would watch trading ships gliding along on the sea in front of them (line 145); (2) she then compares the appearance of the ship's wind-swollen sails to the pregnant mother's own belly (lines 146-9); (3) finally, just as a merchant ship travels to distant

	Marking th' <u>embarked</u> <u>traders</u> on the <u>flood</u> ;	locations in order to bring back new goods, so the mother went on errands for Titania to bring the queen items that she requested (lines 148-152).
146	When we have laughed to see the sails <u>conceive</u> , And grow <u>big-bellied</u> , with the <u>wanton</u> wind:	145: observing (marking) ² the merchant vessels (traders) ¹ on the sea (flood). ² embarked = alluding to the goods which have been put on board the ship. ¹
148	<u>Which</u> she, with pretty and with <u>swimming gait</u> , Following (<u>her womb then rich with my young squire</u>)	146-7: with conceive and big-bellied , the sails are amusingly imagined as having become impregnated by the lascivious (wanton) wind. 148: Which = ie. the traders of line 145. swimming gait = smooth and flowing manner of walking; ¹ swimming reinforces the passage's water imagery. = the mother was, at the time, pregnant with the Indian boy. rich with = wealthy by the possession of; ¹ Schmidt suggests "enriched by". ⁶ squire = lad. ²
150	<u>Would imitate</u> , and sail upon the land,	= ie. the mother would imitate the ships.
152	To fetch me trifles, and return again, As from a voyage, rich with merchandise. But she, being <u>mortal</u> , <u>of that boy did die</u> ,	153: mortal = ie. human; unlike the immortal spirits of the fairy world. of that boy did die = the mother died during childbirth.
154	And, for her sake, do I rear up her boy:	
156	And, for her sake, I will not part with him.	
158	Ober. How long, within this wood, intend you stay?	
160	Titan. <u>Perchance</u> , till after Theseus' wedding-day. If you will <u>patiently</u> dance in our <u>round</u> ,	= maybe. ² 160: patiently = tolerantly, ¹ ie. without being quarrelsome. round = a circular dance, typically performed while holding hands. ¹
162	And see our moonlight <u>revels</u> , go with us: If not, <u>shun me</u> , and I will <u>spare your haunts</u> .	= merrymaking. ¹ 162: shun me = ie. "keep away from me". ¹ spare your haunts = "avoid your usual hangouts." ¹
164	Ober. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.	
166	Titan. Not for thy fairy kingdom. – Fairies, away! – We shall <u>chide downright</u> , if I longer stay.	= argue or quarrel straightaway or directly. ^{1,2}
168	[Exit Titania and her train.]	
170	Ober. Well: go thy way. Thou <u>shalt not from</u> this grove,	171-2: Oberon apostrophizes the departed Titania: he will get his revenge on her for her insult or affront (injury). ² shalt not from = ie. shalt not depart from; in this common Elizabethan construction, in the presence of the verb of intent (shalt), the verb of action (depart , or similar) could be omitted.
172	Till I torment thee for this <u>injury</u> . – My gentle Puck, come hither: thou rememberest,	

174 Since once I sat upon a promontory,

And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
176 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,

That the rude sea grew civil at her song,

178 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,

To hear the sea-maid's music.

180 **Puck.** I remember.

182

Ober. That very time, I saw (but thou couldst not)
184 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,

Cupid, all armed: a certain aim he took

186 At a fair vestal, thronèd by [the] west,

And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,

188 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:

But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft

174: **Since** = when.⁴
promontory = "a point of highland which juts out into the sea" (OED).

176: **Uttering** = giving voice to;¹ in *The Winter's Tale* too, Shakespeare uses the word **utter** in connection with singing: "*He sings several tunes faster than you'll tell money: he utters them as he had eaten ballads...*"
dulcet and harmonious = sweet or pleasing and melodious.^{1,5}
breath = voice or song.²

177: the mermaid's singing pacified the rough (**rude**)¹ sea.
civil = calm.⁵

178: Shakespeare used the same imagery in his long poem *Lucrece* (1594): "... and little stars shot from their fixed places." See the note at line 8 above for the **spheres** of the heavenly bodies.

182-192 (below): Oberon recounts a lengthy story of Cupid firing an arrow without effect on a maiden. The point of Oberon's tale is to explain the origin of the magical flower, called love-in-idleness, whose juices Oberon intends to use to spread some mischief.

Editors have agreed that some allegory was intended by Shakespeare in this passage; certainly, the **vestal** is Queen Elizabeth I, the unmarried English monarch famed for her chastity. But beyond that, no satisfactory explanation has been established.

= in ancient cosmology (which assigned attributes like cold or hot, and dry or moist, to heavenly bodies), the moon was regarded as **cold** and moist.
= sure, accurate.²

186: **vestal** = the **vestals** were famous virgin-priestesses of ancient Rome.
throned by the west = enthroned in the west; the reference is to Elizabeth I, ruling over England. The Quarto prints "*throned by west*", and the Folio "*throned by the west*". Ridley wonders if the clause has been printed incorrectly, noting that **by** doesn't really work.³

= launched his arrow (which would cause its victim to fall in love).
= ie. as if.

189-192 (below): the flame of Cupid's fiery arrow (**shaft**) was extinguished by the moist beams of the moon, and so, when it struck the vestal, it had no effect on her, failing to inflame her love.

= arrow.

190	Quenched in the <u>chaste</u> beams of the <u>watery moon</u> :	190: chaste = allusion to Diana, the virgin Roman goddess of the moon; hence, a reinforcing allusion to England's virgin queen. watery moon = reference to the moist character ascribed to the moon (see the note at line 184 above).
192	And the imperial <u>votress</u> passèd on, In maiden meditation, <u>fancy-free</u> . Yet <u>marked I</u> where the <u>bolt</u> of Cupid fell:	= religious devotee, bound by vows, ie. the vestal. = ie. untainted by feelings of love (fancy). = ie. "I noted". = arrow.
194	It fell upon a little western flower; Before, milk-white; now purple, with love's wound,	
196	And maidens call it <u>love-in-idleness</u> .	196: love-in-idleness was a rare name used for the pansy sometimes called a johnny jump up (<i>Viola tricolor</i>), which is known in part for its multicolored petals of purple, yellow and white. ¹¹
	Fetch me that flower; the herb I <u>shewed</u> thee once.	= ie. showed; <i>shew</i> was the older and more common alternate form of <i>show</i> .
198	<u>The juice of it, on sleeping eye-lids laid,</u>	198: The juice of it = the flower's liquid. on sleeping eye-lids laid = when spread or applied onto the eyelids of one who is asleep.
200	Will make <u>or</u> man <u>or</u> woman madly dote Upon the next live creature that it sees.	199: or...or = either...or. 199-200: dote / Upon = fall excessively in love with, become infatuated with. ¹
202	Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again Ere the <u>leviathan</u> can swim a <u>league</u> .	201-2: be thou...league = "return to me in less time than it takes a sea monster (leviathan) to swim a league (about three miles). ¹ leviathan = could refer to a whale. ^{2,5}
204	Puck. I'll <u>put a girdle round about the earth,</u>	= go around the earth; ¹ this expression first appeared in published literature here, and was soon adopted by subsequent authors.
206	In forty minutes.	205: if leviathan (line 202) is taken to mean whale, and if one assumes Puck is equating forty minutes with the time it takes a whale to swim a league (about three miles), the implied speed for a whale would be about 4.5 miles per hour. Cruising speed for most whales is, in fact, in the 3-6 miles per hour range. ¹²
	[Exit Puck.]	
208	Ober. <u>Having once</u> this juice,	= ie. "once I have".
210	I'll watch Titania, when she is asleep, And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:	
212	The next thing then she, waking, looks upon, (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,	
214	On <u>meddling</u> monkey, or on <u>busy</u> ape)	214: meddling and busy both mean "interfering" or "prying", ^{1,2,6} reflecting a trope of the period, though the exact reason is not completely clear. Some examples include: (1) a 1570 text recounts " <i>a tale of an ape meddling in that (in which) he had no skill.</i> " The ape was skilled at making toys (so went the story), but " <i>one day being busy to meddle with an art he had no skill of</i> " (that is, when he tried his hand at fishing, a task for which he was unqualified), " <i>instead of a fish he caught a frog.</i> "

216 She shall pursue it with the soul of love;
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
 (As I can take it with another herb)
 218 I'll make her render up her page to me. –
 But who comes here? I am invisible,
 220 And I will overhear their conference.
 222 *Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.*

224 **Demet.** I love thee not: therefore pursue me not.
 Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
 226 The one I'll stay: the other stayeth me.

228 Thou told'st me, they were stol'n unto this wood;
 And here am I, and wood, within this wood,
 Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
 230 Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.
 232 **Helena.** You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant:
 But yet you draw not iron, for my heart

234 Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
 And I shall have no power to follow you.

236 **Demet.** Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?

(2) A 1581 publication describes a man as "*too busy like an ape*" and a later (1683) text suggests that monkeys were considered "*busy-bodies...full of meddling*."

= most passionate love.⁵
 216: "but before (*ere*) I reverse the charm on her eyes".

= give up, relinquish.¹ = ie. the young Indian boy.

= eavesdrop on. = conversation.

Entering Characters: we remember that **Helena** is in love with **Demetrius**, but her feelings are not returned; Demetrius, instead, loves Egeus' daughter Hermia.

Helena has followed through on her vow to inform Demetrius of Hermia's plan to meet Lysander in these woods, from where they plan to elope. Demetrius has arrived in pursuit, hoping to catch them.

Notice how throughout this dialogue, Helena consistently uses "*you*" to address Demetrius, to demonstrate both her respect for and submission to him; Demetrius, meanwhile, varies his form of address, using "*thee*" when he wishes to emphasize his scorn for Helena, and "*you*" as a way to maintain his emotional distance from her.

226: Demetrius intends to keep Lysander from eloping with Hermia (*The one I'll stay*), while acknowledging that it is Hermia who is driving his actions and emotions (*the other stayeth me*).

However, it is conventional to emend *stay* to *slay* and *stayeth* to *slayeth*: the meaning of the line thus becomes, Demetrius intends to literally kill Lysander, while lamenting that Hermia is figuratively killing him (Demetrius) by rejecting his love.

= ie. into.
 = mad (punning).

= attract. = lodestone, magnet.¹

233-4: **But yet...steel** = the meaning of this pair of clauses has been extensively debated. One interpretation might be: what Demetrius attracts is not mere **iron**, but steadfast **steel** – and being **true as steel**, Helena emphasizes her complete loyalty to Demetrius. Both iron and steel have magnetic properties.

true as steel (line 234) = this expression's pedigree dates back at least to 1300.

234-5: **leave you...follow you** = if Demetrius would stop exerting his magnetic power over her, she would no longer feel compelled to follow him.

Leave = give up.⁵

237: Demetrius, aggravated, asks rhetorically if he has done or said anything to lead Helena on.

238 Or rather do I not in plainest truth,
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you?

240 **Helena.** And even for that, do I love you the more.

242 I am your spaniel: and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:

244 Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me: only give me leave
246 (Unworthy as I am) to follow you.
What worser place can I beg, in your love,
248 (And yet, a place of high respect with me)
Than to be usèd as you use your dog?

250 **Demet.** Tempt not, too much, the hatred of my spirit.
252 For I am sick, when I do look on thee.

254 **Helena.** And I am sick when I look not on you.

256 **Demet.** You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city, and commit yourself
258 Into the hands of one that loves you not;

To trust the opportunity of night,
260 And the ill counsel of a desert place,

With the rich worth of your virginity.
262

Helena. Your virtue is my privilege: for that

264 It is not night, when I do see your face.
Therefore, I think, I am not in the night;

266 Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company.
For you, in my respect, are all the world.
268 Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here, to look on me?

270

entice = allure.¹

speak you fair = "speak kindly to you?"¹

= double negatives were common and acceptable in Elizabethan English.

= precisely;¹ pronounced as *e'en*. = ie. for that reason.¹

242-9: the *spaniel* was commonly used metaphorically to describe one who fawns submissively on another;¹ Shakespeare had used this exact conceit in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (written c. 1590):

*Yet, spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love,
The more it grows and fawneth on her still.*

= treat. = kick.

= permission.

247-9: Though being treated (*used*) like Demetrius' dog is the most degrading and lowest role Helena can imagine, she would still regard it as an honourable position so long as it allows her to be with him.

251: ie. Demetrius warns Helena not to push him too hard.

256-8: by chasing Demetrius so obviously, Helena is opening herself up to accusations of immodesty, and even promiscuity.

impeach = call into question, cast doubt upon.⁴

modesty = chastity, propriety of behaviour.

259-261 (below): Demetrius rebukes Helena for putting herself into such a dangerous position when her chastity is at stake.

259: to risk being out after dark, when there is greater chance for immorality.

260: and trusting for her safety in the face of any evil plans or designs (*ill counsel*) that likely exist in such a deserted or desolate (*desert*) location.^{1,2}

261: to put her precious virginity at risk.

263: *Your virtue...privilege* = Helena responds that she is in fact protected from harm thanks to Demetrius' upright moral nature; *privilege* = sanctuary, protection.^{1,2}

for that = because.⁵

264-5: it doesn't feel like night to Helena when she is with Demetrius, ie. her world is lit up by his presence.

266-9: Helena continues to pitifully equivocate: since Demetrius is her world, she in fact has a world of company in the woods (ie. she is not alone at all!).

in my respect (line 267) = "in my view", ie. "as far as I am concerned".⁹

272	Demet. I'll run from thee, and hide me in the <u>brakes</u> , And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.	= bushes, thickets. ²
274	Helena. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.	274: even the most savage beast is not as cruel as Demetrius.
276	Run when you will: the story shall be changed: Apollo flies and Daphne <u>holds the chase</u> :	275-279 (below): Helena admits to Demetrius that she will stubbornly follow him wherever he goes, using several analogies to highlight her recognition that this situation represents a reversal of natural roles – it is usually the boy who chases the girl! 276: in the original myth, it is <i>Apollo</i> who chases the beautiful maiden <i>Daphne</i> through the woods. <i>holds the chase</i> = does the chasing.
278	The dove pursues the <u>griffin</u> : the mild <u>hind</u> <u>Makes speed</u> to catch the tiger. <u>Bootless speed</u> , When cowardice pursue, and valour flies.	277: <i>griffin</i> = mythical monster with the head and wings of an eagle and body of a lion. <i>hind</i> = female deer. ¹ 278: <i>Makes speed</i> = hurries, makes haste. ¹ 278-9: <i>bootless...flies</i> = Helena concludes her speech with a strained, even nonsensical, example of inversion of the natural order, but this time it's personal: running quickly is useless (<i>Bootless speed</i>), when the coward (she, Helena) chases the fleeing brave one.
280	Demet. I will <u>not stay thy questions</u> . Let me go:	= no longer endure this conversation ² (Durham suggests, "listen to thy talk."); a likely adoption from Shakespeare's most-quoted Bible, the Geneva Bible of 1561: in Titus 3:9, Paul advises Titus to " <i>stay</i> (meaning "avoid") <i>foolish questions</i> ".
282	Or if thou follow me, do not believe, But I shall <u>do thee mischief</u> in the wood.	= ie. "cause thee harm".
284	Helena. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field, You do me mischief. <u>Fie</u> , Demetrius! Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex:	= for shame.
288	<u>We</u> cannot fight for love, as men may do: We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.	287: "your cruelty towards me forces me to act in a way (ie. chasing him) which is unbecoming for my sex." = ie. women.
290	[Exit Demetrius.]	293ff: the remainder of the scene is spoken, mostly, in rhyming couplets.
292	<u>I'll</u> follow thee, and <u>make a Heaven of hell</u> , To die upon the <u>hand</u> I love so well.	293-4: for Helena, being close to Demetrius is enough to turn her suffering into a kind of joy, even if it leads to her own death through Demetrius' cruelty. <i>I'll</i> = the Folio prints "I". <i>make a Heaven of hell</i> = an interesting inversion of Hermia's exclamation at Act I.i.264 that Lysander " <i>hath turned a Heaven unto a hell</i> ." <i>To die upon the hand</i> = in dying by the hand. ^{5,9}
296	[Exit Helena.]	
298	Ober. Fare thee well, nymph. <u>Ere</u> he do leave this grove, Thou shalt <u>fly</u> him, and he shall seek thy love. –	298-9: Oberon apostrophizes Helena, promising her yet another reversal of roles: before (<i>ere</i>) Demetrius leaves the woods, he will be the one chasing her, and she fleeing him; <i>fly</i> = flee.
300		

Re-enter Puck.

302	Hast thou <u>the flower</u> there? Welcome, wanderer.	303: the line is printed as shown in both the Quarto and Folio; however, it would seem to make sense to reverse the two clauses: "Welcome, wanderer. Hast thou the flower there?" ⁹
304		Another suggestion has been to move the question mark to the end of the sentence: "Hast thou the flower there, welcome wanderer?" ⁹
	Puck. Ay, there it is.	the flower = ie. the love-in-idleness; see line 196 above.
306	Ober. I pray thee give it me.	= please.
308	I know a <u>bank</u> where the <u>wild thyme blows</u> ,	308: a syllable seems to be missing from this line, unless where or wild is to be treated as a disyllable. bank = ie. shore of a stream. ¹ wild thyme = species name for <i>Thymus serpyllum</i> . blows = blooms or blossoms. ²
	Where <u>oxlips</u> , and the <u>nodding violet</u> grows,	309: oxlips = plant whose flower resembles the cowslip. ¹ nodding violet = likely nodding because of the way the violet's flower can droop: a 1631 work writes, " <i>I asked a nodding violet why it sadly hung the head...</i> "
310	Quite <u>over-canopied</u> with <u>luscious woodbine</u> ,	310: over-canopied = overhung. ¹ luscious = highly pleasant to the sense of smell. ¹ woodbine = honeysuckle. ¹
	With sweet <u>musk-roses</u> , and with <u>eglantine</u> :	311: musk-roses = species of rose with large, white flowers possessing a musk scent. ² eglantine = ie. the eglantine rose, or sweet-briar. ^{2,3}
312	There sleeps Titania, <u>sometime of the night</u> ,	= at some time or another during the night. ¹
314	Lulled in these flowers, with <u>dances and delight</u> : And there the snake <u>throws</u> her <u>enamelled</u> skin,	= "dances that give delight." ⁵ = sheds. = hard polished, ¹ glossy, ⁶ and/or multi-coloured. ²
	<u>Weed wide enough</u> to wrap a fairy in.	315: the cast-off skin of a snake is just wide enough to make a garment or covering (Weed) ^{1,4} for a fairy.
316	And, with the juice of this, I'll <u>streak</u> her eyes, And <u>make her full of hateful fantasies</u> .	316-7: Oberon himself will rub (streak) ¹ the juice of the flower onto the eyes of Titania as she sleeps, so as to cause her to fall violently in love with whoever she sees first upon waking: wanting to humble her, he expects this enchantment will lead her into a ridiculous and humiliating situation. make her full of hateful fantasies = fill her with disgusting or repulsive hallucinations or conceits. ^{1,2,6}
318	Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove: A sweet <u>Athenian lady</u> is in love	= ie. Helena.
320	With a <u>disdainful youth</u> : anoint his eyes. But do it, <u>when</u> the <u>next</u> thing he <u>espies</u> ,	= ie. Demetrius. = so that. = the sense is "first". = sees.
322	May be the lady: thou shalt know the man	322-3: thou shalt...hath on = Puck does not know

	By the Athenian garments he hath on.	Demetrius, so Oberon must explain how the Fairy may recognize him.
324	<u>Effect it with some care</u> , that he may prove More <u>fond</u> on her than she upon <u>her love</u> :	= ie. be careful! 325: more deeply in love with Helena than she loves him (<i>her love</i> , ie. Demetrius). <i>fond</i> = foolishly doting. ⁵
326	And look thou meet me <u>ere the first cock crow</u> .	= before the rooster first crows, perhaps a couple of hours before dawn. ¹³
328	Puck. Fear not, my lord: <u>your servant</u> shall do so.	= ie. Puck himself.
330	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	
	ACT II, SCENE II	
	<i>Another part of the wood.</i>	
	<i>Enter Titania, with her train.</i>	
1	Titan. Come, now a <u>roundel</u> and a fairy song:	= dance in a circle. ⁴
2	Then, for the third part of a minute, <u>hence</u> ,	2: after the dance, the fairies are instructed to go about their various duties, as delineated below, for 20 seconds. Stevenson comments, "the fairies, being so small themselves, divide up their time into small parts" (p. 86). ⁵ <i>hence</i> = ie. "go from here".
	Some to kill <u>cankers</u> in the musk-rose buds;	= caterpillars or other insect larvae that attacks plants. ¹
4	Some war with <u>rere-mice</u> for their <u>leathren</u> wings,	4-5: <i>Some war...coats</i> = some of the fairies should battle bats (<i>rere-mice</i> , a disyllable, pronounced <i>rear-mice</i>) to collect their wings from which coats can be made for elves. <i>leathren</i> = leather-like; ¹ <i>leathren</i> was an occasionally-used alternate form of <i>leather</i> . Shakespeare may have borrowed the idea for this line from Edmund Spenser's influential <i>The Faerie Queene</i> : "the lether-winged bat."
6	To make my small elves coats; and some keep back The <u>clamorous</u> owl, that nightly hoots and <u>wonders</u> At our <u>quaint</u> spirits. Sing me now asleep:	5-7: <i>and some...spirits</i> = other fairies should keep away the owls, with their noisy (<i>clamorous</i>) hooting and intrusive curiosity at the fairies' doings. ⁵ <i>wonders</i> = marvels. ¹ <i>quaint</i> = dainty, delicate. ^{4,5}
8	Then to your <u>offices</u> , and let me rest.	= duties. ⁴
10	<i>The Fairies sing.</i>	
		12-36 (below): As the fairies sing, note the variety of rhyme schemes they employ, including both alternating rhyming lines (<i>abab</i>) and rhyming couplets.
12	All Fairies.	
	<i>You spotted snakes, with <u>double</u> tongue,</i>	= ie. forked. ⁵
14	<i><u>Thorny</u> hedgehogs, be not seen,</i>	= covered with spines. ⁵
	<i><u>Newts</u> and <u>blind-worms</u>, do no wrong,</i>	= a legless lizard, the slow-worm. ¹
16	<i>Come not near our Fairy Queen.</i>	16: Stevenson notes that both newts and blind-worms were

18	<p><i>Chorus.</i> <i>Philomel, with melody,</i></p>	<p>thought to be poisonous.</p>
20	<p><i>Sing in our sweet lullaby,</i> <i>Lulla, lulla, <u>lullaby</u>, lulla, lulla, lullaby:</i></p>	<p>= ie. the nightingale. The allusion is to the gruesome story of Tereus, the king of Thrace, who violently raped Philomena, the sister of his wife Procne. Tereus cut out Philomena's tongue to keep her from telling anyone what happened, and kept her locked in a shed. Philomena famously weaved her story onto a cloth, which she then was able to pass on to a friend. When Procne, who had been told by Tereus that her sister was dead, learned the truth, she, in revenge, cooked and fed Itys, her son by Tereus, to Tereus. As Tereus chased the girls with murderous intent, the gods transformed them into birds – Philomena a nightingale, and Procne a swallow.</p>
22	<p><i>Never harm,</i></p>	
24	<p><i>Nor spell, nor charm,</i></p>	
26	<p><i>Come our lovely lady <u>nigh</u>;</i> <i>So good night, with lullaby.</i></p>	<p>21: lulla is the older word, transformed into lullaby in the late 16th century.¹</p>
28	<p><i>1st Fairy. Weaving spiders, come not here;</i> <i><u>Hence</u>, you long-legged spinners, hence!</i> <i>Beetles black, approach not near:</i> <i>Worm nor snail, do no offence.</i></p>	<p>24: ie. come near (nigh) the lovely Fairy Queen.</p>
32	<p><i>Chorus.</i> <i>Philomel, with melody, &c.</i></p>	<p>= away!</p>
34	<p><i>2nd Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:</i></p>	
36	<p><i>One <u>aloof</u>, stand sentinel.</i></p>	<p>36: one fairy should remain, standing apart (aloof), acting as a guard to watch over Titania.</p>
38	<p>[<i>Exeunt Fairies</i>]</p>	
40	<p>[<i>Titania sleeps.</i>]</p>	
42	<p><i>Enter Oberon,</i> <i>and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.</i></p>	
44		<p>45-52 (below): Oberon casts a spell on Titania. The lines form rhyming couplets, each line seven syllables, beginning with a stressed syllable, then alternating between unstressed and stressed, and ending with a stressed syllable. The resulting cadence is hypnotic and sing-songy, perfectly suited for an incantation.</p>
46	<p><i>Ober. <u>What</u> thou seest, when thou dost wake,</i> <i>Do it for thy true-love take:</i></p>	<p>Note how Oberon, in this speech, employs a pair of rhyming triplets surrounding a rhyming couplet.</p>
48	<p><i>Love and <u>languish</u> for his sake.</i></p>	<p>45-46: whoever (What = who) Titania sees first upon waking, she will take for her true love.</p>
	<p><i>Be it <u>ounce</u>, or <u>cat</u>, or bear,</i> <i><u>Pard</u>, or boar with bristled hair,</i></p>	<p>47: Oberon desires that Titania not just love, but pine and yearn (languish) for, the object of her affection.</p>
		<p>48-49: for the second time in the play, Oberon gleefully imagines Titania falling in love with an animal; see Act II.i.213-4 above.</p>
		<p>ounce = lynx.³ cat = wildcat.⁴</p>

		<i>pard</i> = leopard. ³
50	In thy eye, <u>that</u> shall appear	= ie. that which.
	When thou wak'st, it is thy dear:	
52	Wake, when some vile thing is near.	52: Oberon's hope that Titania will awaken to fall in love with some repulsive creature reveals his vindictive streak.
54		
	[Exit Oberon.]	
56	Enter Lysander and Hermia.	Entering Characters: <i>Lysander</i> arrives in the woods as he promised, meeting <i>Hermia</i> in anticipation of their secret elopement. Note that the couple continues the rhyming, employing a variety of rhyme schemes in their dialogue.
58	Lysan. Fair love, you faint, with wandering in the wood: And to speak <u>troth</u> , I have forgot our way.	58-59: Lysander notices that Hermia is exhausted from wandering through the forest, and is also honest enough to admit they are lost. <i>troth</i> = truth.
60	<u>We'll rest us</u> , Hermia, if you think it good,	= an example of the common Elizabethan grammatical construction known as the ethical dative, in which the superfluous <i>us</i> adds emphasis – and also helps fill out the meter.
	And <u>tarry</u> for the <u>comfort</u> of the day.	61: and wait (<i>tarry</i>) until daytime before resuming their search for a way out of the woods. <i>comfort</i> = cheering influence. ⁶
62		
	Herm. Be it so, Lysander: find <u>you out</u> a bed:	=ie. yourself.
64	For I, upon this bank, will rest my head.	
66	Lysan. One <u>turf</u> shall serve as pillow for us both:	66-67: Lysander prefers to sleep nearer to Hermia, and assures her poetically that his intentions are honourable. <i>turf</i> = patch or small area of grass, ¹ to be shared as a pillow.
	One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.	67: Lysander explains the meaning of this line at lines 74-77 below.
68		
	Herm. Nay, good Lysander: for my sake, my dear,	70: after Hermia says, "Lie further off, yet", there may be a pause as Lysander moves a little further away, but not enough to satisfy Hermia's nervous sense of propriety. <i>yet</i> = still. ²
70	Lie further off, <u>yet</u> ; <u>do not lie so near</u> .	
72	Lysan. O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence. Love takes the meaning in love's conference.	73: when two people are in love, they understand the true meaning of what is spoken between them, ie. no ill intent should be inferred. ⁹
74	I mean that my heart unto yours is knit, So that but one heart we can make of it:	74-75: Lysander explains " <i>one heart</i> " from line 67 above. 75: the Folio prints, " <i>So that but one heart can you make of it</i> ", placing slightly more pressure on Hermia to understand Lysander's meaning correctly, in comparison to the tone of the Quarto's more neutral, mutual, and reassuring phrasing.
76	Two <u>bosoms interchainèd</u> with an oath:	76: <i>bosoms</i> = commonly used, as here, to refer to the breast or heart as the seat of emotions. ^{1,2}

78 So then two bosoms, and a single troth.
Then, by your side, no bed-room me deny:
80 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Herm. Lysander riddles very prettily.

82 Now much bespew my manners, and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say, Lysander lied.
84 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy,
Lie further off, in human modesty:
86 Such separation, as may well be said,
Becomes a virtuous bachelor, and a maid,
88 So far be distant, and good night sweet friend:
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

90 **Lysan.** Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
92 And then end life, when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

94 **Herm.** With half that wish, the wisher's eyes be pressed!

[*They sleep.*]

Enter Puck.

100 **Puck.** Through the forest have I gone,
102 But Athenian found I none,

104 On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love. –
106 Night and silence. Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:

108 This is he (my master said)
Despised the Athenian maid:

110 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.

112 Pretty soul, she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy. –

interchained = linked together.⁶ The Folio, however, prints "*interchanged*", meaning "exchanged", here.¹

= ie. one faith as pledged to each other.^{1,6}

= space or room in which to lie.⁶

79: note Lysander's light punning.

= speaks enigmatically; Hermia compliments Lysander's wordplay.

= curse, a mischief on.^{1,4}

= ie. for the sake of.

= ie. as decorum demands.^{1,5,6}

= is appropriate for.²

89: Hermia wishes Lysander's love to last until he dies. Note how Lysander at line 92 responds directly to this wish.

= ie. "so may my life end". = am no longer faithful.

= "may personified Sleep grant you all his (Sleep's) rest", ie. a full night's rest.

95: in response, Hermia playfully hopes that half of Sleep's rest will be given to Lysander.

eyes be pressed = possibly an abbreviated use of the expression "pressed with sleep", in which **press** means "lie heavy on", suggesting the sleeper is overcome with exhaustion and in need of rest.

101-2: Puck's assignment, we remember, was to find Demetrius, and apply the magic flower's juice to his eyelids as he slept, so that he would fall instantly in love with Helena upon awakening and seeing her first.
found = the Folio prints "*find*".

= put to the test, confirm.^{2,5}

= power.

= Puck notes conditions as he cautiously seeks his target.

= garments, clothes.^{3,5}

107: Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius.

108: ie. "who viewed with contempt (**Despised**)¹ Helena."

= Puck also mistakes Hermia for Helena!

= damp.¹

111-2: Puck notes that Hermia and Lysander are sleeping far apart, but assumes that Lysander is actually Demetrius, who, cruel and unloving, avoids sleeping too closely to Helena.

durst = dares.

lack-love = one who is without love.

kill-courtesy = boor.¹

114	<u>Churl</u> , upon thy eyes I throw All the power this charm doth <u>owe</u> :	= contemptible fellow. ² = own, possess.
116	When thou wak'st, let love <u>forbid</u> Sleep <u>his seat on</u> thy eyelid.	115-6: "when you wake up, may the love you will feel for (the supposed) Helena be so great that it will hinder or prevent (forbid) ¹ you from returning to sleep." his seat on = from settling upon.
118	So awake, when I am gone: For I must now <u>to</u> Oberon.	= ie. go to.
120	[Exit Puck.]	
122	Enter Demetrius and Helena running.	122: Helena is chasing after Demetrius.
124	Helena. Stay, <u>though thou kill me</u> , sweet Demetrius.	124: Stay = stop! though thou kill me = "even if your cruel treatment hurts me terribly".
126	Demet. I <u>charge thee hence</u> , and do not haunt me thus.	= "I order (charge) you to get away from me!"
128	Helena. O, wilt thou <u>darkling</u> leave me? do not so.	= in the darkness. ¹
130	Demet. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.	
132	[Exit Demetrius.]	
134	Helena. O, I am <u>out of breath</u> in this <u>fond</u> chase!	134: out of breath = common expression since the early 16th century. fond = both "foolish" and "love-crazed". ^{1,3}
	The more my <u>prayer</u> , the lesser is my <u>grace</u> .	135: "the more I beg, the less is my good fortune (grace)." ^{2,6} prayer = act of entreaty. ¹
136	Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies: For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.	137f: Helena's insecurity and sense of inferiority take center stage. = ie. became. = ie. with tears.
138	How <u>came</u> her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears. If so, my eyes are oftener <u>washed</u> than hers.	
140	No, no: I am as ugly as a bear: For beasts that meet me, run away for fear.	
142	Therefore, <u>no marvel, though</u> Demetrius Do, <u>as a monster, fly</u> my presence, thus.	= ie. "it is no wonder that". = ie. "as if I were a monster". = flee.
144	What wicked and <u>dissembling glass</u> of mine Made me compare with Hermia's <u>sphery eyne</u> ? –	144-5: Helena blames her deceiving (dissembling) ¹ mirror (glass) for tricking her into believing that her eyes could be as lovely as Hermia's. sphery = sphere-like; ¹ Schmidt suggests "star-like" or "celestial". ⁶ eyne = eyes, an archaic and poetic form.
146	But who is here? Lysander, on the ground? Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound. –	146-7: ground and wound would have rhymed much more so in the 16th century than they do today; Paul Meier suggests the words would have been pronounced gruh-oond and wuh-oond. ²²
148	Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.	
150	Lysan. [Awaking.]	150: the first person Lysander sees upon waking is Helena, and immediately falls passionately in love with her!
	And <u>run through fire</u> I will for thy sweet sake.	= metaphorically, "face any danger"; ⁵ this still recognizable expression dates back to Old English, and references Psalms 66:12 (Geneva Bible: "we went into fire and

		<i>into water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place").</i>
152	<u>Transparent</u> Helena, <u>nature</u> shews art, That through thy <u>bosom</u> makes me see thy heart.	152-3: literally, Lysander imagines he can see Helena's heart through her chest (bosom), hence calling her transparent ; figuratively, her open and undeceiving nature (her transparency) allows him to perceive exactly what she thinks and feels. nature shews art = nature is showing its magical powers (art). ⁷
154	Where is Demetrius? Oh how fit a word Is that vile name to perish on my sword!	154-5: knowing that Helena loves Demetrius, Lysander expresses a desire to kill his rival, even though Demetrius does not return her feelings.
156		
158	Helena. Do not say so, Lysander, say not so. What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though? Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.	157-9: Helena misunderstands Lysander's rage: she thinks he wants to kill Demetrius because Demetrius is his rival for Hermia's hand. She assures Lysander that Hermia loves him, and so he has no reason to feel such hostility to Demetrius.
160		
162	Lysan. Content with Hermia? No: I do repent The <u>tedious</u> minutes I with her have spent. Not Hermia, but Helena I love.	= wearisome, annoying. ¹
164	Who will not <u>change a raven for a dove</u> ?	= figuratively, exchange an ugly woman for a beautiful one. Dark features were considered undesirable in Shakespeare's time. The raven was proverbial for its blackness.
		165-172 (below): Lysander asserts that a person's passions are directed and controlled by reason; there is humour here in that Elizabethan characters, including many in this play (such as Lysander at this moment) frequently fall in love completely unguided by reason.
	The <u>will</u> of man is by his reason <u>swayed</u> : And reason says you are the worthier maid. Things growing are not ripe, until their season: So I, being young, till now <u>ripe</u> not to reason.	= desire. ² = directed. ¹
166		
168		168: Lysander concludes the metaphor begun in the previous line: up until now, he was not mature (ripe) enough to let reason manage and direct his feelings and desires.
	And <u>touching</u> now the <u>point</u> of human <u>skill</u> ,	169: "and now that I have reached the summit (point) ² of mature adult judgment and discretion (skill). ⁴ touching = attaining. ²
170	Reason becomes the <u>marshal</u> to my will,	170: personified Reason becomes the leader (marshal) ⁶ of Lysander's passion (will), ie. his will now follows his reason. ⁹ marshal = the OED suggests that Shakespeare has in mind the formal office of <i>marshal</i> – the person responsible for organizing and overseeing the ceremonies of a noble or royal household, "especially ... the arrangement ... of guests"; the sense, however, seems more to be "conductor", since in the next line, we see that Reason has led Lysander to Helena's eyes.
	And leads me to your eyes; where I <u>o'erlook</u>	171-2: in Helena's eyes (love's richest book), Lysander can

172	Love's stories, written in <u>love's richest book</u> .	read through (<i>o'erlook</i>) ¹ the stories of love. Shakespeare may have borrowed this metaphor of one's <i>eyes</i> being a <i>book</i> from Sir Philip Sydney's linguistically influential <i>The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia</i> : " <i>are your eyes a fit book (think you) to read a tale upon?</i> " (1590). In <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> (written about the same time as <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>) Shakespeare wrote, " <i>and makes his book thine eyes</i> ".
174	Helena. <u>Wherefore</u> was I to this <u>keen</u> mockery born? When, <u>at your hands</u> , did I deserve this scorn? 176 Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man, That I did never, no nor never can, 178 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye, But you must <u>flout my insufficiency</u> ?	174: "why (<i>Wherefore</i>) was I born to endure this harsh and cutting (<i>keen</i>) ² mockery?" = ie. "from you". ¹ 179: Helena feels that Lysander is deliberately ridiculing her, and feels the humiliation keenly. <i>flout my insufficiency</i> = insult or abuse Helena's inadequacies. ^{1,2}
180	<u>Good troth</u> , you do me wrong (<u>good sooth</u> you do) In such disdainful manner me to woo. 182 But, fare you well: <u>perforce I must confess</u> , I thought you lord of more true <u>gentleness</u> .	180: both <i>Good troth</i> and <i>good sooth</i> have the sense of, "truly" or "really". = ie. "I am forced to admit". 183: Helena expected Lysander to behave with more politeness and courtesy (<i>gentleness</i>) ¹ than he is currently showing.
184	O, that a lady, <u>of one man refused</u> , Should, <u>of</u> another, therefore be <u>abused</u> !	= by one man (Demetrius) rejected. = by. = deceived ³ or wronged. ²
186		
188	[Exit Helena.]	
190	Lysan. She sees not Hermia. – Hermia, sleep thou there, And never mayst thou come Lysander near!	190: Lysander wants Hermia to stay away from him!
192	For, as a <u>surfeit</u> of the sweetest things The deepest loathing to the stomach brings: Or, as the <u>heresies</u> , that men do leave, 194 Are hated most <u>of</u> those they did deceive: So thou, my <u>surfeit</u> , and my <u>heresy</u> , 196 Of all be hated; but the most, of me! –	191-6 (below): Lysander uses a pair of analogies to make the insightful psychological point that, under certain circumstances, love and delight can swiftly turn to hatred, just as his affection for Hermia has instantaneously changed to intense disdain. 191-2: just as overindulging in the sweetest foods can make a person's stomach revolt at the thought of eating more. <i>surfeit</i> = sickness brought on by consuming in excess. ¹ 193-4: false doctrines (<i>heresies</i>) are hated most by those who once believed them, but, upon realizing they have been misled, give them up. ⁵ <i>of</i> = by. 195: Hermia, whom Lysander once loved, is now the object of both his own excess (<i>surfeit</i>) and error (<i>heresy</i>): his former affection now nauseates him, and he regards that love as an emotional wrong. 196: ie. Hermia should be hated by everyone, but most of all, by Lysander!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The wood. Titania lying asleep.

*Enter Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout,
and Starveling.*

1 **Bottom.** Are we all met?

2
3 **Quin.** Pat, pat: and here's a marvellous convenient
4 place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our
5 stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house, and we
6 will do it in action, as we will do it before the duke.

8 **Bottom.** Peter Quince?

10 **Quin.** What sayest thou, Bully Bottom?

12 **Bottom.** There are things in this comedy, of Pyramus
13 and Thisbe, that will never please. First, Pyramus
14 must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies
15 cannot abide. How answer you that?

16 **Snout.** Berlakin, a parlous fear.

18
19 **Starv.** I believe we must leave the killing out, when
20 all is done.

22 **Bottom.** Not a whit: I have a device to make all well.
23 Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to
24 say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that
Pyramus is not killed indeed: and, for the more better

26 assurance, tell them, that I Pyramus am not Pyramus,
27 but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

28 **Quin.** Well: we will have such a prologue, and it
29 shall be written in eight and six.

32 **Bottom.** No: make it two more: let it be written in
eight and eight.

Entering Characters: the craftsmen return to the woods to rehearse their play, just as Peter Quince had instructed them to do the day before at Act I.ii.138-9 above.

The Quarto and Folio both read, ***Enter the Clowns***; in the 16th century, the term "clowns" referred to rustic or comic characters,^{1,2} or men of the lower class.⁵

One feature that makes this scene particularly funny is the men's exaggerated yet sincere fear that their acting will be so lifelike and realistic that it might terrify their audience, especially the women!

1: ie. "is everyone here?"

= exactly,⁵ or "right on time".² = suitable, appropriate.^{1,2}

= piece of ground.¹

= thicket.¹ = ie. attiring-house, or dressing area.¹

= practice or perform it here (in a manner akin to a dress rehearsal).

= term of endearment, especially for a rough but good-natured fellow.^{1,5}

= obvious malapropism by Bottom: the play is a tragedy!

= ie. what should we do about this?

17: ***Berlakin*** = "by our lakin", meaning "by our Lady", a strong oath and allusion to the Virgin Mary; ***lakin*** is a diminution of *Lady*: *Lady* + *kin* became *lady-kin* which in turn was shortened to *lakin*.¹

parlous = perilous, dangerous;¹ not a malapropism, but a common word.

19-20: ***when all is done*** = after all;⁵ a common predecessor to the still-used expression, "when all is said and done."

= not in the least, ie. not at all.¹ = plan or stratagem.^{1,5}

25: ***indeed*** = ie. for real.

more better = double comparatives such as this (*more easier, more happier*, etc.) were common.

= ie. rid the spectators of fear.

= in alternating lines of eight and six syllables.¹ Stevenson notes that many ballads were written in this measure.

32-33: Bottom thinks he is improving the meter with his suggestion, but he only reveals his lack of understanding

34	Snout. Will not the ladies be afeared of the lion?	of poetry.
36	Starv. I fear it, I <u>promise</u> you.	= assure. ⁵
38		39-43 (below): several early editors have suggested that Shakespeare may have been alluding in these lines to a description, published in 1594, of the ceremonies and pageantry surrounding the baptism of Prince Henry of Scotland. It seems at one point a chariot was drawn into the presence by a "black-moore"; the author noted, though, that the original plan called for a real lion to pull the chariot: " <i>This Chariot which should haue bene drawn in by a Lyon, (but because his presence might haue brought some feare, to the neerest or that the sight of the lights and torches might haue commoued his tamenes)</i> " – that is, the planners feared the lion might have terrified those closest to it, and that the bright lights would have spooked the lion (<i>commoued his tameness</i> ; <i>commoued</i> = disturbed or excited violently). ^{1,3,9}
	Bottom. Masters, you ought to consider with	39-40: consider with yourselves = think about, contemplate. The Quarto reads "yourself", but we adopt the Folio's "yourselves". The construction "consider with oneself" was common in the late 16th and 17th centuries.
40	yourselves, <u>to</u> bring in (God <u>shield</u> us) a lion among	= ie. that to. ⁹ = ie. protect.
42	ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful <u>wild-fowl</u> than <u>your</u> lion living: and	= obvious malapropism. = colloquial use of "your". ⁵
	we ought to <u>look toote</u> .	= "look to it", ie. address or deal with this. Instead of " <i>to it</i> ", poets usually wrote " <i>to 't</i> " if they wished to indicate that <i>to it</i> should take up only a single syllable of verse. Shakespeare, however, seems to have created the genuine one-syllable word toote to mean the same thing. The use of toote may be intended to give a rustic and unsophisticated flavour to Bottom's speech, highlighting his dialect. Interestingly, the Folio replaces <i>toote</i> with <i>to 't</i> . The word's earliest appearance in print was actually in the 1597 Quarto of Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> : " <i>Thinke ont, looke toot, i doe not vse to iest.</i> " Subsequent writers adopted toote for "to 't", including Thomas Middleton, in 1607's <i>A Trick to Catch Old One</i> : " <i>nay looke toote.</i> "
44	Snout. Therefore, another prologue must tell he is	45-46: Snout's absurd solution is to present a second
46	not a lion.	prologue to assure the spectators that Bottom is not a real lion!
		48-57 (below): Bottom rejects Snout's idea and instead proposes his own ridiculous list of suggestions of how Snout can assure the audience that he is not a real lion.
48	Bottom. Nay: <u>you must name his name</u> , and half his	= upon entering the stage in a lion's costume, Snug should let the audience know who he really is!
50	face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same <u>defect</u> : "Ladies," or, "Fair ladies, I would wish	= ie. effect, a malapropism.

52	you,” or, “I would request you,” or, “I would <u>entreat</u>	= beseech. ²
	you, not to fear, not to tremble: <u>my life for yours</u> . If	= "I'll bet my life against yours." This expression was used to express a certainty.
54	you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my	54-55: <i>it were pity of my life</i> = it would be a matter of great regret. ¹
56	life. No, I am no such thing: I am a man as other men	
58	are”: and there indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug, the joiner.	
	Quin. Well: it shall be so: But <u>there is two hard things</u> ;	59: <i>there is two</i> = the non-agreeing construction <i>there is two</i> was common in Elizabethan English. <i>hard things</i> = difficulties or problems that need to be addressed.
60	that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber:	60-61: the first problem is, how should the production represent moonlight on the stage in the performance area (which Quince assumes will be indoors)?
62	for you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.	
64	Snout. Doth the moon shine, that night we play our play?	63-69: since the play is to be presented within the next day or so, it would seem obvious that the moon's phase – and hence the strength of its light – at showtime will be much the same as on the current night. On the other hand, the mechanicals may in fact be rehearsing during the daytime, which would be more sensible than doing so at night in the woods. If this were the case, it would be at least plausible that none of them would know off hand the current phase of the moon.
66	Bottom. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac: find out moonshine, find out moonshine.	
68	Quin. Yes: it doth shine that night.	
70		71-73 (below): Bottom humorously assumes that the craftsmen will be admitted into an important room such as the great chamber in the duke's palace, and that the play will be performed in a room intimate enough that the moon's light could meaningfully shine in through a single open window. = window which opens on hinges. ⁵
	Bottom. Why then, may you leave a <u>casement</u> of the	= a semi-private room, often used for ceremonies or receptions, or even dining; a 1607 law dictionary states that the great chamber was part of the suite of rooms belonging to "his majesty's household", which included the "bed-chamber".
72	<u>great chamber</u> window (where we play) open; and the	
74	moon may shine in at the casement.	75-77 (below): Quince alludes to the familiar image of the "man in the moon", a motif dating back in English literature to at least the 14th century. ¹
	Quin. Ay: or else, one must come in, with a bush	75-77: or, one of the craftsmen will have to play the part of the moon, carrying with him the recognizable attributes of the "man in the moon". 75-76: <i>bush of thorns</i> = the man in the moon was traditionally imagined to be carrying a thorn bush or a bundle of sticks; the origin of this idea is thought by some to

76 of thorns, and a lantern, and say he comes to

disfigure, or to present, the person of moonshine.

78 Then, there is another thing; we must have a wall in

80 the great chamber: for Pyramus and Thisbe (says the story) did talk through the chink of a wall.

82 **Snout.** You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

84 **Bottom.** Some man or other must present wall: and

86 let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some

rough-cast, about him, to signify wall; or let him

88 hold his fingers thus: and through that cranny, shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

90 **Quin.** If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your

94 speech, enter into that brake, and so every one

according to his cue.

96

Enter Puck.

98 **Puck.** What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,

100 So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen? – What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor,

102 An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

104 **Quin.** Speak, Pyramus: – Thisbe stand forth.

be found in Numbers 15:32-36, in which a man was stoned to death for collecting sticks on the Sabbath.^{1,5}

= to represent the light of the moon.

The Quarto prints "*lantern*", the Folio "*lanthorne*", a common variant, used because the sides of lanterns used to be made of horn.⁵ In his famous dictionary, Samuel Johnson wrote that *lantern* "*is by mistake often written lanthorn.*"

= malapropism for "figure", meaning "represent" or "depict".¹

= ie. the second problem needing to be addressed (see line 59 above).

= crack, crevice.¹

= ie. cannot; note that the men instinctively look to Bottom to solve the practical problems of performance.

= ie. "play the part of the".

= "a composition of moistened clay and sand with an admixture of horse-dung, chopped straw, or the like, used in making bricks and casting-moulds, plastering walls, grafting, etc." (OED).

87: *rough-cast* = a mixture of water, lime and gravel, applied onto a wall's surface to give it a rough texture.¹

or = appears in both the Quarto and Folio; usually emended to "*and*".

= everyone; an old and common expression.

= bush, thicket.

95: ie. should follow the script and speak when cued.

It has frequently been noted that in the Elizabethan era, each actor received only his own lines plus the preceding cue lines. Copying entire scripts by hand, solely to ensure that each participant had a complete copy of the entire play, was too labour-intensive to be practical.

= wearing homemade garments of hemp; hence, coarse and rustic fellows or country bumpkins.^{2,5}

= poetically, resting place.^{1,2}

= afoot, in preparation.^{3,5} = a listener.

= ie. a good reason to jump in or interfere.

= come forward.¹ Bottom is playing Pyramus, Flute Thisbe.

106-139 (below): the labourers rehearse their play. The script has pretenses of grandeur, but becomes instead an unintended farce; the malapropisms, absurd metaphors, and misused words transform their earnest drama with its awful

106 **Bottom.** Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet, –

108 **Quin.** Odours, odours.

110 **Bottom.** – odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
112 But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear.

114
116 [Exit Bottom.]

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

118
120 [Exit Puck.]

122 **Flute.** Must I speak now?

122 **Quin.** Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand,
124 he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to
come again.

126 **Flute.** Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
128 Of colour like the red rose, on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,

130 As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

132 **Quin.** "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not speak
134 that yet; that you answer to Pyramus. You speak all
your part at once, cues and all. – Pyramus enter: your
136 cue is past: it is, "never tire."

attempts at elevated language into a very funny scene.

You may wish to note that the speeches of the craftsmen's play are written in iambic pentameter.

= obvious malapropism. = smells.

108: Quince corrects Bottom's error. The text here reflects the Folio's version; the Quarto reads, "*Odours, odorous*."

= listen. = wait.

= presently, shortly.¹

117: it seems clear that Puck is commenting on what an odd Pyramus Bottom makes. However, Stevenson thinks Puck is saying that, when Bottom reappears, he will be the most unusual Pyramus ever seen – foreshadowing his (Puck's) next move.

The Quarto assigns this line to Quince, the Folio to Puck; it would not make sense for Quince to say this: we must keep in mind that the craftsmen themselves think very highly of Bottom, seeing him as their strongest actor, no matter how ridiculous he comes across to the audience.

119: Puck follows Bottom off-stage and into the brush.

= common oath, derived from the Virgin Mary.

= ie. Pyramus.

= ie. return.

= ie. growing on a "triumphant" rose bush (**brier**); **triumphant** is an absurd way to describe the rose.

129: **brisky juvenal** = brisk juvenile. Both of these words were invented by Shakespeare.¹ In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the comically pompous Spaniard Don Armado also uses *juvenal*.

eke most lovely Jew = "also a most lovely Jew". A truly unexpected and incongruous comparison.

= faithful, loyal. = grow exhausted.

= a delightful malapropism; the word **ninny**, meaning "simpleton" or "fool" had just entered the literature in 1593.¹

133-6: not only has Flute mispronounced "Ninus", but he should have waited to deliver line 131 until Bottom had re-entered the stage and spoken his own next line.

Ninus was the legendary founder of the first Assyrian Empire and its capital Nineveh.¹⁴

There are multiple layers of humour in the inclusion of **Ninus' tomb** in the craftsmen's script: of course, **Ninny's tomb** is funny on its own; but perhaps only literate members

		of the audience would recognize that Shakespeare directly borrowed the reference to Ninus' tomb from Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> , in which, in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (which Ovid placed in Nineveh), the couple " <i>did agree at Ninus Tumb to meet without the town</i> ".
138	Flute. O – As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.	
140		141: Puck has transformed Bottom's head into that of a donkey!
	<i>Re-enter Puck, and Bottom with an ass's head.</i>	
142		143: "If I were attractive, Thisbe, I would be yours alone"; this of course makes little logical sense; but, as Stevenson notes, Bottom has humorously mispunctuated his line: responding to Thisbe's description of him (Pyramus) as true as a horse, he should have said, "If I were, fair Thisbe, I were only thine." ⁵
144	Bottom. If I were <u>fair</u> , Thisbe, I were only thine.	Bottom delivers his line without realizing the metamorphosis he has just undergone. We may also note that the adjective <i>fair</i> is misapplied here, since it was normally used to describe a woman ¹ – a small slip that further underscores the amateur nature of the script. <i>fair</i> = pronounced as a disyllable if line 143 is accepted as written: <i>FAY-er</i> .
146	Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted! Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!	
148		148-9: Bottom remains on the stage. However, the stage direction in the Folio reads simply, " <i>The clowns all exit</i> ", meaning all of the craftsmen, including Bottom, leave the stage. In the Folio, Bottom re-enters after Puck exits the stage at line 158 below.
	<i>[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]</i>	
150		= around in circles; ⁵ Puck intends to mischievously get the men to run about in confusion.
	Puck. I'll follow you: I'll lead you <u>about a round</u> ,	
152	Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier: Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,	= the editors all agree that <i>fire</i> refers to a will o' the wisp – a florescent light sometimes seen floating above a swamp or marsh – even though the OED does not include this sense in its entry for <i>fire</i> .
154	A hog, a headless bear, sometime a <u>fire</u> ,	
		155: note that the four sounds (together with <i>burn</i>) correspond exactly, and in the same order, to the four animals and fire Puck listed in the previous two lines (153-4); the sequence is then repeated exactly in the next line (156).
156	And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.	
158		= mischievous trick, prank. ^{1,5}
	<i>[Exit Puck.]</i>	
160	Bottom. Why do they run away? this is a <u>knavery</u> of them to make me afeard.	
162		
	<i>Re-enter Snout.</i>	
164		
	Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?	
166		

168	Bottom. What do you see? you see an <u>ass-head</u> of	168-9: you see...your own = in trying to make Bottom seem foolish, Snout has only revealed himself to be the foolish one. Bottom, of course, does not perceive the irony of his own words.
170	your own, do you?	ass-head = a vulgar term of abuse meaning "fool" or "simpleton". ¹
		Commentators tell us that Shakespeare here has adopted a proverbial insult of the period, "you see a fool's head of your own", meaning, "in trying to make another look foolish, one only exposes one's own folly." However, I have been able to find only one other 16th century work that used this expression, Nicholas Breton's <i>A Flourish Upon Fancy</i> (1577). The expression "fool's head of his own", used in various ways, appears with greater frequency in the 17th century.
		Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly will use the expression in its basic form – " <i>You shall have an fool's-head of your own</i> " – in <i>The Merry Wive's of Windsor</i> , written just a couple of years after <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> .
	[Exit Snout.]	
172		
	Re-enter Quince.	
174		
176	Quin. Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! thou art translated.	= elliptically, "God protect thee". ¹ = transformed.
178	[Exit Quince.]	
180	Bottom. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of	
182	me, to <u>fright</u> me, if they could. But I will not stir	= ie. frighten.
184	from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and	
186	down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am	
188	not afraid.	
	Sings.	
	The <u>woosel cock</u> , so black of hue,	= male European blackbird; ⁴ woosel was a common variant of ouzel , both used for the blackbird.
	With <u>orange-tawny</u> bill,	= yellowish-brown; ¹ Bottom used the same adjective at Act I.ii.130 above to describe the colour of a beard he was prepared to wear.
190	The <u>throstle</u> , with his note so true,	= thrush. ¹
192	The wren, with <u>little quill</u> ;	= quiet voice. ^{1,3}
194	Titan. [Awaking.]	
196	What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?	
198	Bottom. [Sings.]	
	The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,	
	The <u>plain-song</u> cuckoo gray:	= perhaps describing the cuckoo's song as a simple melody. ^{1,5}
200	Whose note full many a man doth <u>mark</u> , And dares not <u>answer nay</u> ; –	199-200: many a man hears the cuckoo's call – which was said to announce he is a cuckold – and dare not deny it (answer nay). ¹ The joke stems from the cuckoo's habit of laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving them to raise the cuckoo's hatchlings; thus the cuckoo's call was imagined to be mocking cuckolded husbands, as here. ¹⁵ mark = take notice of. ¹

202	For indeed, who would <u>set his wit to</u> so foolish a	= pit his intelligence or mind against, ie. waste his time arguing with. ¹
204	bird? who would <u>give a bird the lie</u> , though he cry "cuckoo" <u>never so</u> ?	= accuse the bird of lying. ¹ = ever so, ie. persistently.
206	Titan. I pray thee, <u>gentle mortal</u> , sing again:	206: gentle = honourable, noble, friendly. ¹ mortal = creature subject to death; Titania naturally notes that the being before her is not supernatural like herself. ^{2,6} There is much humour here in Titania addressing the ridiculous Bottom, with his ass's head, in such dignified verse.
	<u>Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note</u> :	207: mine = my. enamoured of thy note = delighted or in love with Bottom's song (note); ¹ of = by.
208	So is mine eye <u>enthralled to thy shape</u> ,	= made a willing slave to (ie. captivated by) Bottom's (attractive) appearance or looks. ^{1,2}
	And thy <u>fair virtue's force (perforce) doth move me</u>	209: "and the power (force) of your beautiful or admirable qualities (fair virtue) irresistibly (perforce) stirs or compels me (doth move me)". ^{1,2,5}
210	On <u>the first view</u> to say, to swear, I love thee.	= "my looking upon you for the first time".
212	Bottom. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and	213-4: reason and...now-a-days = metaphorically, "these days, people fall in love for no reason", ie. love does not follow logic. ⁵
214	love keep little company together, now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not	214-6: the more...friends = with this unexpectedly witty remark, Bottom imagines personified Reason and Love (them , line 216), which are rarely found together, as quarreling neighbours who ought to have some third-party step in to reconcile them.
216	make them friends. – <u>Nay, I can gleek, upon occasion.</u>	= Bottom is proud of his witticism about reason and love. gleek = quip, jest. ^{3,4}
218	Titan. Thou art as wise, as thou art beautiful.	
220	Bottom. Not so neither: but if I <u>had wit enough</u> to	= ie. were clever enough.
222	<u>get out of</u> this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.	221: get out of = ie. "find my way out of". 221-2: I have...turn = "that would be sufficient to serve my purpose."
224	Titan. Out of this wood do not desire to go:	224f: Titania begins to recite in rhyming couplets, elevating her language even further.
226	Thou shalt remain here, whether <u>thou wilt or no</u> . I am a spirit, of no common <u>rate</u> :	= "you want to or not." = value or estimation. ^{1,2}
	The summer <u>still doth tend upon my state</u> ,	227: emphasizing her own exalted rank in order to convince Bottom to remain with her, Titania seems to imagine that summer itself waits upon her. still = always. ⁹ doth tend...state = obeys her or revolves around her high rank; Stevenson paraphrases the line, "the riches of summer are always at my command."

228	And I do love thee: therefore go with me. I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee:	
230	And they shall fetch thee <u>jewels, from the deep</u> , And sing, while thou, on <u>pressed flowers</u> , dost sleep:	= gems from the seas, ie. specifically pearls. ⁵ = a bed made up of flattened flowers, to emphasize Bottom's special treatment.
232	And I will <u>purge</u> thy <u>mortal grossness</u> so, That thou shalt, like an <u>airy</u> spirit, go. –	232-3: Titania promises to purify (purge) Bottom's human materiality (mortal grossness), so that he may move about like a spirit. ^{1,2,6} Stevenson suggests, "I will remove all the coarseness of your human form, so that you shall be like a fairy" (p. 90). ⁵ airy = living, located, or subject to the air. ^{1,5}
234	Pease-blossom, Cobweb, <u>Moth</u> , and Mustardseed!	234: Titania calls in her fairy attendants. Moth = pronounced "mote", which clarifies the name's suitability for a fairy.
236	<i>Enter four Fairies.</i>	236: the Folio reads, confusingly, " <i>Enter Pease-blossome, Cobweb, Moth, Mustard-seede, and foure Fairies.</i> " However, the aforementioned fairies <i>are</i> the four fairies.
238	Pease. Ready.	238-244: in both the Quarto and Folio, the four brief lines here are assigned to Fairy #1, Fairy #2, etc.; but there is no reason not to name the speakers, as done by Durham, whose arrangement we adopt.
240	Cob. And I.	
242	Moth. And I.	
244	Must. And I.	
246	All. Where shall we go?	
248	Titan. Be kind and courteous to <u>this gentleman</u> :	= ie. Bottom.
		249-258 (below): note Titania's remarkable rhyming dectet – ten consecutive rhyming lines (even with the repetition of eyes). See the note at Act I.i.237 above for a brief discussion of how words like eyes would have reasonably rhymed with words like dewberries in Shakespeare's day.
	<u>Hop</u> in his walks, and <u>gambol</u> in his eyes,	249: the fairies are instructed to skip (Hop) along the paths Bottom frequents, and even frolic (gambol) where he can see them. ^{1,2,6}
250	Feed him with <u>apricocks</u> , and <u>dewberries</u> ,	= apricots, a common variant. = blackberries. ¹
252	With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries; The <u>honey-bags</u> steal from the <u>humble-bees</u> ,	252: honey-bags = the <i>honey-bag</i> is the "enlarged part of the alimentary canal" of a bee, "in which nectar is carried" (OED); the modern name is the "honey-stomach". humble-bees = <i>humble-bee</i> is the earlier name for the bumble-bee, though the latter was also in use in the 16th century; called "humble-bee" because of its humming sound (<i>bumble-bee</i> is also appropriate, as the word "bumbling" meant "buzzing"). ¹
	And for <u>night-tapers</u> , <u>crop their waxen thighs</u> ,	253: night-tapers = candles to be used at night. crop their waxen thighs = cut off the bees' legs; the wax contained therein (imagines the Bard) can be used to make the candles. It seems to have been a popular belief that wax was

254 And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,

To have my love to bed, and to arise;

256 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes;

258 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

260 **Peas.** Hail, mortal!

262 **Cob.** Hail!

264 **Moth.** Hail!

266 **Must.** Hail!

268 **Bottom.** I cry your worships' mercy, heartily: – I
270 beseech your worship's name.

272 **Cob.** Cobweb.

274 **Bottom.** I shall desire you of more acquaintance,
good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make
276 bold with you. – Your name, honest gentleman?

278 **Pease.** Pease-blossom.

280 **Bottom.** I pray you, commend me to Mistress
Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your
282 father. Good Master Pease-blossom, I shall desire
you of more acquaintance, too. – Your name, I
284 beseech you, sir?

286 **Must.** Mustardseed.

Bottom. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your

stored or found on the legs of the bee. However, it is pollen, not wax, that is stored on bees' legs: bees collect pollen using rows of stiff hairs (called *pollen combs*) on their hind legs; these hairs scrape pollen from the bees' bodies into concave structures called *pollen baskets*, which hold the collected pollen.¹⁶

The only bees that make wax are young female worker honeybees: inside the bee's body, the sugars of honey are converted to wax; then, the honeybee secretes the wax, using it to construct honeycombs.¹⁷

254: here too Shakespeare is in error: the bioluminescence of the beetle species known as the *glow-worm* occurs in its tail, not its head.⁵

at = ie. with or by.

255: Bottom may use the candles to find his way to bed at night and when he awakens in the morning.

To have = to bring.⁵

= allusion to the butterfly's colorful and variegated wings.

257: the fairies should use the wings to fan away any moonlight that might disturb Bottom's sleep.⁵

= ie. in salutation.¹ = show Bottom every consideration.¹

260-6: as at lines 238-244 above, the Quarto and Folio assign these lines to Fairy #1, etc.

= "I beg your worships' pardon."⁵ = earnestly, sincerely.^{1,6}
= entreat, ask earnestly for.¹

273-292 (below): as Bottom greets each fairy, he will make comically polite-sounding remarks based on the literal meaning of their names.

274-5: *if I cut...you* = a popular folk-remedy was to apply cobwebs to staunch bleeding and heal wounds.

= the flower of the pea plant.

= ie. please. = "remember me kindly".¹

= an unripe peapod.^{1,5} = pea-pod.¹

287-8: *I know your patience well* = commentators differ widely in their interpretation of this line:

(1) Reynolds and Sawyer¹⁸ believe the line refers to two things:

(a) the "persistence and vigor of the mustard seed"; it was well known that "no matter how often the seed-head is destroyed or cut back, the mustard remains one of the most prolific of plants"; and

(b) the mustardseed's "use in a plaster or poultice to ease a sore back or aching muscles." The authors argue that a listening audience would hear *patience* as *patients*;

(2) Stevenson wonders if Bottom "is referring ironically to the fact that mustard is hot" (p. 91);⁵

(3) is there a Biblical allusion here? In the parable of the mustardseed (Matthew 13:31-32), Jesus says, "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man taketh and soweth in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and it is a tree...*" (Geneva Bible).

In saying "*the least of all seeds*", Jesus emphasizes:

(a) the smallness of the mustard seed, which makes its name for a fairy apropos; and

(b) that the mustard seed requires time and *patience* to reach its full size;

(4) a very early commentator thought that Bottom was complimenting Mustardseed's family for showing great forbearance because they were continuously being consumed by oxen;⁹ and finally,

(5) in the New Oxford edition of the play, Bourus simply interprets *your patience*, in a footnote, to mean, "what you have endured", but without explanation.

288-9: *That same...house* = Bottom is aware that oxen feed on mustard plants.

cowardly = one interpretation is that the ox is *cowardly* because it, being the size of a relative *giant*, preys on something so much smaller than itself.¹⁸

ox-beef = properly refers to the flesh of an ox consumed as food, but here Bottom means simply "ox" as an animal. There is also a subtle association of mustard as a condiment, traditionally served by the English with beef during a meal.^{5,18}

many a...house = humorously, members of Mustardseed's "family" – that is, other mustard plants.

= allusion to the propensity of hot mustard to cause the eyes to water.

your kindred = other members of Mustardseed's "family".

293: **The Greetings Conclude:** note the absence or omission of greetings from Bottom to Moth.

= attend. = leafy, shady recess.^{1,6}

295: the moon appears a bit tearful to Titania. Once again, there is a reference to the cosmic moistness of the moon.

296-7: literally, when the personified moon (*she*) weeps, so does every flower; more concretely, when the moon weeps,

288 patience well. That same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I

290 promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water

292 ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

294 **Titan.** Come, wait upon him: lead him to my bower.
The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye:

296 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

	Lamenting some enforced chastity.	its tears, figured as dew, moisten every flower. ¹⁹ The line alludes to the belief that at night, the shining moon moistens the air, creating the dew which settles on the ground: e.g., " <i>the Moone imprinteth her moisture in the earth, & is cause of gendring and dew therein...</i> " (1582, <i>Batman Upon Bartholome</i>).
298	<u>Tie up my lover's tongue</u> , bring him silently.	299: another line open to multiple interpretations: could be "mourning an involuntary chastity", ¹⁹ or "mourning a violated chastity." ^{3,4,5} Whichever way we take it, the underlying point remains unclear.
300	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	= an instruction to keep Bottom from speaking anymore – perhaps Titania, though she finds her new love's looks irresistible, is not so impressed by his endless and mindless speech! ⁹
	<u>ACT III, SCENE II.</u>	
	<i>Another part of the wood.</i>	
	<i>Enter Oberon.</i>	
1	Ober. I wonder if Titania be awaked;	
2	Then <u>what</u> it was that next came in her eye,	2-3: Oberon is eager to learn upon whom Titania has first set her eyes, knowing that she will fall madly in love with him.
4	Which she must <u>dote on</u> , <u>in extremity</u> .	<i>what</i> = who. <i>dote on</i> = love excessively, be infatuated with. ² <i>in extremity</i> = to the utmost degree.
	<i>Enter Puck.</i>	
6	Here comes my messenger. –	
8	<u>How now</u> , <u>mad</u> spirit?	= "how are things now?" ¹ = wild, gay. ⁶
	What <u>night-rule</u> now about this <u>haunted</u> grove?	9: "what night-time revelries or diversions (<i>night-rule</i>) ^{2,4,6} have been going on in this much-frequented (<i>haunted</i>) ⁴ woods? Line 9 begins an extended period of rhyming (mostly in couplets) that extends for several hundred lines.
10	Puck. <u>My mistress</u> with a <u>monster</u> is in love,	11: <i>My mistress</i> = ie. Titania. <i>a monster</i> = an unnatural creature, ⁵ ie. Bottom with his ass's head. However, Shakespeare may have been using the word <i>monster</i> in its older sense of a being that is part-human and part-animal, ¹ which describes Bottom precisely.
12	Near to her <u>close</u> and <u>consecrated bower</u> .	= private or secret. ⁵ = sacred sleeping space. ²
	While she was <u>in her dull and sleeping hour</u> ,	= ie. asleep. <i>dull</i> = weary, sleepy; ⁶ <i>dull</i> could also refer to the insensibility experienced during sleep. ¹ The collocation <i>dull sleep</i> appears frequently in the 16th and 17th centuries.
14	A crew of <u>patches</u> , <u>rude</u> <u>mechanicals</u> ,	14: <i>patches</i> = clowns, simpletons. ^{1,4} <i>rude</i> = ignorant, uneducated. ²

	That work for <u>bread upon</u> Athenian <u>stalls</u> ,	<i>mechanicals</i> = craftsmen or manual labourers. ¹
16	Were met together to rehearse a play, Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day:	15: <i>bread</i> = ie. food. ⁶ <i>upon</i> = at, by. <i>stalls</i> = small shops or sheds where tradesmen carry on their work. ⁵
18	The <u>shallowest thick-skin</u> of that <u>barren sort</u> ,	18: Puck alludes to Bottom here. <i>shallowest</i> = most lacking in depth of mind, stupidest. ^{1,5} <i>thick-skin</i> = dull or slow fellow. ^{1,5} <i>barren sort</i> = stupid or dull company. ^{3,5}
20	Who Pyramus <u>presented</u> , in their <u>sport</u> , <u>Forsook</u> his scene, and entered in a <u>brake</u> :	= represented, played. = play, performance. ¹ = left, walked away from. = bush.
22	When I did him at this advantage take, An ass's <u>nole</u> I fixèd on his head.	21: "when I caught him at this favourable moment". ² = head. ¹
	<u>Anon</u> his Thisbe must be answerèd,	23: shortly thereafter (<i>Anon</i>), Bottom (playing Pyramus) must respond to his cue as spoken by Thisbe. Note that Puck now switches to the present tense as he approaches the climax of his narrative: the effect is to heighten the excitement and immediacy, creating a sense of reliving and not just recounting the events.
24	And <u>forth my minnick comes</u> . When they him <u>spy</u> ,	24: <i>forth my minnick comes</i> = Bottom comes forth, out of the brush. <i>minnick</i> = burlesque actor, or actor; rare variant of "mimic". ^{1,2} <i>spy</i> = see.
	As wild geese that <u>the creeping fowler eye</u> ;	25-30 (below): in this extended double simile, Puck compares the labourers' flight – their running in fear – from Bottom to (1) geese who see a hunter (line 25), and (2) jackdaws (<i>choughs</i>) who hear a gun fired (26-27), both flocks flying away in panic (28). = see the stealthily approaching (<i>creeping</i>) ⁶ wild-bird hunter (<i>fowler</i>). We may note that a <i>fowler</i> usually looked to catch birds with a net. ¹
26	Or <u>russet-pated choughs</u> , <u>many in sort</u> ,	26: <i>russet-pated choughs</i> = jackdaws (<i>choughs</i>) with grey (<i>russet</i>) heads; <i>russet</i> usually means reddish-brown, but there are numerous contemporary examples of <i>russet</i> used for grey. ^{1,3,5} <i>pated</i> = headed. <i>many in sort</i> = in a great crowd, many together; <i>in sort</i> = in a body. ¹
28	<u>Rising</u> and cawing at the gun's <u>report</u> ; <u>Sever</u> themselves, and <u>madly sweep</u> the sky: So, <u>at his sight</u> , away his <u>fellows fly</u> ,	27: taking flight (<i>Rising</i>) and calling out when they hear a gunshot (<i>report</i>). = scatter. ¹ = frantically move swiftly across. ¹ 29f: the simile now shifts to the craftsmen. <i>at his sight</i> = upon seeing Bottom. <i>fellows</i> = companions. ² <i>fly</i> = flee; but <i>fly</i> also connects subtly back to the literal flying away of the scattering birds of the double-

30	And at <u>our</u> stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls:	simile.
		30: the fairies knock over one of the men by stamping on the ground; Stevenson tells us that fairies were thought to have the ability to shake the ground. <i>our</i> = why Puck uses "our" here is unclear, as he was the only fairy present at the tradesmen's rehearsal.
	<u>He "murther!"</u> cries, and help from Athens calls.	31: <i>He</i> = another one of the men. ⁵ <i>murther</i> = common alternate form of "murder".
32	Their sense, thus weak, lost with their fears, thus strong, Made <u>senseless</u> things begin to do them wrong:	32-33: "having lost what little sense they had, and being overcome by fright (line 32), they were so panicked that even inanimate objects (things without consciousness, ie. <i>senseless</i>) seemed to do them harm (line 33)." ⁵ It is worth noting the parallelism within line 32 (<i>Their sense, thus weak ... their fears, thus strong</i>) and the linguistic link and contrast between <i>sense</i> in line 32 and <i>senseless</i> in line 33. This is Shakespeare at his subtle best.
34	For briars and thorns, at their apparel, <u>snatch</u> : Some sleeves, some hats; <u>from yielders, all things catch</u> .	= catch, snag. ¹ = ie. the briars and thorns would snag every loose item their owners wore. <i>yielders</i> = people who let such things get pulled off. ³
36	I led them on, in this <u>distracted</u> fear,	= confused, mad. ^{2,6}
38	And left sweet <u>Pyramus translated</u> there:	= ie. Bottom. = transformed. ⁵
40	When in that moment (so it came to pass) Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.	
42	Ober. This <u>falls out</u> better than I could <u>devise</u> . – But hast thou yet <u>latched the Athenian's</u> eyes	= turns out. = have planned. 42: <i>latched</i> = watered, moistened; a variant of "leach". ¹ <i>the Athenian's</i> = ie. Demetrius'.
44	With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?	
46	Puck. I took him sleeping (<u>that is finished too</u>)	= ie. the assignment to moisten the Athenian's eyes was completed.
48	And the Athenian woman by his side; That when he waked, <u>of force she must be eyed</u> .	= by necessity. = ie. he couldn't help but see her.
50	<i>Enter Demetrius and Hermia.</i>	
52	Ober. <u>Stand close</u> : this is the same Athenian.	= stand still (so as to remain unnoticed). ⁵
54	Puck. This is the woman: but not this the man.	53: we remember that Puck mistakenly applied the herb's juice to Lysander's eyes, not Demetrius'. The goal was to cause Demetrius, who had been mistreating Helena, to awaken and fall in love with her. Instead, in mistakenly applying the drug onto Lysander's eyes, Puck has caused Lysander to fall in love with Helena, abandoning Hermia, with whom he had been planning to elope. Demetrius, in the meantime, remains in love with Hermia, who still only has eyes for Lysander. Oberon and Puck will remain on-stage as observers to the quarreling between the mortal characters, not to speak again until lines 473ff below.
		55ff (below): note how in the following dialogue, Demetrius

56 **Demet.** O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

58 **Herm.** Now I but chide: but I should use thee worse,
For thou (I fear) hast given me cause to curse.

60 If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er-shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,

62 And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day

64 As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
66 This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the centre creep, and so displease
68 Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.

It cannot be, but thou hast murdered him;
70 So should a murtherer look; so dead, so grim.

72 **Demet.** So should the murdered look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart, with your stern cruelty:

74 Yet you, the murtherer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus, in her glimmering sphere.

76 **Herm.** What's this to my Lysander? where is he?

78 Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

80 **Demet.** I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

82 **Herm.** Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?

84 Henceforth be never numbered among men. –
O, once tell true: tell true, even for my sake; –

uses the respectful "you" in addressing Hermia, while she addresses her pursuer with the contemptuous "thou".

= ie. Demetrius himself.
= speak so harshly. = ie. Demetrius himself.

= ie. "am only reproving you." = treat.
= pronounced as a one syllable word: *gi'n*.

61: *o'er-shoes in blood* = literally "above shoe-level in blood", used figuratively by Hermia to mean "wholeheartedly immersed in your bloody course of action".¹
plunge in the deep = ie. "plunge into the depths of it" (Stevenson, p. 92);⁵ the sense is, "then you may as well go all in".

= faithful.
= ie. as Lysander was. = slipped; pronounced "*stol'n*".

65-68: *I'll believe...Antipodes* = a reasonable interpretation of this difficult bit of hyperbole may be, "I would as soon believe that the earth could be drilled straight through with a hole (*bored*),^{1,6} and that the moon would move slowly (*creep*)¹ into the resulting hole, and through the center of the earth (and out the other end), thus annoying her brother the sun who is shining at noon (*noontide*) on the opposite side of the earth, disrupting the lives of the people living there (*the Antipodes*)."^{1,6}
with (line 68) = among.³

69: Lysander's murder is the only possible explanation for his disappearance!
70: Hermia imagines Demetrius to have the look of a killer.
dead = ie. deadly.^{1,5}

72-73: the sense is, "you mean, this is what a murdered man should look like – it is I who has been killed, by your rejection."

75: *Venus* = ie. the planet.
sphere = another reference to the Ptolemaic view of the cosmos: the earth, sitting at the center of the universe, is surrounded by the moon and planets, each embedded in its own crystalline sphere which revolves around the earth.

= ie. "what does this have to do with", or "what does this matter compared to my concern for".
= ie. "to me?"

= Demetrius' reference to Lysander's *carcass* in line 80 above may have prompted this question.
= from this moment on.

85: Hermia briefly softens her tone, pleading sincerely for truth, before immediately returning to her bitter and sarcastic tirade.
once tell true = ie. "for once, tell the truth."

86 Durst thou have looked upon him, being awake?
 And hast thou killed him, sleeping? O brave touch!

88 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?

An adder did it: for with doubler tongue

90 Than thine (thou serpent) never adder stung.

92 **Demet.** You spend your passion on a misprised mood:
 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood:
 94 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

96 **Herm.** I pray thee, tell me then, that he is well.

98 **Demet.** And if I could, what should I get therefore?

100 **Herm.** A privilege, never to see me more:
 And from thy hated presence part I [so]:

102 See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

104 [Exit Hermia.]

106 **Demet.** There is no following her in this fierce vein:
 Here therefore, for a while, I will remain.
 108 So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
 For debt that bankrout sleep doth sorrow owe:

110 Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
 If for his tender here I make some stay.

112 [Demetrius lies down and sleeps.]

114 **Ober.** What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
 116 And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight.

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
 118 Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

even = pronounced "e'en".

= ie. "have you dared". = ie. Demetrius being awake.
 = "what a valiant deed or achievement!" (ironic).^{2,5,6}
 = snake.²

89: **An adder did it** = Lysander's murderer was in fact a snake – Demetrius!

doubler tongue = ie. greater deceit; the common expression **double-tongued** meant "deceitful" and "insincere",¹ but also alludes to the serpent's forked tongue.

= the **serpent** was sometimes used by Shakespeare as a symbol of deceit (OED).

= use up, waste.¹ = emotion.¹ = misplaced anger or fancy.^{1,5}
 = ie. spilling Lysander's blood.
 = ie. "for all that I know."¹

= please.

= ie. if. = ie. get for that, ie. receive in return.¹

= right, benefit.^{1,6}

101: **hated** = loathed, hateful.¹

so = **so** appears in neither the Quarto or Folio, but is usually added here to fill in the meter and complete the rhyme with line 102.

102: **whether** = pronounced as a monosyllable: *wh'e'er*.

he = ie. Lysander.

no = ie. not.

106: "there is no use following Hermia while she is in this fierce mood" (Stevenson, p. 92).⁵

108-9: Demetrius' sorrow is intensified because he has not gotten any sleep; Shakespeare uses a striking metaphor of sleep as a bankrupt debtor: it owes relief – sleep itself – to Demetrius, but cannot pay it off, leaving his grief to grow heavier.

bankrout = bankrupt, a common alternate form.

sleep = printed as *slippe* and *slip* in the Quarto and Folio respectively, and generally emended to *sleep*.

= ie. the debt. = a small or partial amount. = ie. sleep.

111: if I pause here (**make some stay**)¹ to accept sleep's (**his**) offer (**tender**) (of partial payment).

= ie. applied. = ie. Lysander's.

117-8: "the result of your mistake (**misprision**) must necessarily be that a faithful lover (this would be Lysander) has rejected his or her beloved (**some true love turned**; the beloved here is Hermia), rather than someone becoming

120 **Puck.** Then fate o'er-rules, that one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

122 **Ober.** About the wood, go swifter than the wind,
124 And Helena of Athens look thou find.
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
126 With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.

By some illusion see thou bring her here:

128 I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

130 **Puck.** I go, I go, look how I go,
132 Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

[Exit Puck.]

134

Ober. Flower of this purple dye,

136 Hit with Cupid's archery,

Sink in apple of his eye;

138 When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
140 As the Venus of the sky. –
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
142 Beg of her for remedy.

faithful to (ie. falling in love with) one he or she previously hated." The latter refers to Oberon's intended scheme – for Demetrius (who disliked Helena, and thus was *false*) to fall in love with Helena.

perforce = of necessity.

120-1: then fate, which always prevails, ordains that for every one man who remains true to his love, a million do not, ruining or bringing to nought (*confounding*) one vow after another.

= throughout.

= love-sick.⁵ = countenance.⁵

126: reference to the belief that for every sigh, the heart loses a drop of blood,⁵ and hence that sighing directly leads to loss of strength and power.⁹

127: Oberon instructs Puck to use one of his tricks to bring Helena around; *illusion* = deception.²

128: Oberon plans to enchant Demetrius so that when Helena appears, he will, upon seeing her, immediately fall in love with her.

against she do appear = in expectation or anticipation of Helena's arrival.^{1,4}

= the *Tartars*, a central-Asian peoples, were famed for their prowess in warfare and their skill as horsemen and in archery in particular. Shakespeare made frequent reference to the Tartars in his plays.

135-142 (below): Oberon first apostrophizes the flower (through line 140), then the sleeping Demetrius.

Note that Oberon's entire speech comprises a rhyming octet – eight consecutive rhyming lines!

135-159 (below): Oberon and Puck return to speaking in seven-syllable lines, all beginning with a stressed syllable, then alternating between unstressed and stressed. All the lines are in rhyming couplets.

135: ie. "you purple-colored flower", referring to the love-in-idleness, the flower whose juice had been anointed previously on the eyelids of Lysander and Titania.

136: "act with the same power as an arrow shot by Cupid, which when it strikes, causes its victim to fall in love."

137: "penetrate (*Sink*)¹ into Demetrius' eye."

apple of his eye = this expression for the pupil dates back to Old English.¹

138: when Demetrius sees Helena.

141-2: spoken to Demetrius; *she* = Helena.

142: "seek a cure from Helena for your love for her", ie. "plead for her to return your love."

144		<i>Re-enter Puck.</i>	
146	Puck. Captain of our fairy band, Helena is here at hand,	146: Puck addresses Oberon.	
148	And the youth, <u>mistook by me</u> ,	148: Puck has brought Lysander with him as well as Helena. mistook by me = Puck admits to having mistakenly applied the love-juice to Lysander instead of Demetrius.	
	Pleading for a lover's fee.	149: Lysander is begging Helena for that which a lover is entitled to – meaning a return of his affection, or perhaps a kiss. = literally, "foolish show", ie. ridiculous antics, spectacle. ^{3,5}	
150	Shall we their <u>fond pageant</u> see? Lord, what fools these mortals be!	= ie. Lysander and Helena.	
152	Ober. Stand aside. The noise <u>they</u> make		
154	Will cause Demetrius to awake.		
156	Puck. Then will two, at once, woo one:	156: ie. both Lysander and Demetrius will be courting Helena.	
	That <u>must needs be sport alone</u> .	157: this cannot help but be a bit of entertainment (sport) without equal (alone). ⁴ must needs be = is necessarily.	
158	And those things do best please me That <u>befall preposterously</u> .	= occur or happen unnaturally or perversely. ^{2,5}	
160			
162		<i>Enter Lysander and Helena.</i>	
		163-175 (below): the following speeches by Lysander and Helena are each in sestet form, following an <i>ababcc</i> rhyming scheme – exactly the pattern found in the closing six lines of an Elizabethan sonnet.	
164	Lysan. Why should you think, that I <u>should woo in scorn</u> ? Scorn and derision <u>never come in</u> tears.	= "am courting you mockingly or insultingly?" ¹ 164: ie. people who are genuinely mocking someone don't cry while doing so. never come in = ie. are never accompanied by.	
166	Look, when I vow, I weep: and vows so <u>born</u> , In their <u>nativity</u> all truth appears.	165-6: as Lysander pledges his love to Helena, he sheds tears, which are evidence of the sincerity of his vows. Note the metaphor, with nativity , of newly-made vows as being born .	
168	How can these things, in me, seem scorn to you? <u>Bearing the badge of faith</u> , to prove them true?	= carrying or showing (Bearing) the visible sign or mark (badge) of sincerity and trustworthiness (faith) ² – ie. his tears.	
170	Helena. You do <u>advance</u> your cunning, more, and more. <u>When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!</u>	170: Lysander's deceit is escalating. advance = show. ^{2,5} 171: When truth kills truth = Lysander's swearing his love to Helena (the first truth), by superseding his previous oath to Hermia (the second truth), is killing it. Stevenson's gloss is, "In order to be true to me, you must break your vows to Hermia." O devilish-holy fray! = a powerful oxymoron: Lysander's separate protestations to the two women are individually both sacred (holy), but in attempting to present both as truth, he sets them against each other, and the resulting conflict or	

172 These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?
 Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.
 174 Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
 Will even weigh; and both as light as tales.

176 **Lysan.** I had no judgement, when to her I swore.
 178 **Helena.** Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.
 180 **Lysan.** Demetrius loves her: and he loves not you.
 182 **Demet.** [*Awaking.*]
 184 O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect divine,

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
 186 Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

188 That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,

Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow,

190 When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

192 **Helena.** O spite! O hell! I see, you all are bent
 194 To set against me, for your merriment.

combat (*fray*) is evil or damnable (*devilish*).^{1,2,6}

= abandon or give up Hermia.¹

173-5: weigh each vow on a scale, and you will find that each weighs nothing; by promising his love to both Hermia and Helena, Lysander has created vows that have equal value – none at all.

light as tales = as of little value (*light*) as are idle stories or fictional narratives (*tales*);¹ *light* also bears the literal sense of being low in weight.

= discretion, good sense, wisdom.²

= nor any.

184: *nymph* = beautiful maiden.¹

perfect divine = sacred or ideal godlike one;^{1,2} *perfect* is stressed on its second syllable, not uncommon in Elizabethan verse.

= "your eyes"; *eyne* is the old poetic form of "eyes".

186: *Crystal is muddy* = "compared to the brightness of your eyes, crystal is dull and dirty."^{1,5}

186-7: *how ripe...grow* = a brief but dense metaphor, by which Demetrius compares Helena's *lips* to *cherries*, describing them both as red and full (*ripe*)¹ and tempting. We may note that the comparison of a woman's lips to cherries was ubiquitous in Elizabethan poetry.

tempting grow = becoming increasingly enticing; but *grow* also carries an agricultural sense, suggesting the ripening or growth of the cherries on the tree.

188-190: *That pure...hand* = compared to Helena's white hand, even the snows of the Taurus mountains, blown by the cold wind, appear black.⁵

congealed = frozen.¹

Taurus = large and lofty mountain range in southeast Asia Minor; Sugden notes that the peaks are snow-covered all year round.²⁰

189: *the eastern wind* = an east wind was considered harsh and sharp.

turns to a crow = metaphorically, appears black in comparison. A dark complexion was considered unattractive by Elizabethan standards.

191: *This princess* = this paragon² (ie. the hand).

seal of bliss = pledge or symbol of happiness.^{1,5}

193-4: Helena couldn't be more indignant, now that both Lysander and Demetrius (*you all*) are mocking her by pretending to be in love with her.

bent = inclined.

		<i>set against</i> = attack, act hostile toward. ¹
196	If you were <u>civil</u> , and <u>knew</u> courtesy, You would not do me thus much injury.	= decent, well-behaved. ⁶ = ie. had good manners. ²
198	Can you not hate me, as I know you do, But you must <u>join in souls</u> to mock me too?	= ie. act as one, or "conspire together". ⁵
	If you were men, as men you are in show,	
200	You would not <u>use</u> a <u>gentle</u> lady so; To vow, and swear, and <u>superpraise</u> my <u>parts</u> ,	199: if Lysander and Demetrius possessed the qualities of true men – honour, courage, etc. – as they have the appearance of men. = treat. = tender, meek. ⁶ = excessively praise or overpraise. ¹ = personal qualities. ¹
202	When I am sure you hate me with your hearts. You both are rivals, and love Hermia:	
204	And now both rivals, to mock Helena. <u>A trim exploit</u> , a manly enterprise,	= a fine deed (ironic). ^{2,5}
206	To <u>conjure tears up in</u> a poor maid's eyes With your derision! <u>none of noble sort</u>	= bring tears to. = no person of virtuous nature or high birth. ⁵
208	Would so offend a <u>virgin</u> , and <u>extort</u>	208: <i>virgin</i> = maiden. 208-9: <i>extort...patience</i> = exhaust Helena's patience, ⁵ ie. push to the limit her capacity to endure the men's cruelty; <i>extort</i> = wrest away through intimidation. ^{1,4}
	A poor soul's patience, all to <u>make you sport</u> .	= "amuse you."
210	Lysan. You are unkind, Demetrius: be not so.	
212	For you love Hermia: this you know I know. And here, with all good will, with all my heart,	
214	In Hermia's love I yield you up my <u>part</u> : And <u>yours of Helena</u> , to me bequeath:	214-5: because Lysander no longer loves Hermia, he willingly gives up his share (<i>part</i>) of her love to Demetrius, and asks Demetrius in return to give him his share of Helena's love (<i>yours of Helena</i>).
216	Whom I do love, and will do till my death.	
218	Helena. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.	
220	Demet. Lysander, keep thy Hermia: <u>I will none</u> . If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.	= I want nothing to do with her."
222	My heart to her but as <u>guest-wise sojourned</u> , And now to Helen is it home returned,	222-4: Demetrius compares his heart to a traveller, which took temporary residence with Hermia, but has now returned to its own home with Helena. <i>guest-wise</i> = like a guest. ¹ <i>sojourned</i> = travelled, perhaps with sense of remaining elsewhere only for a time. ^{1,2}
224	There to remain.	
226	Lysan. Helen, it is not so.	
228	Demet. <u>Disparage</u> not the faith thou dost not know, Lest to thy peril, <u>thou aby it dear</u> . –	228: "do not scorn or vilify (<i>Disparage</i>) ⁶ the sincerity of a love that you don't understand." = "you will pay or atone for (<i>aby</i>) ^{2,5} it dearly." = ie. there. = over there.
230	Look, <u>where</u> thy love comes: <u>yonder</u> is thy dear.	
232	<i>Re-enter Hermia.</i>	234-7 (below): because the darkness of night takes away a person's ability to see, his or her hearing becomes more acute as compensation.

234	Herm. Dark night, that from the eye <u>his function</u> takes,	= its function, ie. the eye's role. The word function could be used to specifically describe the actions or jobs of bodily organs; ¹ hence, in Shakespeare's later play <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> , Troilus speaks of a credence in his heart which " <i>doth invert the attest of eyes and ears / As if those organs had deceptive functions...</i> "
236	The ear more quick of <u>apprehension</u> makes; Wherein <u>it</u> doth impair the seeing sense, It pays the hearing double recompence. –	= perception. ³ = ie. dark night.
238	Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found: Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.	238-9: Hermia was able to find Lysander by hearing him, not seeing him, in the night.
240	But why, unkindly, didst thou leave me so?	
242	Lysan. Why should he stay, whom love <u>doth press</u> to go?	242: "why should a person remain, when love compels (doth press) ¹ him to depart?"
244	Herm. What love could press Lysander from my side?	
246	Lysan. <u>Lysander's</u> love, that would not let him <u>bide</u> , Fair Helena; who more <u>engilds</u> the night	= ie. Helena. = stay, remain. ⁶ = literally "gilds", figuratively "brightens with golden light" (OED).
248	Than all <u>yon fiery oes and eyes of light</u> .	= poetically, the stars. ⁵ yon = those. ¹ oes = circles, round spots. ^{1,3} eyes = while it was commonplace to compare one's eyes to stars, Shakespeare may have been the first to call the stars "eyes". Note the alphabetical wordplay of " <i>oes and eyes</i> " ("o's and i's").
250	Why seek'st thou me? <u>could not this make thee know</u> , The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so?	= ie. didn't Lysander's leaving Hermia make it clear to her.
252	Herm. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.	
254	Helena. <u>Lo</u> : she is one of this <u>confederacy</u> ! Now I perceive they have <u>conjoined</u> all three,	254-5: Helena believes that Hermia has joined the two men in the conspiracy to torment her. Lo = look, behold. confederacy = plot, alliance. ² conjoined = united. ²
256	To <u>fashion</u> this <u>false sport</u> , in <u>spite</u> of me. –	256: "to contrive (fashion) ² this deceptive or wicked recreation or diversion (false sport) ^{1,2,5} in their contempt (spite) ⁴ of me."
258	<u>Injurious</u> Hermia, most ungrateful maid, Have you conspired, have you with <u>these</u> contrived To <u>bait</u> me with this <u>foul derisiön</u> ?	= insulting. ⁴ = ie. these other two. 259: "to persecute (bait) me with this shameful mockery (foul derision)?" ^{1,5}
260	Is all the <u>counsel</u> that we two have shared, <u>The sisters' vows</u> , the <u>hours</u> that we have spent,	260-278 (below): in this lengthy passage, Helena appeals to Hermia's memory of the close bond they have forged to ask why she would now join this plot against her. = confidences. ^{2,6} 261: The sisters' vows = the pledges of loyalty and friendship the two women, as close as sisters, have shared. Note that there may also be a secondary allusion to the vows

(of chastity, etc.) taken by nuns (in the 16th century, *sister* could refer to a nun) upon entering a convent; such a reference would heighten the sense of solemnity and sacredness of the intimacy shared by the two women.
hours = pronounced as a single syllable.

262-3: *When we...us* = the girls would scold time for moving too quickly, prematurely ending their moments together.

chid = rebuked; past tense of "chide".

Line 263 seems short, but a brief pause between the line's two clauses, as Helena awaits an answer from Hermia, may provide the missing unstressed syllable.

= artistically skillful, proficient in creating new things.^{2,5}

266-7: have embroidered together.

needles = as here, *needle* was usually pronounced as a single syllable in Shakespeare's verse.

sampler = a sample of embroidery work, used to demonstrate a woman's skill.^{1,5}

268: ie. singing the same song together, in unison (*in one key*) rather than in harmony.

= the precise meaning of *sides* is unclear; Schmidt suggests "frame", ie. their bodies, and more specifically, their "breast(s), as containing the heart or the lungs" (p. 1056),⁶ ie. the chest cavities as the seat of vital organs.

= in one body.⁵

271-3: Helena compares her relationship with Hermia to that of two cherries or berries growing from a single stem – separate (*in partition*) but joined (forming *an union*), distinct yet united.

Like to = like.

seeming parted = seemingly separate.

moulded = formed.¹

274: the women appear to have distinct bodies, but they share one heart between them.

275-6: Helena employs an analogy from heraldry to emphasize her close bond with Hermia: the pair of them were like two coats-of-arms joined into a single shield and topped by a single *crest*.

In heraldry, the coats of arms of two families could be combined, or "impaled", on one shield (this could occur, for example, when a marriage united two families); the arms of one family (in the case of a marriage, the husband's) were placed on the left half, and the other's (the wife's) on the right half. Above the coat of arms was typically placed a helmet, which in turn was topped by a device (*crest*) such as a crown or wreath.

Two of the first = ie. with two bodies (*first* = former, referring to the *bodies* of the previous line, line 274).

Due but to one = belonging to one family or lineage.⁵

262 When we have chid the hasty-footed time
 For parting us: – O, is all forgot?

264 All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

266 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

268 Both warbling of one song, both in one key;

 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds

270 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;
 272 But yet an union in partition,
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

274 So with two seeming bodies, but one heart;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
 276 Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest.

278 And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men, in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:

280 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it;
Though I alone do feel the injury.

282 **Herm.** I am amazèd at your [passionate] words:

284 I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

286 **Helena.** Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face?
288 And made your other love, Demetrius,
(Who even but now did spurn me with his foot)
290 To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,

Precious celestial? Wherefore speaks he this,

292 To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander

294 Deny your love (so rich within his soul)
And tender me (forsooth) affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?

296 What though I be not so in grace as you,

So hung upon with love, so fortunate,

298 But miserable most, to love unloved?

This you should pity, rather than despise.

300 **Herm.** I understand not what you mean by this.
302

Helena. Ay, do; perséver, counterfeit sad looks:

304 Make mouths upon me, when I turn my back:
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up:

306 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.

308 If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument. –
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault:
310 Which death, or absence soon shall remedy.

crowned = topped.⁶

= rend, tear.⁴ = apart.

= behaviour appropriate for a maiden, ie. gentle and modest.¹

283: **amazed** = confused, bewildered.^{1,5}

passionate = in the Folio only, absent from the Quarto.

= ie. did. = assign or put to a task.¹

= pronounced *e'en*. = kick.

290: see line 184 above for the first three compliments;
but Demetrius never called Helena **rare** (meaning "excellent").

291: **Precious celestial** = nor did Demetrius call her this.

Wherefore = why.

292-5: **wherefore...consent** = why would Lysander pretend to reject your love and offer me his, unless you urged him to do so?"

= reject. = so deeply rooted within him; **rich** = abundant.⁶

= offer. = truthfully, but implying some contempt.⁴

295: "except that you encouraged it and agreed to it?"

296: "what does it matter (**What though**) that I am not so much in favour (**in grace**) (with Lysander) as you".

= the sense is, Helena does not have men admiring her as much as does Hermia; **hung upon** = clung to.⁵

298: **miserable most** = ie. "(I am) utterly miserable".

to love unloved = ie. Helena loves, but is unloved.

303: "sure, keep at it (**persever**); continue to pretend to be sorrowful or serious (**sad**)."

persever = typically stressed on the second syllable.

= make faces at.⁵

= ie. at each other. = keep the pleasant practical joke going.¹

306: this diversion (**sport**), if well executed (**carried**), will deserve to be recorded for history (**chronicled**).^{1,5} Helena is bitterly sarcastic.

= a subject or target (of merriment).^{2,5}

312	Lysan. Stay, gentle Helena: hear my excuse, My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!	
314	Helena. O excellent!	
316	Herm. Sweet, do not scorn her so.	317: spoken to Lysander.
318	Demet. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.	319: ie. if Hermia cannot successfully persuade Lysander too leave Helena alone, then Demetrius can force him to do so.
320	Lysan. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat: Thy threats have no more strength than her <u>weak prayers</u> .	= feeble entreaties <i>prayers</i> = both the Quarto and Folio print <i>praise</i> , which is generally emended to <i>prayers</i> , as here.
322	– Helen, I love thee, <u>by my life</u> , I do: I swear by that which I will lose for thee, To prove him false that says I love thee not.	= an oath. 324: Lysander swears again by his <i>life</i> , which he would willingly sacrifice for Helena.
326	Demet. I say, I love thee more than he can do.	
328	Lysan. If thou say so, <u>withdraw</u> , and prove it too.	= go away, retire; ¹ but with <i>and prove it too</i> , and the lines that follow, the sense may be more like "come along", suggesting Lysander is challenging Demetrius. ⁶
330	Demet. Quick, come!	331: Demetrius is as eager as Lysander to settle this.
332	Herm. Lysander, <u>whereto tends all this</u> ?	= "what is the object of all this?" (Stevenson, p.95). ⁵
334	Lysan. <u>Away</u> , you <u>Ethiop</u> !	335: <i>Away</i> = "get away from me"; Hermia is clinging to Lysander (see lines 341-2 below). <i>Ethiop</i> = allusion to Hermia's dark complexion; <i>Ethiop</i> was a favourite word of Shakespeare's. As suggested previously, darker skin was considered unattractive, so Lysander's use of this word is meant to be hurtful.
336	Demet. No, no: he'll Seem to break loose: – <u>take on</u> as you would follow, But yet come not. You are a <u>tame</u> man, <u>go</u> !	337-8: <i>he'll...loose</i> = Lysander will only pretend (<i>Seem</i>) to try to break free from Hermia to fight Demetrius. 338-9: <i>take on...come not</i> = "act as if you will willingly follow me, but then don't actually come along;" <i>take on</i> = behave or act (in a specified manner) (OED). = meek, submissive; ¹ an insult. = ie. "get out of here!"
340	Lysan. <u>Hang off</u> , thou <u>cat</u> , thou <u>burr</u> ! vile thing, let loose, Or I will shake thee from me, <u>like a serpent</u> !	341-2: Lysander continues to try to shake off Hermia, who desperately keeps hold of him. <i>Hang off</i> = ie. "let go"; Shakespeare may have invented, or at least seems to have recorded, a long-lost opposite to the still common expression, "hang on", meaning "to cling or hold onto". <i>cat</i> = commonly used by Shakespeare as an insult for a woman. <i>burr</i> = obvious metaphor, since Hermia refuses to release her hold on Lysander. <i>like a serpent</i> = ie. "as if you were a serpent wrapped around me!"
342		

344	Herm. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this, Sweet love?	
346	Lysan. Thy love! <u>out</u> , <u>tawny Tartar</u> , out!	347: out = common exclamation of abhorrence or impatience. ^{1,2} tawny Tartar = another allusion to Hermia's supposed brownish (tawny) ¹ complexion, a trait Shakespeare connects here to the Tartars . Note that this is the second mention of the Tartars in this scene (see line 132 above).
348	Out, loathed <u>medicine</u> ! O hated <u>potion</u> , <u>hence</u> !	348: Lysander compares Hermia to something distasteful, such as a medicine or potion he might ingest. The OED tells us that the word medicine could inherently carry a sense of a remedy "which is necessary but disagreeable or unwelcome", and that the word potion also frequently was employed "with disparaging connotations." hence = "get away from here!"
350	Herm. Do you not jest?	350: incredulous, Hermia asks Lysander if he is joking.
352	Helena. Yes, <u>sooth</u> : and so do you.	= truly.
354	Lysan. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.	354: Lysander reminds Demetrius that they have a date for a fight.
356	Demet. <u>I would I had your bond</u> ; for I perceive, <u>A weak bond holds you</u> . I'll not trust your word.	356-7: Demetrius expresses skepticism that Lysander will actually keep his word. I would I had your bond = "I wish (would) you would give me a written pledge (bond)," ie. to do as he promised. ^{1,6} A weak bond holds you = Demetrius sees that Hermia is not really clinging that tightly to Lysander, nor is he really trying hard to release himself from her clutches; ⁹ a secondary meaning may be that Lysander does not keep his promises.
358	Lysan. <u>What?</u> should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?	= an exclamation expressing astonishment and indignation. ¹
360	Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.	
362	Herm. <u>What?</u> can you do me greater harm than hate?	= Hermia mocks Lysander's use of " What? " in line 359.
364	Hate me, <u>wherefore</u> ? O me! <u>what news</u> , my love?	= why. = "what novelty is this?" ^{1,5}
366	Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?	
368	I am as <u>fair</u> now as I was <u>erewhile</u> .	= beautiful. = before, previously. ^{1,5}
370	Since <u>night</u> , you loved me; yet since night, you left me:	= nightfall. ⁵
372	Why then, you left me (O, the gods forbid)	367-8: the sense is, "am I supposed to conclude that you genuinely (In earnest) ¹ left me?"
374	<u>In earnest</u> , shall I say?	= an oath.
376	Lysan. Ay, <u>by my life</u> :	
378	And never did desire to see thee more.	
380	Therefore be <u>out of hope</u> , of <u>questiön</u> , of <u>doubt</u> ;	372: Lysander employs some wonderful parallel structure to force Hermia to understand, once and for all, that he is done with her. out of hope = without hope; a now rarely-used opposite expression to the still common "full of hope". out of question = beyond question, without any doubt. ¹ out of doubt = beyond doubt; ¹ another lost phrase, used as the opposite to the still common "filled with doubt".
382	Be certain: nothing truer: 'tis no jest,	
384	That I do hate thee, and love Helena.	
386		376ff (below): Hermia's understanding of the situation

376 **Herm.** O me, you juggler, you canker-blossom,

378 You thief of love! what, have you come by night,
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

380 **Helena.** Fine, i' faith!

382 Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

384 Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

386 **Herm.** Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

388 Between our statures: she hath urged her height,

390 And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height (forsooth) she hath prevailed with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,

392 Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak:

394 How low am I? I am not yet so low,
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

396

shifts: finally accepting that she no longer possesses Lysander's love, Hermia now turns her wrath on Helena, whom she blames for stealing Lysander away from her.

376: **juggler** = trickster, deceiver;^{1,2} may be a trisyllable here: *JU-guhl-er*.

canker-blossom = **canker** here likely is a verb, meaning "to cause a plant to become diseased";¹ with this invented compound word, Hermia describes Helena as one who destroys a blossom.¹ As a noun, we may add, **canker** may refer to a caterpillar or grub that attacks plants.¹

= ie. Lysander's.

380: "that is excellent, truly!"

As we have seen previously, Helena is prone to sarcasm.

382: **No touch** = not a bit.⁵

382-3: **will you...tongue** = Helena resents Hermia's attempts to force an answer from her.

384: **fie** = for shame.

counterfeit = faker, feigner.

puppet = literally a doll;⁵ but **puppet** could also mean

(1) "bad actor or performer",¹ suggesting that Helena is not impressed with Hermia's acting or emotional display; and

(2) "marionette",¹ implying that Hermia is allowing herself to be manipulated by the men in carrying out this practical joke.

(3) at line 387f, however, Hermia will make her own inference from this insult.

= Hermia suddenly grasps what Helena really is hinting at; the modern equivalent is "that's the way the wind is blowing".

387-392: Hermia accuses Helena of capturing Lysander's heart by emphasizing that she (Helena) is attractively tall, and Hermia unappealingly short!

compare = ie. a comparison.

= ie. Helena has asserted or pressed forward (**urged**)^{2,6} the fact that she is tall.

= figure, appearance.^{4,5}

= verily, truly. = ie. Lysander.

= ie. short.

= Hermia mocks Helena's height and thinness; **painted** may also scornfully suggest that Helena wears cosmetics.¹

The **maypole** was the familiar pole around which people danced during May Day celebrations; it was typically **painted** with spirals of various colours.^{1,5}

397-403 (below): Helena suddenly – and disingenuously! – adopts the persona of the meek and innocent girl; but

398 **Helena.** I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst:
I have no gift at all in shrewishness:

400 I am a right maid for my cowardice:

Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
402 Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

404 **Herm.** Lower? hark again!

406 **Helena.** Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me;
408 I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you,

410 Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

412 He followed you: for love, I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence, and threatened me

414 To strike me, spurn me; nay, to kill me too.

And now, so you will let me quiet go,
416 To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further. Let me go.
418 You see how simple, and how fond I am.

420 **Herm.** Why? get you gone. Who is 't that hinders you?

422 **Helena.** A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

424 **Herm.** What, with Lysander?

426 **Helena.** With Demetrius.

428 **Lysan.** Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena.

430 **Demet.** No sir: she shall not, though you take her part.

she has already shown herself to be perfectly capable of attacking her companions with remarkable fury and viciousness.

= "I beg you".

= savage, sharp-tongued.^{1,4,5}

399: ie. "I was not born with the quality of being scolding and quarrelsome (*shrewishness*)."

400: the sense is, "I am naturally as timid as a real girl (*right maid*)^{3,9} should be."

for = in.³

= pronounced as "*she's*". = somewhat.⁴ = shorter.

= meet Hermia equally in a fight.

405: the sense is, "listen (*hark*) – again she mentions that I am short!"

= always.

= always. = secrets.

410-1: there was only one time that Helena wronged Hermia – when she informed Demetrius that Hermia and Lysander were going to meet in the woods the previous night.

Save that = except that.

in love unto Demetrius = "out of my love for Demetrius".

your stealth = ie. "your having stolen away".⁵

= ie. "out of my love for him".

= "driven me away through his scolding"; *chid* is the past tense form of *chide*.

414: *spurn* = kick.

to kill me too = not exactly true; the closest Demetrius came to threatening Helena's death was when he said he would leave her alone in the woods at "*the mercy of wild beasts*." (see Act II.i.271-2 above).

= if.⁵

= ie. "take my foolishness back with me".

= stupid, silly.² = foolish.

= the sense is, "who's stopping you?"

430: Demetrius affirms that Hermia shall not hurt Helena, even though Lysander (*you*) is siding with Helena (something Demetrius resents because he sees Lysander as his rival in love for Helena).

432 **Helena.** O, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd!

She was a vixen when she went to school:

434 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

436 **Herm.** Little again? nothing but low and little?
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

438 Let me come to her.

440 **Lysan.** Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;

442 You bead, you acorn.

444 **Demet.** You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.

446 Let her alone: speak not of Helena,
Take not her part; for if thou dost intend

448 Never so little shew of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

450 **Lysan.** Now she holds me not:

452 Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

454 **Demet.** Follow? nay: I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.

456

[Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.]

458 **Herm.** You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you. –

460 Nay, go not back.

462 **Helena.** I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.

464 Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.
My legs are longer though, to run away.

432: **she is** = pronounced as "she's".
keen = sharp, cutting.²
shrewd = shrewish, bad-tempered, malicious.¹

= figuratively, a quarrelsome and shrewish girl; a **vixen** is a she-fox.¹

= allow. = abuse, insult.²
= at.

441: **minimus** = small creature.¹
hindering knot-grass = the common weed known as knot-grass was called so because of the prominent joints, or nodes, located up and down the stem. It was thought that an infusion of this plant would stunt (**hinder**) the growth of any child or animal.^{5,19}

444-5: Demetrius is annoyed that Lysander is so zealous (**officious**)¹ in speaking for Helena, even though she rejects his attention.

= some editors suggest **intend** means "pretend".^{4,5}
448: ie. "to show even the slightest sign of affection towards her"; **shew** = show, a common alternate form.
= pay or atone for.

451-3: ie. now that Lysander is free from the clutches of Hermia (**she**), he is free to confront Demetrius over Helena.

452-3: **to try...Helena** = to find out (**try**) which of the two of them has the best claim to Helena.^{2,5}

455: Demetrius won't just follow Lysander – he thinks this would seem less manly or make him appear subordinate in some way to his rival – but will go side-by-side (**cheek by jowl**) with him.

459: **mistress** = the vocative bears a sense of contempt here.⁶
all this...you = "all this to-do or commotion (**coil**)^{1,5} is because of you."
'long of = along of, meaning "on account of";¹ **'long** is an aphetic form of **along** (meaning that the initial short unstressed vowel of **along** has been dropped).

= ie. "don't go anywhere;" suddenly alone with her nemesis, Helena may be slowly retreating from Hermia.

462-3: Helena has not forgotten that Hermia wants to hurt her.
curst = shrewish, savage, ill-tempered.

464: ie. Hermia is more eager for a fight than is Helena.

466		[Exit Helena.]	467, 471: the Quarto has both women exit as line 471; the Folio fails to direct either to leave the stage. The stage directions here represent a common adaptation.
468	Herm. I am <u>amazed</u> , and know not what to say.		= dumbfounded. ^{2,3}
470		[Exit Hermia.]	471: Oberon and Puck remain on-stage; they have been viewing the endless confusion – the results of Puck's handiwork – between the mortals since the latter began to arrive at line 49ff above
472			473-4 (below): Oberon is aggravated by the error Puck made in applying the love-juice to Lysander instead of Demetrius, and notes that Puck makes an awful lot of such gaffes.
474	Ober. This is thy negligence: <u>still thou mistak'st</u> , Or else committ'st thy <u>knaveries</u> wilfully.		= ie. "you are always (<i>still</i>) making mistakes." = mischievous tricks. ¹
476	Puck. Believe me, king of <u>shadows</u> , I <u>mistook</u> . Did not you tell me, I should know the man By the Athenian garments he had on? And, so far blameless proves my enterprise, That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes:		= spirits. ⁵ = erred.
480			479-480: Puck is not to be blamed if Oberon's plan miscarried, as Puck in fact followed the Fairy King's instructions to the letter.
482	And so far am I glad it <u>so did sort</u> , As this their <u>jangling</u> I <u>esteem</u> a <u>sport</u> .		= turned out (<i>did sort</i>) ⁴ the way it did. 482: ie. "because all their bickering (<i>jangling</i>) I consider or judge (<i>esteem</i>) to be great entertainment (<i>sport</i>). ^{2,6}
			484ff (below): after the lengthy scenes of squabbling between first the mortals and then the spirits, Shakespeare now returns to doing what he does best – creating sublime poetry.
			484-499 (below): Oberon has a three-point plan to prevent Lysander and Demetrius from fighting; Puck should: (1) (a) cause the sky to become overcast with clouds; and (b) raise a dense fog, so that the resulting darkness will cause the two men to have difficulty seeing (lines 485-7); (2) by impersonating one and then the other, cause the two men to run around in circles and lose sight of each other, until, exhausted, they fall asleep (488-495); (3) squeeze into Lysander's eyes some juice from a new herb which will reverse the spell that caused him to fall in love with Helena; then Lysander and Hermia can go ahead with their original plan to marry (496-9).
484	Ober. Thou see'st, <u>these lovers</u> seek a place to fight: <u>Hie</u> therefore, Robin, <u>overcast the night</u> , The starry <u>welkin</u> cover thou <u>anon</u>		= Lysander and Demetrius. = hurry. ² = cover the dark sky with clouds. ⁵
486			486: an imperative: "cover the starry sky (<i>welkin</i>)". <i>anon</i> = immediately after. ⁶
	With <u>drooping</u> fog, as black as <u>Acheron</u> ,		487: <i>drooping</i> = descending, sinking. ^{1,6} There are instances in earlier 16th century literature of fog described as falling or descending upon the landscape. <i>Acheron</i> = one of the rivers of Hades; it was across Acheron that the ferry-man Charon carried the souls of the

488 And lead these testy rivals so astray,
 As one come not within another's way.
 490 Like to Lysander, sometime frame thy tongue:
 Then stir Demetrius up, with bitter wrong:
 492 And sometime rail thou like Demetrius:
 And from each other, look thou lead them thus;
 494 Till o'er their brows, death-counterfeiting sleep
 With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:

496 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
 498 To take from thence all error with his might,

And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

500 When they next wake, all this derisiön
 Shall seem a dream, and fruitless visiön.

502 And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,

With league whose date till death shall never end.

504 Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
 I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy:

506 And then I will her charmed eye release
 From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.
 508

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
 510 For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
 And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger:

departed into Hades proper.

= short-tempered.²

490-1: ie. "by impersonating Lysander's voice, rile up Demetrius with stinging insults (**bitter wrong**)."^{2,5}

frame = fashion, shape.²

= rant abusively.²

494-5: poetically, till sleep overtakes them.

death-counterfeiting = in imitation of death; sleep and death were frequently compared. In *MacBeth*, Shakespeare wrote, "*Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit...*"

leaden = heavy, like lead.

batty wings = like the wings of bats, perhaps alluding to the silent and nocturnal nature of bats.

creep = steal into.²

= ie. juice. = powerful, efficacious.¹

498: **from thence** = from there (Lysander's eyes).

his might = its (the juice's) power or efficacy.^{3,5}

499: and restore to Lysander's eyes their accustomed (**wonted**) way of seeing, ie. so that he once again perceives things the way they truly are.

= scorn, ridicule.^{1,6}

= an unprofitable or idle illusion or sight.^{2,6}

502: **the lovers** = all four of the noble mortals who have spent the night in the woods; Lysander and Hermia will be back together again, and Helena will be with Demetrius (whose love for Helena, we should note, Oberon has chosen not to reverse).

wend = make their way.

503: with a bond (**league**)² whose duration (**date**)^{2,5} will last unbroken until death; Schmidt suggests **league** bears a sense of "mutual love".⁶

= task.¹

= ie. go to. = ie. beg for.

506-7: only after Titania agrees to turn over the Indian boy will Oberon reverse the spell that has caused her to fall in love with Bottom (the **monster**, thanks to his ass's head).

510-1: poetically, because night is ending and day is approaching fast.

Line 510: the line seems to be saying that the dragons, representing night, are flying swiftly through the clouds (**cut the clouds full fast**).¹ However, some editors suggest Puck is alluding to the chariot of personified Night, which in mythology was typically drawn by horses, but here are reimagined by Shakespeare to be pulled by dragons.

night's swift = the Folio prints **night-swift** here; the OED

		has a separate entry for this compound word, recognizing it perhaps as the "official" option. <i>Aurora's harbinger</i> = ie. the brightly-shining planet Venus, the morning star, and forerunner (<i>harbinger</i>) of the dawn; <i>Aurora</i> was the goddess of the dawn.
512	At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,	512-3: <i>At whose...churchyards</i> = as dawn approaches, the ghosts who haunt the night return to their graves. <i>Troop</i> (line 513) = go, walk. ¹
514	Troop home to churchyards: <u>damnèd spirits all</u> , That in <u>crossways</u> and <u>floods</u> have burial,	513-4: <i>damned...burial</i> = Puck refers to the bodies of: (1) suicides, who were buried at crossroads (<i>crossways</i>), ¹ denied proper internment in consecrated ground because of the sinful nature of their self-murders; thus they were considered <i>damned</i> , unable to enter Heaven; ¹⁹ and (2) those who drowned at sea (<i>floods</i>), their bodies lost; because these unfortunates never received proper burial rights, their spirits were doomed to wander the earth, it was thought, for one hundred years. ¹⁹ <i>damned spirits all</i> = despite the wording, the <i>damned spirits</i> are distinct from the <i>ghosts</i> of line 512 who get to return to the churchyards. = ie. graves.
	Already to their <u>wormy beds</u> are gone:	
516	For fear lest day should look their <u>shames</u> upon, They wilfully themselves <u>exile</u> from light,	516-8: the damned spirits deliberately avoid daylight to hide their sinful crimes (<i>shames</i>) in darkness. <i>exile</i> = sometimes stressed on the second syllable, as here, in Shakespeare's work.
518	And must <u>for aye consort</u> with <u>black-browed</u> night.	518: and must forever (<i>for aye</i>) keep company (<i>consort</i>) ¹ with dark night. <i>black-browed</i> = dark-faced. ¹
520	<i>Ober.</i> But we are spirits of <u>another sort</u> : I, with <u>the morning's love</u> , have <u>oft made sport</u> ;	= a different kind. 521: contrasting himself with the constrained spirits described by Puck in the previous speech – those who cannot tolerate the light – Oberon explains how he plays and amuses himself when the sun (<i>the morning's love</i>) comes up. There have been other interpretations of this line: for example, some commentators believe that <i>morning's love</i> is a figurative description of Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, whom Oberon is describing as having courted. ⁴ <i>oft made sport</i> = often found diversion; ¹ a common expression.
522	And, like a <u>forester</u> , <u>the groves may tread</u>	522: <i>forester</i> = an officer having charge for a forest. ¹ <i>the groves may tread</i> = ie. "I can walk through the woods".
524	<u>Even</u> till the <u>eastern gate</u> all fiery-red, <u>Opening on Neptune</u> , with fair blessèd beams, Turns into yellow gold <u>his</u> salt green <u>streams</u> . –	523-5: poetically, even until the red dawn breaks over the sea and the sun's rays turn the sea's green waters to golden yellow. <i>Even</i> = pronounced <i>E'en</i> , a monosyllable. <i>eastern gate</i> = Shakespeare imagines the eastern horizon as a gate through which the sun rises at dawn. <i>Opening on Neptune</i> = the <i>gate</i> , or eastern horizon, of line 523 opens onto the sea; <i>Neptune</i> was the god of the sea.

		<i>with fair blessed beams</i> = describes the <i>morning's love</i> , or sun, of line 521. <i>his</i> (line 525) = ie. Neptune's. <i>streams</i> (line 525) = waters.
526	But notwithstanding, <u>haste</u> , make no delay:	= hurry.
528	We may effect this business yet <u>ere</u> day.	527: "we can still accomplish this task before (<i>ere</i>) day breaks."
530	[Exit Oberon.]	
532	Puck. Up and down, up and down, I will lead <u>them</u> up and down:	= ie. Lysander and Demetrius.
534	I am feared in field and town: <u>Goblin</u> , lead them up and down. – Here comes one.	= Puck addresses himself in this line.
536		
538	Re-enter Lysander.	
540	Lysan. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? <u>speak thou now</u> .	= ie. "speak up so I can hear you."
542	Puck. Here, villain, <u>drawn</u> and ready. Where art thou?	541, 545-6: Puck impersonates Demetrius. <i>drawn</i> = ie. with sword drawn. ⁴
544	Lysan. I will be with thee <u>straight</u> .	= right away, at once.
546	Puck. Follow me then To <u>plainer</u> ground.	= flatter or smoother. ^{1,5}
548	[Exit Lysander, as following the voice.]	
550	Re-enter Demetrius.	
552	Demet. Lysander, speak again: Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?	
554	<u>Speak in some bush</u> . Where dost thou hide thy head?	= perhaps should be repunctuated as so: "Speak! [pause] In some bush?" ⁹
556	Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars, Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,	556-560: Puck now impersonates Lysander.
558	And wilt not come? Come, <u>recreant</u> ; come, thou child,	= synonym for "coward". ¹
560	I'll <u>whip thee with a rod</u> . He is defiled That draws a sword on thee.	559: <i>whip thee with a rod</i> = "flog you with a stick;" Puck, as Lysander, threatens to punish Demetrius as if he were a <i>child</i> (line 558). 559-560: <i>he is...on thee</i> = any man who bothers to fight with Demetrius is automatically dishonoured (<i>defiled</i>); ¹ it was a common trope that combatants should only take on worthy opponents.
562	Demet. Yea, art thou there?	
564	Puck. Follow my voice: <u>we'll try no manhood here</u> .	= "we will not put our courage to the test, ie. will not fight, on this ground here."
566	[Exeunt Puck and Demetrius.]	
568	Re-enter Lysander.	
570	Lysan. He goes before me and still dares me on: When I come where he calls, then he is gone.	

	Here she comes, <u>curst</u> and sad.	= shrewish, ill-tempered.
618	Cupid is a <u>knave</u> ish lad,	= mischievous.
620	Thus to <u>make poor females mad</u> .	= drive poor women crazy. Puck is commenting on how irrational love can be, and humorously blames Cupid, whose arrows are traditionally thought to strike people seemingly at random.
	<i>Re-enter Hermia.</i>	
622	Herm. Never so weary, never so <u>in woe</u> .	= grieved, sorrowful.
624	<u>Bedabbled</u> with the dew, and torn with briers:	= made wet. ¹
	I can no further crawl, no further go:	
626	My legs can keep no pace with my desires.	626: "my legs cannot go as fast as I want them to go."
	Here will I rest <u>me</u> , till the break of day:	= myself.
628	Heavens <u>shield</u> Lysander, if <u>they mean a fray</u> !	= protect. = Lysander and Demetrius intend to fight.
630	<i>[Lies down and sleeps.]</i>	
632	Puck. On the ground	
	Sleep sound:	
634	I'll apply	
	<u>Your</u> eye,	= ie. to your; most editions emend this line to " <i>To your eye</i> ".
636	Gentle lover, remedy.	
638	<i>[Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.]</i>	
640	When thou wak'st,	
	Thou tak'st	
642	True delight	
	In the sight	
644	Of thy <u>former lady's</u> eye:	= ie. Hermia's.
	And the country proverb known,	
646	That every man should take his own,	646: this proverbial expression was used in the 16th century as a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 3:8-15, which explained how each man shall be rewarded – or not – according to the work and effort he puts into any project. Puck perverts the proverb, giving it the sense, "every man should end up with his own woman."
	In your waking shall be shown:	647: "when you wake up, everything will become clear."
648	Jack shall have Jill:	648: the names Jack and Jill were used in the 16th century as a generic boy-girl pairing. " <i>Jack shall have Jill</i> " was one of John Heywood's old epigrams, appearing in both his 1546 and 1555 books of proverbs. In <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> , a character laments, " <i>Our wooing doth not end like an old play; / Jack hath not Jill.</i> "
	Nought shall go ill:	649: nothing shall go wrong.
650	The man shall have his <u>mare</u> again,	650: a restatement of the point made in lines 646 and 648 – that each man should end up possessing his own woman – but Puck humorously uses mare (a female horse) to stand in for "woman".
	And all shall be well.	
652	<i>[Exit Puck.]</i>	END OF ACT III

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The same part of the woods.

*Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia,
lying asleep.*

*Enter Titania and Bottom; Pease-blossom, Cobweb,
Mustardseed, and other Fairies attending;
Oberon behind unseen.*

- 1 **Titan.** Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
2 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,

And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,

4 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.
6 **Bottom.** Where's Pease-blossom?
8 **Pease.** Ready.
10 **Bottom.** Scratch my head, Pease-blossom. – Where's
12 Mounsieur Cobweb?
14 **Cob.** Ready.
16 **Bottom.** Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get
you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-
hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle: and good

18 mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret
yourself too much in the action, mounsieur: and,

20 good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not;
I would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-
22 bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?
24 **Must.** Ready.
26 **Bottom.** Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustardseed.

The Scene: the four sleeping mortal young lovers remain on-stage from the previous scene.

Entering Characters: the Fairy Queen is still in love with **Bottom**, whose ass's head is still in place.

The fairy named Moth is neither named nor assigned any lines in this scene.

Titania continues to speak in iambic pentameter to Bottom, regardless of the absurdity of her situation and the idiocy of Bottom's running commentary.

1-4: Titania pampers Bottom with loving tenderness.
= lovely, loveable.^{1,4} = caress, stroke.^{1,4}

3: **musk-roses** = species of rose with large, white flowers possessing a musk scent.²

in = on.

sleek = smooth and glossy;⁶ but the OED credits Shakespeare with introducing the sense, "covered with smooth hair or fur", applied specifically to animals.

= beautiful.

= French form for the prefix "Mister".

16-17: **red-hipped humble-bee** = bumble-bee with red markings;⁶ see the note above at Act III.i.252. We observe that once again, a suggestion is being made to slaughter a bee.

18: **honey-bag** = honey-stomach, the bee's nectar-carrying pouch; see the note above at Act III.i.252.

18-19: **Do not...action** = Bottom reassures Cobweb he need not strain himself in carrying out this mission.

fret = vex, trouble.¹

= flowed over,^{1,3} ie. covered with honey should the honey-bag burst or break.

= fist, clenched hand;^{1,2} perhaps meaning only "hand", for Bottom to shake; **neaf** appears in only one other Shakespeare play – in *Henry IV, Part II*, in which Pistol says,

28	<u>Pray you, leave your curtsy,</u> good mounsieur.	"Sweet knight, I kiss thy neaf."
30	Must. What's your will?	= "please, do not be overly formal;" as Mustardseed offers his hand to Bottom, he may bow or offer some other deferential gesture, which Bottom dismisses as unnecessary.
32	Bottom. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help <u>Cavalery Cobweb</u> to scratch. I must <u>to</u> the barber's,	32: Cavalery = a title of courtesy: cavalier, chevalier; ^{2,4,5} the OED identifies cavalery , which appears in both the Quarto and the Folio, only as a variant of the word cavalry . Cobweb = this should say Pease-blossom ; Cobweb has been sent to collect a honey-bag. to = ie. go to.
34	mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a <u>tender ass</u> , if my hair do	= sensitive or delicate dolt; ^{2,6} the humour here of course arises from the fact that Bottom never learns that his head has been transformed into that of a literal ass.
36	but tickle me, I must scratch.	
38	Titan. What, <u>wilt thou</u> hear some music, my sweet love?	= ie. "would you like to".
40	Bottom. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have <u>the tongs and the bones</u> .	= crude, rustic musical instruments; ⁴ the humour here stems from Bottom's complete ignorance of the courtly instruments Titania has in mind. The precise nature and use of tongs and bones is not clear. The bones were probably pieces of actual animal bone; tongs may be related to the tools of the same name, like oversized pincers, used to grab or grip objects, and may refer specifically to fireplace tongs. Musical or rhythmic sound may have been produced by striking the tongs, which may have been made of metal. ² The Folio prints the stage direction here, " <i>Musicke Tongs, Rurall Musicke</i> ", suggesting that some such primitive music plays throughout the following dialogue.
42	Titan. Or, say sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.	
44	Bottom. Truly a <u>peck</u> of <u>provender</u> : I could <u>mounch</u>	44: peck = a unit of dry measure equivalent to a quarter of a bushel. ¹ provender = general term used for dry foods or fodder such as hay or oats. ¹ mounch = variant of "munch"; ¹ the Folio prints "munch".
46	your good dry oats. Methinks, I have a great desire to a <u>bottle of hay</u> : <u>good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow</u> .	46: bottle of hay = bundle of hay; ⁴ a common collocation. good hay...fellow = the sense is, "nothing beats good, sweet hay;" fellow = equal. ²
48	Titan. I have a <u>venturous</u> fairy that shall seek	= adventurous, bold. ¹
50	The squirrel's <u>hoard</u> , and fetch thee new nuts.	= possibly a disyllable.
52	Bottom. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you: let none of your people <u>stirt</u> me:	= wake abruptly, rouse; ^{1,2} stirt = stirt (or <i>stirte</i> , as it appears in the Quarto) was a variant of "start", and as such is perfectly acceptable. However, modern editions usually print " <i>stir</i> ", which

		is the word that appears in the Folio (" <i>stirre</i> ", actually).
54	I have an <u>exposition</u> of sleep come upon me.	= malapropism for "disposition". ⁵
	Titan. Sleep thou, and I will <u>wind</u> thee in my arms. –	= entwine, wrap. ¹
56	Fairies, be gone, and <u>be always away</u> .	= ie. "be off, in all directions." (Stevenson, p. 99); ⁵ the wording appears the same in both the Quarto and the Folio, but in modern editions is usually emended to " <i>be all ways away</i> ." An audience would hear "always" as "all ways".
58		
	[<i>Exeunt Fairies.</i>]	
60	So doth the <u>woodbine</u> the sweet <u>honeysuckle</u>	60-61: <i>So doth...entwist</i> = Titania seems to be suggesting that the <i>woodbine</i> wraps itself around the <i>honeysuckle</i> ; however, 16th century literature makes it clear that woodbine and honeysuckle were considered the same plant.
62	Gently entwist: the <u>female ivy</u> so <u>Enrings</u> the <u>barky fingers</u> of the elm.	61-62: <i>the female...elm</i> = the image of ivy climbing an elm tree appears occasionally in 16th and 17th century literature. <i>female ivy</i> = Stevenson suggests the <i>ivy</i> is <i>female</i> because it "clings to the elm" (p. 99). ⁵ <i>Enrings</i> = encircles. ¹ <i>barky fingers</i> = the elm's branches are imagined to be bark-covered fingers.
64	O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!	
	[<i>They sleep.</i>]	
66		
	<i>Enter Puck.</i>	
68		
	Ober. [<i>Advancing.</i>]	
70	Welcome, good <u>Robin</u> . See'st thou <u>this sweet sight</u> ?	70: <i>Robin</i> = we remember that Puck was also called Robin Goodfellow. <i>this sweet sight</i> = ie. Titania sleeping beside Bottom. = ie. Titania's foolish infatuation (for Bottom).
	<u>Her dotage</u> now I do begin to pity:	
72	For meeting <u>her of late</u> , behind the wood, Seeking sweet <u>favours</u> for <u>this hateful fool</u> ,	= ie. Titania. = recently. ¹ 73: <i>favours</i> = love-tokens, likely flowers as gifts; ^{4,5} the Folio here prints " <i>savours</i> ". <i>this hateful fool</i> = ie. Bottom; <i>hateful</i> = repulsive. ¹
74	I did upbraid her, and <u>fall out</u> with her;	= argue.
	For she his hairy temples then had <u>rounded</u>	= encircled. ¹
76	With <u>coronet</u> of fresh and fragrant flowers.	76: note the line's alliteration. <i>coronet</i> = garland. ¹
78	And that same dew, which <u>sometime</u> on the <u>buds</u> Was <u>wont</u> to swell, like round and <u>orient</u> pearls,	77-80: Oberon describes the <i>dew</i> as appearing on flowers, first like lustrous (<i>orient</i>) pearls, then like tears. <i>sometime</i> = formerly. <i>buds</i> = ie. of flowers. <i>wont</i> = accustomed. <i>orient pearls</i> = an extremely common 16th and 17th century collocation.
	Stood now within the pretty <u>flouriets' eyes</u> ,	79: <i>flouriets'</i> = appears to be a variant of "flowerets", ie. small flowers (of the coronet); we note that the OED does

80 Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.

82 When I had, at my pleasure, taunted her,
And she, in mild terms, begged my patience,

I then did ask of her her changeling child;

84 Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairy Land.
86 And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.

88 And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;

90 That he, awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,

92 And think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.

94 But first I will release the Fairy Queen. –
Be as thou wast wont to be;

96 See as thou wast wont to see:
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
98 Hath such force and blessèd power. –

not recognize this form, which appears nowhere else in contemporary English literature outside of this play.

eyes = the *eye* of a flower was the colorful spot in its center.¹

80: the flowers are imagined as crying for shame that they are being used to adorn the head of the monstrous Bottom.

= ie. "as much as I desired".

= gentle. = pleaded with Oberon to show forbearance.

83-84: *I then...gave me* = Oberon took advantage of his superior position at this moment to get Titania to finally give up to him the Indian child.

straight (line 84) = at once, straightaway.

= ie. she sent her fairy.

= ie. now that.

= ie. the loathsome spell; *imperfection* = fault.⁶

88-89: *take this...swain* = ie. remove Bottom's ass's head. Oberon's reference to the *scalp* of *the head* doesn't really make sense, as Bottom's entire head must be returned to its original state.

this Athenian swain = ie. Bottom; *swain* could mean both (1) yokel or rustic; and (2) a country lover; either way, Oberon's contempt for Bottom is clear.

= ie. others.

= return.⁴

92-93: the mortals will only remember the events of the night as having occurred in a dream.

accidents = unfortunate events.¹

fierce vexation = wild and extravagantly troublesome occurrences.^{1,2,5}

95-98: Oberon, returning to the meter of magic, lifts the enchantment from Titania's eyes.

wast wont = ie. was accustomed.

97-98: literally, Diane's flower can overpower Cupid's flower. The goddess *Diane* was famously a virgin; thus, metaphorically, the point here is that, by removing Titania's love for Bottom, chastity triumphs over desire.

An excellent argument has been made that *Dian's bud* is referring here to the specific tree, *agnus castus*, commonly called the "chaste tree." There is a Medieval poem, *The Flower and the Leaf* (once attributed to Chaucer) in which we find these lines:

*In her hand the branch she beareth this,
That agnus castus men call properly;
And all the ladies in her company,
Which ye see of that herb chaplets wear,
Be such as have kept alway maidenhead.*⁸

100 Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

102 **Titan.** My Oberon, what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamoured of an ass.

104 **Ober.** There lies your love.

106 **Titan.** How came these things to pass?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

108 **Ober.** Silence awhile. – Robin, take off this head: –
110 Titania, music call; and strike more dead
112 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

114 **Titan.** Music, ho, music: such as charmeth sleep!
[*Music, still.*]

116 **Puck.** Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's
eyes peep.

118 **Ober.** Sound, music! – Come, my queen, take hands
with me,
120 And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

122 Now, thou and I are new in amity,
And will tomorrow midnight, solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
124 And bless it to all fair prosperity.

126 There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

128 **Puck.** Fairy King, attend, and mark:
I do hear the morning lark.

A 1552 work, *A Book of the Property of Herbs*, says this of *agnus castus*: "The virtue of this herb is, it will keep men and women chaste."

There may also be a more literal interpretation, if we understand *Dian's bud* to indirectly refer to the juice of the flower (see lines Act II.i.217 and III.ii.496 above) Oberon is using to reverse the effects of the juice of the love-in-idleness (*Cupid's flower*).

= ie. "wake up".

= enflamed with love for.¹

104: Oberon indicates Bottom, still wearing the ass's head.

= face.

110-1: *and strike...sense* = ie. "let the senses of these *five* people (the four young lovers plus Bottom) in their sleep become more deeply oblivious than they are in ordinary sleep."

five = the Quarto and Folio both print *fine* here, but this seems to clearly be an error for *five*. This was in fact a common typographical occurrence: the letter *v* was usually represented with a *u*, and numerous examples can be found of the *u* having been flipped upside-down.

115: music plays continuously; the music may be soft and sustained.⁷

117: Puck addresses the sleeping Bottom.

peep = look, see.⁶

119-126: note the play's second rhyming octet.

120: like a mother rocking a cradle, the fairies *rock the ground* to keep the Athenians sleeping; compare the earlier scene in which the stamping fairies jolt the ground so as to knock over one of the tradesmen who has scattered at the appearance of the transformed Bottom: see above at Act III.ii.30.

= ie. on friendly terms again.

= ceremoniously.²

= festively.⁵

124: will bless Theseus' house so that everything in it will prosper and enjoy good fortune.

125-6: all three marriages – Lysander to Hermia; Demetrius to Helena; and Theseus to Hippolyta – will take place in great merriment (*jollity*).^{1,6}

= listen and make note of.²

129: the lark was frequently mentioned for its early morning song.

130	Ober. Then my queen, in <u>silence sad</u> ,	= solemn silence. ³
132	<u>Trip</u> we after [<u>the</u>] <u>night's shade</u> : We the globe can <u>compass</u> soon,	132-3: Oberon proposes that they circle (compass) the earth, always following the darkness (night's shade) ¹ as night itself retreats around the earth. Trip = move lightly, skip, or dance. ^{1,6} the = appears only in the Folio.
134	Swifter than the <u>wandering moon</u> .	= the moon and planets were frequently described as wandering because, unlike the stars that follow a fixed nightly path, the moon and planets trace a changing course across the sky.
136	Titan. Come my lord, and in our flight,	
138	Tell me how it came this night,	
140	That I sleeping here was found,	
142	With these mortals on the ground.	
	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	
	[<i>Wind horn.</i>]	143: a horn is sounded or blown off-stage. The Folio adds here the amusing extra stage direction, " <i>Sleepers lie still</i> ;" Stevenson speculates that this instruction was included to remind the actors playing the sleeping Athenians not to arise here: it is a later sounding of the horns (see lines 193-5 below) that will wake them, not this one!
144	<i>Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.</i>	Entering Characters: we have not seen Theseus , Duke of Athens, since the play's opening scene. Hippolyta , we remember, is the Amazon queen whom Theseus intends to marry; and Egeus is the aggrieved father of Hermia, whom he wants to marry Demetrius.
146	Thes. Go one of you, <u>find out</u> the <u>forester</u> :	= ie. find. = officer in charge of the forest.
148	For now our <u>observation</u> is performed.	148: the rites (observation) ² are concluded; the reference is to May Day celebrations (see lines 183-4 below).
150	And since we have the <u>vaward</u> of the day, My love shall hear the music of my hounds. –	= beginning, early part; ^{3,4} day is just breaking. 150: Theseus intends to go on a hunt with Hippolyta, and expects his betrothed to enjoy the baying of the hunting dogs.
	<u>Uncouple</u> , in the western valley, let them go: –	= an instruction to one of the attendants to unleash one or more pairs of hounds.
152	<u>Dispatch</u> I say, and find the forester. –	= make haste, hurry.
154	[<i>Exit an Attendant.</i>]	
156	We will, fair queen, <u>up</u> to the mountain's top,	= ie. go up.
158	And mark the musical confusiön Of hounds and echo in conjunctiön.	157-8: a clever and satisfying auditory image of the baying of the hounds and the echoes of their cries intersecting to create a discordant sound. 160-6 (below): Hippolyta establishes her own hunting credentials by recounting a hunt she attended with a couple of legendary heroes (Hercules and Cadmus), focusing especially on describing in glowing terms the baying of the hunting dogs, whose voices fill the entire landscape. We

160 **Hippol.** I was with Hercules and Cadmus, once,

When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear,

162 With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear

Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,

164 The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seeme[d] all one mutual cry. I never heard

So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

168 **Thes.** My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind:

So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung

170 With ears that sweep away the morning dew;

Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped, like Thessalian bulls:

note that this episode was invented by Shakespeare: no classical myth pairs Hercules and Cadmus in any such hunt.

160: **Hercules** = greatest hero of myth, most famous for completing the Twelve Labors, a series of almost impossible tasks, such as slaying the Nemean lion and cleaning the Augean stables.

Cadmus = legendary founder and king of the city of Thebes; Cadmus is best-known for slaying the Ismenian dragon, whose teeth he sowed in the ground; the teeth grew into a band of fully-grown soldiers, five of whom survived to help Cadmus found Thebes.

161: **Crete** = large island in the Aegean Sea.

bayed = pursued, drove, or brought to bay (ie. cornered).¹
= see the note at line 168 below.

163: **gallant chiding** = splendid barking or brawling noise.^{1,2}

163-5: **besides the...cry** = the cries of the hounds, together with their echoes arising from every part of the landscape, seemed to merge into a single all-encompassing sound.

besides the groves = ie. in addition to (the sounds coming from) the woods.

fountains = springs.

Seemed = the Quarto and Folio both print "*Seeme*".

mutual = common.^{2,6}

166: these oxymorons emphasize the simultaneous cacophony and beauty of the cries of the baying hounds.

168: the connection between Sparta and its hunting dogs seems to have first appeared in English literature in Golding's *Metamorphosis*: "*his hounds espied him where he was ... this latter was a hound of Crete, the other was of Spart*".

Then, Shakespeare might also have seen the quality of Spartan hounds praised in the 1581 translation of Seneca's ten plays; in *Hippolyta* (usually called *Phaedra* today), there is a reference to "*the Spartan dogs, eager of prey and of courageous kind*." Subsequent Elizabethan literature (post-publication of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that is) is littered with references to Spartan hunting dogs.

169-176 (below): Theseus goes on to delineate some of the desirable qualities possessed by his dogs.

169: **So flew'd** = with great *flews*, large and overhanging chaps or jowls.¹

so = could mean "equally" (OED, sense III.15).¹

sanded = sandy-coloured, referring to the dogs' coats.¹

169-170: **their heads...dew** = Theseus emphasizes the dogs' large drooping ears which drag along the ground as they track a scent.

171: **Crook-kneed** = with bent legs, bandy-legged.⁶

dew-lapped = "with folds of loose skin hanging about the neck." (Crystal, p. 124).²

Thessalian bulls = Thessaly, a province of northern

		Greece, was well-known for its bulls. ⁵
172	Slow in pursuit; but matched in mouth like bells,	172-3: match...under each = "the voices of the hounds were like a chime of bells, forming a descending scale of notes" (Stevenson, p. 100). ⁵ We note that the expression each under each is unique to Shakespeare and this play, not appearing elsewhere in 16th or 17th century literature.
	Each under each. A <u>cry</u> more <u>tuneable</u>	= "pack of hounds". ¹ = tuneful, melodious. ^{2,5}
174	Was never <u>hollowed to</u> , nor <u>cheered with horn</u> ,	174: hollowed to = accompanied by crying or shouting; hollowed was a common alternate form of the hunting term <i>holla'd: to holla</i> means "to call after the hounds". ¹ cheered with horn = urged forward or encouraged by use of the hunting horn. ¹
	In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.	
176	Judge when you hear. – But, <u>soft!</u> <u>what nymphs are these?</u>	176: soft = wait a moment. what nymphs are these = Theseus stumbles upon the sleeping Athenians; nymphs = specifically, the maidens, Helena and Hermia. ¹
178	Egeus. My lord, this is <u>my daughter</u> here asleep,	= ie. Hermia.
180	And this Lysander, this Demetrius is,	
180	This Helena, <u>old Nedar's Helena</u> .	= Nedar is the name of Helena's father; see Act I.i.133.
182	I <u>wonder of</u> their being here together.	= marvel at.
184	Thes. No doubt, <u>they rose up early</u> , to observe The rite of May: and hearing our intent, Came here, <u>in grace of our solemnity</u> .	183-5: Theseus assumes the young Athenians were up early to observe May Day festivities, and came to the forest knowing that the duke would also be there to celebrate. they rose up early = festivities to honour May Day usually began right after midnight. ⁹ in grace of our solemnity = "to do us honour us in these rites". ⁵
186	But speak, Egeus, is not this the day	
188	That Hermia should give answer of her choice?	186-7: today is the deadline for Hermia to decide whether to marry Demetrius (as her father wishes), enter a convent, or face death. This day must thus mark the appearance of the new moon, which Theseus stated back at Act I.i.195 was to be Hermia's day of decision; however, the new moon also signals the wedding-day for Theseus and Hippolyta (Act I.i.1-3). Whether four days have actually been presented in the play has been a source of discussion and disagreement for centuries!
	Egeus. It is, my lord.	
190	Thes. Go, <u>bid</u> the huntsmen wake them with their horns.	= ask.
192		= off-stage.
194	[Horns and shout <u>within</u> . Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia wake and <u>start up</u> .]	= here likely meaning "suddenly sit up", as Theseus will shortly ask them to stand. ¹
196	<u>Good morrow</u> , friends. <u>Saint Valentine</u> is past:	197: Good morrow = customary morning greeting.
198	Begin <u>these wood-birds</u> but to couple, now?	197-8: Saint Valentine...now = Theseus humorously addresses the young folks: he compares their pairing up to that of birds, which traditionally were said to select their

200 **Lysan.** Pardon, my lord.

202 **Thes.** I pray you all, stand up. –
I know you two are rival enemies.

204 How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
206 To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

208 **Lysan.** My lord, I shall reply amazèdly,
Half sleep, half waking: but, as yet, I swear,
210 I cannot truly say how I came here.
But as I think (for truly would I speak)
212 And now I do bethink me, so it is;

I came with Hermia, hither: our intent
214 Was to be gone from Athens, where we might
Without the peril of the Athenian law, –

216

218 **Egeus.** Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough.
I beg the law, the law, upon his head: –

They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
220 Thereby to have defeated you and me;
You of your wife, and me, of my consent:
222 Of my consent, that she should be your wife.

224 **Demet.** My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,

Of this their purpose hither, to this wood,
226 And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.

228 But my good lord, I wot not by what power,
(But by some power it is) my love to Hermia,
230 (Melted as the snow) seems to me now

As the remembrance of an idle gaud,
232 Which in my childhood I did dote upon:

And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
234 The object and the pleasure of mine eye,

mates on February 14, Saint Valentine's Day (**Saint Valentine**). Chaucer had written, "*For this was on seynt valentyngs day / Whan euery birde cometh te chese (choose) his make (mate).*"

these wood-birds = metaphorically, the young Athenians;
wood-birds = birds of the woods.

= please.

= ie. Demetrius and Lysander.

204-6: ie. "how is it that there is such a state of peace here, that you two, who share a mutual hatred, are now so free from suspicion (**jealousy**) that you can sleep near each other, unafraid of the other's hostility (**enmity**)?"⁵

= with confusion, bewilderedly.¹

= ie. "I want to speak the truth".

212: "and now I remember, – yes, that is how it was".

bethink me = recollect.^{1,6}

= to here.

215: free from the danger posed by Athenian law.¹

without = outside of, ie. beyond.¹

the Athenian = pronounced as *th' Athenian*.

216-7: Egeus, addressing Theseus, interrupts Lysander, having heard enough: Theseus, he feels, has sufficient evidence to punish Lysander (as well as his daughter Hermia) for going against the duke's orders.

220-2: **defeated...wife** = deprived (**defeated**)² Demetrius of a wife and Egeus of his right to approve Hermia's choice of husband.

= ie. Lysander and Hermia stealing away.⁵

226-7: Demetrius followed Hermia and Lysander into the woods, and Helena followed Demetrius; note the nice parallelism these lines: Demetrius followed **in fury**, Helena followed **in fancy** (ie. led by her imagined love for Demetrius).¹

= know.

= metaphorically, "now gone".

231-2: Demetrius compares his previous love for Hermia to the infatuation he might have had for a trifling ornament (**idle gaud**)⁵ when he was a child – insignificant and trivial.

dote upon = love excessively.

= fidelity.² = essence, very substance.⁶

236 Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia:

= before.

237-9 (below): Demetrius explains the seemingly irrational, repeated changes in his affections through a metaphor: like a person who, when sick, is disgusted by the foods he normally eats, but then regains his proper appetite when he recovers, Demetrius entered a "sick" state the moment he first set eyes on Hermia, and unnaturally fell in love with her; but he is now "healthy", and, properly, once again loves Helena.

= ie. like one who is sick.⁹ = metaphorically, Helena.
= having returned.⁵ = true preference or appetite.
= his normal food preferences, ie. Helena.

238 But, like a sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
240 Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

242: it is good fortune that the young Athenians have come together like this.

242 **Thes.** Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.

243: a common device in Elizabethan drama: rather than force the audience to listen to a rehash of prior events, the authority figure postpones the narration for a later time.

discourse = story, narration.

anon = soon, shortly.

Of this discourse, we more will hear anon. –

244: Theseus will override (**overbear**) Egeus' desire that Hermia marry Demetrius.¹

244 Egeus, I will overbear your will:

= presently. = ie. Theseus and Hippolyta.
= united;¹ Theseus plans a triple-marriage!
= because. = somewhat spent.^{1,5}
= intended.¹
= three men and three women, ie. three couples.
= ceremony.⁵

246 For in the temple, by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
248 Our purposed hunting shall be set aside. –
Away, with us, to Athens! three and three,
250 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity. –
Come, Hippolyta.

252 [Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and train.]
254

255ff (below): the lovers are disoriented, their perception distorted and vision blurred, as they try to make sense of the night's events.

= ie. the details of what exactly has happened. = ie. unclear.
= ie. that seem like or appear to be.

= divided or separated, hence "unfocused", eyes.²

256 **Demet.** These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

258 **Herm.** Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

260 **Helena.** So methinks:
262 And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

263: Helena is still unsure of where she stands: like a **jewel** she has found, Demetrius now belongs to her, but yet another may still have a claim to him.⁵

264 **Demet.** Are you sure
266 That we are awake? It seems to me

265-6: **Are you...awake** = omitted from the Folio.

268	That yet we sleep, we dream. <u>Do not you think</u> The Duke was here, and <u>bid us</u> follow him?	= Demetrius seeks affirmation of what just happened. = ie. "asked us to".
270	Herm. Yea, and my father.	
272	Helena. And Hippolyta.	
274	Lysan. And he did bid us follow to the temple.	
276	Demet. Why then, we are awake: let 's follow him, And <u>by the way</u> let us recount our dreams.	= ie. along the way.
278	[<i>Exeunt Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.</i>]	
280	Bottom. [<i>Awaking.</i>]	
282	When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my <u>next</u> is, "Most fair Pyramus." – <u>Hey ho!</u> Peter	281: as he awakens, Bottom immediately resumes rehearsal of the play, as though the intervening supernatural events of the night had never occurred. 283: next = ie. next cue. Hey ho! = more commonly written as "heigh-ho". ¹ An exclamation usually uttered to express weariness or a sigh, but the sense here is akin to a cry of "yoo-hoo", ie. "where are you?"
284	Quince? Flute, the bellows-mender? Snout, the tinker? Starveling? <u>Gods my life!</u> <u>stolen hence</u> , and	285: Gods my life = ie. "God save my life", an exclamation. stolen hence = literally, "they have been taken from here", ie. "they are gone!"
286	left me asleep? I have had a most <u>rare vision</u> . I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it	286: rare = striking, unusual. ² vision = sight, with perhaps a sense of the supernatural. ^{1,2} 287: past the wit... it was = beyond the ability of anyone to describe it.
288	was. Man is but an ass, if he <u>go about [to]</u> expound this dream. Methought I was – there is no man can tell	288-9: man is...dream = only a fool would try to explain or interpret this dream. go about to = make an attempt or effort to; ⁵ to is omitted in the Quarto, but present in the Folio.
290	what. Methought I was, – and methought I had, – but man is but <u>a patched fool</u> , if he will <u>offer</u> to say	291: a patched fool = a fool wearing the traditional multi- coloured (patched) coat or costume of a jester; ^{1,5} this is the Folio's reading: the Quarto prints " <i>patcht a fool</i> ". offer = make an attempt. ¹
292	what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not	292-5: The eye...dream was = Bottom humorously con- fuses the senses and the corresponding organs that exper- ience them. The lines represent Bottom's adopting and thoroughly muddling 1 Corinthians 2:9: " <i>The things which eye hath not seene, neither eare hath heard, neither came into mans heart, are, which God hath prepared for them that loue him.</i> " (Geneva Bible).
294	able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to	
296	report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because <u>it hath no bottom</u> : and	295-6: I will...dream = Quince was the author of the play the tradesmen will perform for the court. = that is, the dream is so "deep" as to be incomprehensible.
298	I will sing it in the latter end of <u>a play</u> , before the duke. <u>Peradventure</u> , to make it the more <u>gracious</u> ,	298-300: Bottom's first idea is to sing the ballad of his dream near the conclusion of the play to be presented by the mechanicals for Theseus; but on further thought, he
300	I shall sing it <u>at her death</u> .	

decides it would be more charming or acceptable (*gracious*)^{2,5} to perform it during Thisbe's death scene!

There are two difficulties in interpreting lines 298-300:

(1) Bottom says he will sing the ballad in *a play*, not *the play*; does he have a different play in mind? Some early commentators have wondered if *a play* should read "*our play*".

(2) as Stevenson notes, *at her death* is awkward, since Thisbe has not been mentioned since Act III, leaving the pronoun without a clear antecedent. Some earlier editors have suggested emending "*at her death*" to "*after death*", meaning Bottom will rise from his own death and sing his ballad.⁹

Peradventure = perhaps.¹

The Scene: the mechanicals are gathering in anticipation of their formal performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* before the duke – but Bottom, the leading man, is missing!

= ie. gone to Bottom's house to fetch him.

4-19 (below): the Quarto assigns the speech at line 4 to Flute, and those at lines 7, 13, and 19 to Thisbe – who was played by Flute. We follow the assignments of the Folio, as is universally done.

= without doubt; see the note at Act III.ii.372 above.

= transformed;² though Bourus suggests Starveling might instead mean, "carried away (by the fairies)" (p. 1123).⁷

7: *marred* = spoiled, ruined.⁶

7-8: *it goes not forward* = the play cannot be performed.

= play (the part of).^{2,5}

= sharpness, brain, intelligence.

= artisan, skilled manual labourer.¹

= appearance;⁶ though *person* could also refer to a part in a play.¹

= a malapropism; see the next lines, 19-20.

20: *God bless us* = uttered to protect the speaker from any harm or supernatural influence; here, stated to ward off any malevolent effects that might occur as a consequence of saying something wicked (*a thing of naught*).^{1,5}

26-27: *If our sport...men* = if the play (*sport*)¹ were

302

[Exit Bottom.]

ACT IV, SCENE II.

Athens, Quince's house.

The afternoon of the same day.

Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

1 **Quin.** Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come
2 home yet?

4 **Starv.** He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is
transported.

6
7 **Flute.** If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes
8 not forward, doth it?

10 **Quin.** It is not possible. You have not a man, in all
Athens, able to discharge Pyramus, but he.

12
13 **Flute.** No, he hath simply the best wit of any
14 handicraft man in Athens.

16 **Quin.** Yea, and the best person too, and he is a very
paramour for a sweet voice.

18
19 **Flute.** You must say "paragon": a paramour is
20 (God bless us) a thing of naught.

22 *Enter Snug.*

24 **Snug.** Masters, the duke is coming from the temple,
and there is two or three lords and ladies more
26 married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all

	been <u>made men</u> .	actually to be performed (which now seems uncertain, with the leading man absent), the men's fortunes would be made. Snug, imagining great rewards from the duke, overestimates the value and importance of the play. ⁵ made men = men with assured success in life. ¹
28		
30	Flute. O sweet <u>bully</u> Bottom! Thus hath he lost <u>sixpence a day</u> during his life; he could not have	29-34 (below): Flute rues that Bottom will not only miss out on a day's wages to be paid by the duke for his performance of Pyramus, but that he might now be losing a lifelong daily pension, granted as a reward for his work! = term of endearment. ¹ = a day's wages for a labourer, imagined by Flute to be paid to Bottom as a pension from the duke; a 1599 text alludes to " <i>the poore labouring man, that worketh for a groate or sixe pence a day</i> ".
	<u>scaped</u> sixpence a day. <u>And</u> the duke had not given	31: scaped = ie. avoided getting paid, ie. Bottom would have inevitably collected this amount. ⁶ and = if.
32	him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be	
34	hanged. He would have deserved it: sixpence a day, <u>in</u> Pyramus, or nothing.	= ie. for playing.
36	<i>Enter Bottom.</i>	
38	Bottom. Where are these lads? where are these <u>hearts</u> ?	= good fellows. ⁴
40		
42	Quin. Bottom! O most <u>courageous</u> day! O most <u>happy</u> hour!	= a malapropism, but what word Quince intended here is unknowable. ⁹ = fortunate.
44	Bottom. Masters, I am to <u>discourse</u> wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I	= relate, recount. ²
46	will tell you every thing <u>right</u> as it fell out.	= exactly as it happened. ⁵ Note how Bottom comically contradicts himself.
48	Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.	
50	Bottom. Not a word <u>of</u> me. All that I will tell you is, that the Duke hath <u>dined</u> . Get your <u>apparel</u> together,	= from. = eaten. = ie. costumes.
52	<u>good strings to your beards</u> , new <u>ribands</u> to your	52: good strings...beards = ie. the strings were used to tie on prop beards. ribands = ie. ribbons, a common variant.
54	<u>pumps</u> , meet <u>presently</u> at the palace, every man look o'er his part. For <u>the short and the long is</u> , our play is	= heelless or low-heeled shoes. ¹ = promptly, immediately. ¹ = in sum. ¹
	<u>preferred</u> . In any case <u>let Thisbe have clean linen</u> ;	55: preferred = "presented for acceptance". ¹ As we will see in the early part of Act V, Theseus's Master of the Revels, Philostrate, has reviewed and approved a list of entertainments for the duke to choose from; hence, Ridley's paraphrase of preferred as "on the short list" captures the sense perfectly. ³ let Thisbe...linen = Bottom is concerned for the actors' hygiene; linen = undergarments. ¹
56	and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails: for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most	
58	dear actors, eat no onions, nor garlic: for we are to	

60	<u>utter sweet breath:</u> and I do not doubt but to hear	= speak their lines with pleasant breath.
62	them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words. Away, go, away!	
	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	
	END OF ACT IV.	

ACT V.

SCENE I.

*Athens: the palace of Theseus.
The evening of the same day.*

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate,
Lords, and Attendants.*

1 **Hippol.** 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers
2 speak of.

4 **Thes.** More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

6 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

8 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
10 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold:

That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,

12 See Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy, rolling,

The Scene: the play's story-lines are complete: the Fairy King and Queen have made up, and all the Athenian couples, including Theseus and Hippolyta, are married. All that remains is the performance of the craftsmen's play. The result in one of the funniest scenes in all of Shakespeare.

Entering Characters: **Philostrate** is the official in charge of Theseus' entertainment.

= ie. "that which", referring to the story the young folks recounted of the night's events

3-23 (below): in this lengthy speech, Theseus expresses skepticism about the lovers' story, suggesting that love can distort how people see and understand what really happens. Note how Theseus more than once compares lovers to those who are insane.

= ie. can never.⁵

4: **antique fables** = fantastic fictional tales;^{1,4} **antique** was an alternate form of *antic*. The Folio prints "*anticke*".
fairy toys = illusory and trifling stories.^{1,4}

= tumultuous or excited minds, ie. overactive imaginations.^{1,5}

6: **shaping fantasies** = "imagination that create new things" (Stevenson, p. 102).⁵

6-7: **that apprehend...comprehends** = whose minds can perceive or conceive (**apprehend**) things that rational thought cannot truly understand (**comprehend**).^{1,4,5}

9: ie. are composed (**compact**)^{2,4} entirely of imagination.

10-11: **One sees...madman** = the point is, a lunatic's perception is exaggerated and unreal.

= equally mentally ill.^{1,5}

12: sees the apex of beauty in the dark complexion of an Egyptian, ie. a gypsy.^{3,4}

Helen's beauty = **Helen** is Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world.

brow of Egypt = a good example of a *synecdoche*, a figure of speech by which a part (here, **brow**) is used to represent the whole (face or person).

13-18 (below): the poet works in a sort of inspired madness and fury to give shape and form, and a name and place, to imagined ideas, turning the unreal into the real.

There is humour here in the idea of Shakespeare mocking those who practice his own profession!

= state of delirium.¹ = **rolling** eyes were a sign of frenzy.

14	Doth glance from Heaven to earth, from earth to Heaven.	14: the poet's eyes dart restlessly everywhere.
16	And as imagination <u>bodies forth</u> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen	15-17: And as...shapes : and in his mind's eye, the poet first gives outline or figure to (bodies forth) ¹ things that do not exist (that is, he visualizes them), then, by writing, converts them to concrete forms.
18	Turns them to shapes, and gives to <u>airy nothing</u> A <u>local habitation</u> , and a name.	17-18: and gives...a name = and gives the insubstantial and non-existent a place to exist (local habitation) and a name; ¹ local = localized, relating to a location. ^{1,2} As an example, Stevenson observes that Shakespeare – a poet – gave the imaginary character Bottom a name and a place to live, situating him in Athens (p. 103). ⁵
20	Such <u>tricks</u> hath strong imaginatiön, That if it would but <u>apprehend</u> some joy, It <u>comprehends</u> some <u>bringer</u> of that joy;	19: "the imagination has such clever contrivances (tricks)". ¹ 20-21: that if one's mind merely imagines (apprehends) something pleasurable, then it inevitably conjures up or incorporates (comprehends) a mental image of a person or thing (the bringer) that can provide that pleasure. ^{1,2,5} This is the second time in the same speech that Theseus has contrasted <i>apprehension</i> with <i>comprehension</i> .
22	Or in the night, imagining some <u>fear</u> , How easy is a bush <u>supposed</u> a bear!	22-23: ie. similarly, fear is as capable as joy of causing the mind to imagine things. ⁵ supposed = ie. perceived or thought to be.
24		25-28 (below): Hippolyta points out that the young lovers' individual accounts of the events of the night were in such agreement, that, considered together, they lend credibility to the stories' truth.
26	Hippol. But, all the story of the night <u>told over</u> , And all their minds <u>transfigured</u> so together,	= ie. told and retold (by each of the participants). ¹ 26: the sense is, all of their minds experienced the alterations of reality the same way; transfigured = changed, transformed. ¹
28	More witnesseth than <u>fancy's images</u> , And <u>grows to</u> something of great <u>constancy</u> :	27: provides evidence of being more than creations of the imagination (fancy's images). ^{3,4} 28: ie. the stories, considered together, are very consistent. grows to = ie. becomes. constancy = coherency, consistency. ^{3,4}
30	But <u>howsoever</u> , <u>strange</u> and <u>admirable</u> .	29: howsoever = nevertheless. ³ strange = remarkable, singular. ² admirable = wonderful, to be wondered at. ^{1,3,5}
32	Thes. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.	
34	<i>Enter Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.</i>	
36	Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love Accompany your hearts!	
38	Lysan. More than to us <u>Wait in</u> your royal walks, your <u>board</u> , your <u>bed</u> !	38-39: Lysander wishes a joy to the royal couple even greater than that wished by Theseus upon the young lovers. Wait in = attend. board = meals, feasting. ^{2,5}

40		<i>bed</i> = where the conjugal rights of marriage are enjoyed. ¹
	Thes. Come now: what <u>masques</u> , what dances shall we have,	41-46 (below): impatient for the night to arrive – he is presumably eager to consummate his marriage – Theseus asks what entertainments will be presented to help pass the time.
42	To <u>wear away this long age</u> of three hours,	= entertainments typically comprised of allegorical characters and dancing.
	Between our <u>after-supper</u> and bed-time?	= while away the long period of time. ¹
44	Where is our usual <u>manager of mirth</u> ?	<i>wear away</i> = precursor to <i>while away</i> , which did not appear until the early 17th century.
46	What <u>revels</u> are <u>in hand</u> ? Is there no play,	= the time after supper. ¹
48	To ease the anguish of a torturing hour? Call Philostrate.	= alliteratively referring to Philostrate, the Master of the Revels.
	Philo. Here, mighty Theseus.	= entertainments. = here, present. ²
50	Thes. Say, what <u>abridgement</u> have you for this evening?	47: in the Folio, Theseus calls Egeus rather than Philostrate; then, all the ensuing speeches delivered in this scene by Philostrate were assigned to Egeus.
52	What masque, what music? How shall we beguile The <u>lazy time</u> , if not with some <u>delight</u> ?	= pastime, entertainment. ¹
		52-53: <i>beguile...time</i> = "distract ourselves so that we no longer notice how slowly time is moving".
54		<i>lazy time</i> = time seems sluggish because it passes so slowly.
	Philo. <u>There</u> is a <u>brief</u> , how many <u>sports</u> <u>are ripe</u> .	<i>delight</i> = source of pleasure. ¹
56	Make choice, of which your highness will see first.	55: "here (<i>There</i>) is a list (<i>brief</i>) of the various entertainments (<i>sports</i>) that have been prepared, or are ready to be presented (<i>are ripe</i>)." ^{1,2,5}
58	[<i>Giving a paper.</i>]	Instead of <i>ripe</i> , the Folio prints " <i>rife</i> ", which can mean "ready", so it too is acceptable.
		58: ie. Philostrate hands the list to Theseus; stage direction not in Quarto or Folio.
60	Thes. [<i>Reads.</i>] <u>The battle with the Centaurs</u> , to be sung,	60ff (below): Theseus rejects several of the offerings before settling on the presentation of the craftsmen.
62	By <u>an Athenian eunuch</u> to the harp? –	In the Folio, it is Lysander who reads aloud the titles of the short entertainments, to which Theseus only responds, yay or nay.
64	We'll none of that. That have I told my love, In glory of <u>my kinsman Hercules</u> .	61-64: <i>The battle with the Centaurs</i> = the song was probably about the well-known mythological episode in which the king of the Lapiths invited the <i>Centaurs</i> (the famous race of hybrid creatures featuring human upper and equine lower halves) to his own wedding; the Centaurs got drunk at the wedding feast, and their leader Eurytus attempted to abduct the bride. A great battle ensued between the Centaurs and the humans, during which Theseus killed Eurytus and saved the bride.
		However, there was another unrelated story in which

		<p>Hercules, on his way to find and kill the Erymanthian boar (his fourth labour), met some Centaurs. The Centaurs got drunk on some wine in their possession, and became so aggressive and violent that Hercules was forced to fight them off.</p> <p>It is possible that Theseus knows the song would be about the first story, but is too modest to want to listen to a recounting of his own heroics; instead, he pretends to expect the song to be about the second story, which he then states needs no repeating, since he has already told this story to Hippolyta.</p> <p>an Athenian eunuch = Elizabethan and Jacobian literature is well populated with eunuchs being trotted out to sing for the entertainment of others; their high-pitched voices were presumably highly-prized.</p> <p>my kinsman Hercules = any familial relationship between the two heroes would have been very distant.</p>
66	<p>[Reads.] <i>The riot of the <u>tipsy Bacchanals</u>, Tearing <u>the Thracian singer</u> in their rage? –</i></p>	<p>66-67: Dionysus, also called Bacchus, was the god of wine. His female followers, variously called Maenads, Bacchantes, or (as here) Bacchanals, honoured him by engaging in frenzied dances and rites while seemingly possessed by the god. According to one story, Orpheus (the Thracian singer), the famous musician who could move the trees and stones, encountered the Maenads during one of their celebrations, and they tore him apart in their drunken (tipsy) frenzy.</p>
68	<p>That is an old <u>device</u>: and it was played, When I from Thebes came last a <u>conqueror</u>.</p>	<p>68-69: Theseus has previously seen this story presented in a play.</p> <p>device = play or masque, theatrical show.¹</p> <p>Line 69: Theseus alludes to the aftermath of the famous assault on the city of Thebes by seven heroes, six of whom were killed in battle; when the Thebans rejected an appeal to bury the dead, Theseus led an Athenian army to Thebes to recover the bodies. In one tradition, Theseus defeated the Thebans in battle and forced them to give up the bodies of the fallen warriors; hence, Theseus refers to himself as conqueror.</p>
70	<p>[Reads.]</p>	
72	<p><i>The <u>thrice three Muses</u>, mourning for the death Of <u>Learning</u>, late deceased in <u>beggary</u>? –</i></p>	<p>71-72: the third entertainment option is allegorical in nature: the nine (thrice three) Muses (sister deities who were said to be the protectresses of the arts) metaphorically mourn the end of personified Learning, who died in poverty (beggary). The conceit highlights the neglect and undervaluing of study and knowledge.</p> <p>It has been surmised that these lines refer either to</p> <p>(1) Edmund Spenser's poem <i>The Teares of the Muses</i> (1591), in which the nine Muses lament the neglect of learning and the arts, or</p> <p>(2) Shakespeare's fellow author and playwright Robert Greene, who had died in extreme poverty in 1592.</p>
74	<p>That is some satire, <u>keen</u> and <u>critical</u>, Not <u>sorting with</u> a nuptial ceremony.</p> <p>[Reads.]</p>	<p>73-74: Theseus rejects this entertainment, because its biting (keen)² satire and censorious (critical)⁵ tone are not appropriate or suitable for (sorting with)^{1,4} a wedding celebration.</p> <p>76-80 (below): Theseus is struck by the contradictions and utter lack of sophistication in the description, presumably</p>

		written by Peter Quince, of the tradesmen's play.
76	<i>A <u>tedious</u> brief scene of young Pyramus</i>	= long, ¹ with perhaps an additional sense of wearying and tiresome; but it is clear in this context that tedious is meant to be a direct contradiction to brief , as shown by Theseus' follow-up questions in line 78; Shakespeare later used tedious in a similar sense in <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> ("that is the brief and the tedious of it") and <i>Richard III</i> ("it is better to be brief than tedious").
78	<i>And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth? – Merry, and tragical? Tedious, and brief? That is hot ice, and <u>wondrous strange snow</u>.</i>	= there is clearly a problem here; wondrous is always a two-syllable word in Shakespeare, so a syllable is missing from the line; and the supposed antithesis of strange snow is not convincing. Numerous emendations have been proposed by earlier editors, the most common being, " <i>wondrous strange black snow</i> ."
80	How shall we find the concord of this discord?	80: ie. "how can we make these contradictory words agree?" ⁵
82	Philo. A play there is, my lord, <u>some ten words long</u> ; Which is as brief as I have known a play: 84 But, by ten words, my lord, it is too long: Which makes it <u>tedious</u> . For in all the play, 86 There is not one word apt, one player <u>fitted</u> . And tragical, my noble lord, it is; 88 For Pyramus, therein, doth kill himself. Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess, 90 Made mine eyes water: but more merry tears The <u>passion</u> of loud laughter never shed. 92 Thes. <u>What</u> are they, that do play it? 94 Philo. <u>Hard-handed</u> men, that work in Athens here, 96 <u>Which</u> never laboured in their minds till now: And now have <u>toiled</u> their <u>unbreathed</u> <u>memories</u> ,	82ff (below): unlike Theseus, who is bemused by the title and description of the tradesmen's play, Philostrate, who has seen the men rehearse (see line 89 below) (this would be part of his job – to review any of the court's entertainment beforehand, just as Queen Elizabeth's Master of the Revels reviewed and approved plays before they could be performed publicly), pulls no punches expressing his disdain for their version of <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i> . = deliberate understatement by Philostrate, to exaggerate the brevity of the play. = Philostrate means both (1) long, and (2) wearisome. 86: the sense is, none of the lines is skillfully written, and none of the tradesmen makes a suitable (fitted) ⁵ actor. 87-90: And tragical...water = in a technical sense, the play is a tragedy, since the leading man dies, but Philostrate's ensuing tears were those of laughter, not sadness. 90-91: but more...shed = the tears of laughter he shed had never been exceeded before, ie. were unlike any he had previously experienced; Philostrate emphasizes how hilarious he found the play. passion = emotion. ⁵ = who. = having hard or rough hands, from engaging in manual labour. ¹ = who. 97: and are now exhausting or straining their unpracticed (unbreathed) ^{1,4} mental faculties, ie. these men are not used to using their brains, though memories could also have a secondary sense relating to memorizing lines. ⁵

98 With this same play, against your nuptial.

100 **Thes.** And we will hear it.

102 **Philo.** No, my noble lord,
It is not for you: I have heard it over,

104 And it is nothing, nothing in the world;

Unless you can find sport in their intents
106 Extremely stretched, and conned with cruel pain,
108 To do you service.

Thes. I will hear that play.
110 For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.

112 Go bring them in, and take your places, ladies.

114 [Exit Philostrate.]

116 **Hippol.** I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,
And duery, in his service, perishing.

118

Thes. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

120 **Hippol.** He says they can do nothing in this kind.

toiled = fatigued with work.²

= in anticipation of.

= ie. "I"; Theseus uses the royal "we".

= ie. not suitable.⁵ = ie. heard the entire play.

heard it over = Shakespeare seems to have coined an expression analogous to still-common expressions such as "read it over" and "look it over".

= worthless, of no value. = suggests, "at all".

is nothing in the world = an expression familiar from Bible translations of 1 Corinthians 8:4, such as the Geneva Bible: "*an idol is nothing in the world.*"

105-7: **sport** = amusement.

intents = in lines 105-7, Shakespeare employs an interesting bit of parallel structure: **intent**s has a double sense, because the craftsmen

(1) find their **intent**s, meaning "efforts" or "endeavours", stretched to the limit (**Extremely stretched**), especially as they work under great hardship (**cruel pain**) to memorize (**conned** = memorized) their parts (line 106);^{1,5} and

(2) **intend** to honour and serve Theseus (line 107).^{3,4}

110-1: for nothing (**never anything**) can be inappropriate or out of order (**amiss**) when it is offered (**tender** = offer) in all humility (**simpleness**) and out of loyalty (**duty**); Theseus is pleased to accept and approve the men's performance because of the sincerity and goodwill in their hearts, rather than choosing to take offense at their coarseness or lack of polish.

116-7: Hippolyta dislikes seeing these lowly people (**wretchedness**)² so overburdened (**o'ercharged**),¹ nor does she wish to watch them fail (**perishing** = coming to nothing)⁶ in their painful efforts to serve Theseus by performing the play.

duery = ie. duty, an occasionally-used variant; **duery**, which is the word appearing in the Quarto, is not listed in the OED as a variant of **duty**; and, because the Folio prints **duty** here, it has always been assumed that the Quarto's **duery** was a typesetter's error.

However, there are numerous examples of **duery** being used for **duty** in the 16th and 17th centuries: (1) in the influential *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566), we find a reference to "*the bounden duery that i*" have "*to my Lorde the duke;*" and (2) from John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1583), we find an admonition to "*the common people: whose duery is, to beare their good mindes &; true obedience, to the aforesayd ministers of god.*"

121: ie. Philostrate said the men could not competently perform this type of play.

122	Thes. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.	123: with a bit of <i>noblesse oblige</i> that does him credit, Theseus suggests he and Hippolyta ought to be gracious and grateful to the men for trying, no matter how inept the performance may be.
124	Our <u>sport</u> shall be to <u>take what they mistake</u> :	124: "our entertainment (<i>sport</i>) shall exist in their blunders, which we will accept graciously;" Theseus wants Hippolyta to appreciate the goodwill and sincerity in which the men perform. ⁵
126	And what <u>poor duty</u> cannot do, noble Respect takes it in <u>might</u> , not <u>merit</u> .	125-6: "And though they are unable to provide the level of performance (<i>poor duty</i>) to which we are accustomed, our generous consideration (<i>noble Respect</i>) accepts it according to the performers' abilities (<i>might</i>), rather than by its actual worth (<i>merit</i>)." ^{2,5,6}
	Where I have come, great <u>clerks</u> have purposed	127-137 (below): in this lengthy digression, Theseus explains how he has seen even the most highly learned and eloquent speakers become tongue-tied when addressing him, yet he always generously accepts the speeches according to the spirit and goodwill in which they are given, no matter how ineptly delivered.
128	To greet me with <u>premeditated welcomes</u> ;	127: "in places I have visited, great scholars (<i>clerks</i>) have intended". ^{4,5} = carefully prepared speeches of welcome. ⁵
130	<u>Where</u> I have seen them shiver and look pale, Make periods in the midst of sentences,	= in which. ⁵ 130: ie. pause right in the middle of sentences, as if they were punctuated with periods, or full-stops, = cut short or stammer (<i>Throttle</i>) their rehearsed speeches. ¹
132	<u>Throttle their practised accent</u> in their fears, And in conclusion <u>dumbly</u> have broke off, Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,	132-3: <i>And in...welcome</i> = and in the end, they stopped talking entirely (hence, <i>dumbly</i>), never having given Theseus the welcome they had intended.
134	Out of this silence, yet, I <u>picked</u> a welcome:	= discerned. ¹
136	And in the <u>modesty</u> of <u>fearful</u> duty, I read as much as from the <u>rattling</u> tongue Of <u>saucy</u> and <u>audacious</u> eloquence.	135-7: Theseus sees the same honour bestowed on him from a humble and timid (<i>fearful</i>) speech as from a presumptuous (<i>saucy</i>) ² and bold and fearless (<i>audacious</i>) ² one. <i>modesty</i> = shyness, or absence of arrogance. ^{3,6} <i>rattling</i> = lively, voluble. ¹
138	<u>Love</u> , therefore, and <u>tongue-tied simplicity</u> , <u>In least</u> speak most, to my <u>capacity</u> .	138-9: the combination of affection (<i>Love</i>) and silent sincerity (<i>tongue-tied simplicity</i>) expresses the most while saying the least (<i>In least</i>), to Theseus' understanding or in his opinion (<i>capacity</i>). ^{1,5,6}
140		
142	<i>Re-enter Philostrate.</i>	
144	Philo. So please your Grace, the Prologue is <u>addressed</u> .	= ready to begin. ^{4,5}
146	Thes. Let him approach.	
148	[<i>Flourish of trumpets.</i>]	147: the play is about to begin! This stage direction appears only in the Folio.

150	<i>Enter Quince for the Prologue.</i>	149: Peter Quince takes the role of the Prologue; in Elizabethan plays, the part identified as the Prologue was typically performed by a single actor on-stage.
152	<i>Prol.</i> If we offend, it is with our <u>good will</u> . That you should think, we come not to offend,	<p>151-160 (below): the Prologue is disastrously delivered by Quince: he pauses and stops where he should not, and rushes through periods and commas when he should. The hilarious result is that he ends up either muddling his message or saying the complete opposite of what he intends.</p> <p>In attempting to interpret or make sense of Quince's speech, we must keep in mind that he has no intention to deliver his lines as he does; the issue, then, is how might his audience understand his lines. We offer some paraphrases below.</p> <p>You may enjoy trying to work out what the "correct" punctuation <i>should</i> be. One possible such version of the "correct" speech is presented in an appendix at the end of this play.</p> <p>Note the Prologue's rhyming scheme: <i>abab</i> for the first eight lines, then concluding with a rhyming couplet; In this sense, it functions as sort of a mini-sonnet, since a classical Shakespearean sonnet is comprised of three quatrains following the <i>abab</i> pattern, before concluding with a rhyming couplet.</p> <p>151: "If we offend you, it is with enthusiasm or willingness (<i>good will</i>)^{1,6} that we do so."</p> <p>152-3: <i>That you...good will</i>: "you should believe that we came here but to offend you willingly."</p> <p>153-4: <i>To shew...end</i> = the sense may be taken to be, "to present our average or limited, or absence of, abilities (<i>simple skill</i>)^{1,6} is our true purpose (<i>end</i>)."¹ <i>shew</i> = common alternate form of <i>show</i>. <i>beginning of our end</i> = might be interpreted to mean "the Prologue represents the start of the conclusion of the show"; <i>end</i> might also suggest "demise" or "downfall".</p> <p>= with scorn.</p> <p>156-7: <i>We do...intent is</i> = the audience might take this to mean something like, "we do not come here intending (<i>mind</i>)² to please (<i>content</i>) you, this is our true intent", but the sentence stalls, not really making much sense.</p> <p>157-8: <i>All for...here</i> = "we are not here to delight you." 158-9: <i>That you...at hand</i> = "so that you shall regret (<i>repent</i>) being here, the actors are close by (ie. ready to perform)."</p> <p>159-160: <i>and, by...know</i> = and through their performance, you will learn all that you are likely to learn."</p> <p>151-160 (above): Shakespeare may have gotten the idea for the mispunctuated speech from <i>Ralph Roister Doister</i>, Nicholas Udall's well-known comic play of a few decades earlier.</p> <p>Here is the beginning of a certain love letter from Udall's</p>
154	But with good will. To <u>shew</u> our <u>simple skill</u> , That is the true <u>beginning of our end</u> .	
156	Consider then, we come but <u>in despite</u> . We do not come, as <u>mind</u> ing to <u>content</u> you,	
158	Our true intent is. All for your delight, We are not here. That you should here <u>repent</u> you,	
160	The actors are at hand: and, by their show, You shall know all, that you are like to know.	

play, as written:

*Sweet mistress, whereas I love you; nothing at all
Regarding your riches and substance – chief of all
For your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit
I commend me unto you; never a whit
Sorry to hear report of your good welfare...*

Here is how the letter was actually read aloud to its intended receiver:

*Sweet mistress, where as I love you nothing at all –
Regarding your substance and riches chief of all;
For your personage, beauty, demeanour and wit,
I commend me unto you never a whit.
Sorry to hear report of your good welfare.*

162: Theseus has punned on the common expression **stand upon points**, whose regular meaning is "act scrupulously" or "insist pedantically on following details"; at the same time, **points** also refers to punctuation marks – specifically full stops, such as periods, question marks and exclamation points – so that Theseus' secondary sense is "concern himself with following the punctuation correctly."¹

164-5: **He hath...stop**: the wordplay continues: **rid** means both (1) ridden, as on a horse; and (2) managed or controlled; the double-sense applies to the Prologue: like a rider who cannot control an untamed and spirited young horse, Quince has failed to manage, or deliver, his prologue correctly.

The simile concludes with a pun on **stop** (line 165): like the rider who doesn't know how to get the horse to pull up, Quince doesn't understand how to use the period (**stop**) correctly.

rough colt = unruly or improperly broken-in young horse.¹

= maxim or lesson (to be drawn here).¹

= correctly.¹

169: **recorder** = a simple, flute-like instrument, but played vertically.¹

a sound...government = making noise, but without control (**government**), ie. the child is not playing a proper tune.^{1,5}

171-2: **His speech...disordered** = like a chain that is not damaged (**impaired**) but is nonetheless in a badly snarled state (**disordered**), ie. **tangled**, the speech has all the words, but the punctuation is not in order.¹

Entering Characters: the rest of the cast enters the stage: **Bottom** as Pyramus; **Flute** as Thisbe; and **Snug** as the Lion.

Quince had assigned the parts of Thisbe's father and mother to **Snout** and **Starveling**, but neither of these characters will have a chance to be acted for Theseus. Instead, Snout plays the Wall (explicitly identifying himself

162 **Thes.** This fellow doth not stand upon points.

164 **Lysan.** He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt: he

166 knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak; but to speak true.

168 **Hippol.** Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

170 **Thes.** His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing
172 impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

174 *Enter Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall,
Moonshine, and Lion.*

so at line 212 below), and Starveling could play the Moonshine.

Finally, Quince had assigned himself the secondary role of Pyramus' father, who will also not appear during the performance.

In the Folio, there is a stage direction appearing prior to the entrance of the play's performers, "*Tawyer with a trumpet before them.*" *Tawyer* was a real actor named William Tawyer, who was to pretend to play a fanfare introducing the players.⁹

177-201 (below): in Quince's second speech, Prologue tells the story that will be presented on-stage:

The lovers Pyramus and Thisbe can only meet by talking through the gaps of a wall (lines 179-184); one night, the lovers agree to meet at the tomb of Ninus (185-8); Thisbe, the first to arrive at the tomb, is frightened by a lion, but drops her cloak as she runs away (190-2); Pyramus arrives to find Thisbe's cloak, which the lion, chewing, had soaked with blood, and assumes Thisbe has been killed (193-5), at which discovery he kills himself (196-7); Thisbe returns to find Pyramus dead, and uses his knife to kill herself as well (198-9).

The Prologue's second speech consists once again of a mix of quatrains with an *abab* rhyming scheme and rhyming couplets – except for line 189, which has no matching line with which to rhyme.

177-8: the sense is, the audience may be curious about the upcoming performance, but everything will soon become clear.

Gentles = ladies and gentlemen, gentlefolk.²

perchance = perhaps.

wonder at = marvel at, are astonished by, watch in fascination.^{1,2}

181-2: Snout appears as the Wall; his props are mortar used to construct a wall (**lime**) and the plaster (**rough-cast**) which coats it (see Act III.1.87 above).^{1,6}

doth present = represents, plays the part of.²

182: **vile** = bad, base, villainous (because it keeps Pyramus and Thisbe apart).¹

sunder = separate, ie. keep apart.

183: **chink** = slit, slight opening.¹

content = resigned, accepting (from necessity).¹
= let no one be surprised at this.

185-6: **This man...Moonshine** = the actor playing the moon, or moonshine, bears traditional attributes of the Man in the Moon:

lantern = this is the reading of the Quarto; the Folio prints *lanthorne* (see Act III.i.76 above).

dog = there seems to be a tradition of the Man in the Moon owning a dog.²¹ In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in response to Stephano's joking claim that he was the Man in the Moon, Caliban says, "*My mistress show'd me thee and*

176

178

180

182

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186

Prol. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But, wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know:
This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present

Wall, that vile Wall, which did these lovers sunder:

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper. At the which, let no man wonder.

This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine. For if you will know,

		<i>thy dog and thy bush."</i> bush of thorn = the traditional bundle of sticks carried by the Man in the Moon; see Act III.i.75-76 above.
	By moonshine did these lovers <u>think no scorn</u>	187-8: By moonshine...tomb = the lovers considered it no disgrace or shame (think no scorn) ¹ to meet at night at the tomb of Ninus. = court each other, make love. ¹
188	To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to <u>woo</u> .	
	This <u>grizly</u> beast (which Lion <u>hight</u> by name)	189: grizly = fear-inducing, horrible to behold; a variant of grisly . ¹ hight = is called; an archaic word. ^{1,4}
190	The <u>trusty</u> Thisbe, <u>coming</u> first <u>by night</u> ,	190: trusty = reliable, ¹ because she kept her appointment. coming = arriving. by night = during the night. ¹
	Did scare away, or rather did affright: And as she fled, her <u>mantle</u> she did <u>fall</u> :	191: ie. the lion frightened Thisbe. = cloak. = ie. let fall. ⁴
194	Which Lion <u>vile</u> with bloody mouth did stain. <u>Anon</u> comes Pyramus, sweet youth, and <u>tall</u> , And finds his <u>trusty</u> Thisbe's mantle <u>slain</u> :	= note the amateurish recycling of the adjective vile . = shortly thereafter. = fine, goodly. ^{2,4} 195: trusty is reused; and Quince humorously misapplies stain , describing the mantle itself as having been killed.
196	Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, He bravely <u>broached</u> his <u>boiling</u> bloody breast.	196-7: Shakespeare pokes fun at the overuse of alliteration (which has a long and respectable history in English literature) sometimes still seen in Elizabethan poetry. ⁵ broached = stabbed (the original meaning of "to broach" was "to stab"). ¹ boiling = overflowing with passion or emotion. ¹
198	And Thisbe, <u>tarrying</u> in mulberry shade, <u>His dagger drew, and died</u> . <u>For all the rest</u> ,	= lingering (tarrying) in the shade of a mulberry tree. 199: His dagger...died = picked up Pyramus' knife and killed herself. For all the rest = ie. as for the rest of the story.
200	Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and <u>lovers twain</u> , <u>At large discourse</u> , while here they do remain.	= ie. the two lovers. = tell in full or thoroughly. ^{1,2}
202	Thes. I wonder, if the lion <u>be to</u> speak.	= ie. will.
204	Demet. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when	
206	many asses do.	
208	[<i>Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe,</i> <i>Lion, and Moonshine.</i>]	208-9: only Wall remains on-stage.
210		211-220 (below): note how Snout's speech is hilariously filled with redundancy.
	Wall. In this same <u>interlude</u> it <u>doth befall</u> , That I, one <u>Snout</u> by name, <u>present</u> a wall: And such a wall, as I would have you think, That had in it a <u>crannied</u> hole or chink: Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, Did whisper often very secretly.	= short and light dramatic presentation. ^{1,2} = happens. = the Quarto incorrectly prints <i>Flute</i> here. = represent, play. = full of crannies; ¹ redundant with hole or chink .

	This <u>loam</u> , this <u>rough-cast</u> , and this <u>stone</u> doth show,	217-8: Snout is overloaded with props! loam = a compound used for plaster; see Act III.i.86 above. rough-cast = another compound used for plaster; see Act III.1.87 above. stone = represents the stones from which a wall may be built.
218	That I am that same wall: the truth is so.	
	And this the cranny is, right and <u>sinister</u> ,	219-220: Snout demonstrates the crannies along the wall by spreading the fingers of his right and left (sinister) hands. sinister = stressed on its second, or middle, syllable. fearful = frightened, timid; literally "full of fear".
220	Through which the <u>fearful</u> lovers are to whisper.	
222	Thes. Would you desire <u>lime and hair</u> to speak better?	222-3: who could ask for plaster to speak any better than this? lime and hair = "a kind of plasterer's cement to which hair is added to bind the mixture closely together." (OED, <i>lime</i> , n1, sense 3c).
224		= talk. ¹
	Demet. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard <u>discourse</u> , my lord.	
228	Thes. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence.	232f: the play-within-a-play continues to employ quatrains with an <i>abab</i> rhyme scheme.
230	<i>Re-enter Pyramus.</i>	= grim looking, forbidding. ¹ = colour. = is. = expression of grief.
232	Pyra. O <u>grim-looking</u> night! O night, with <u>hue</u> so black,	235: has Thisbe forgotten to appear at the wall tonight? = ie. property.
	O night, which ever <u>art</u> , when day is not:	= peep or look. ¹ = my eyes (eyne is archaic). Note the line's silly internal rhyme of chink with blink .
234	O night, O night, <u>alack</u> , alack, alack,	
	I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.	
236	And thou O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,	
	That stands't between her father's <u>ground</u> and mine,	
238	Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,	
	Show me thy chink, to <u>blink</u> through, with <u>mine eyne</u> ,	
240		
	[<i>Wall holds up his fingers.</i>]	
242	Thanks, courteous wall. <u>Jove shield thee well for this.</u>	243: Jove shield...this = Quince's variation on the common formula, "God protect thee." Jove = Roman king of the gods; an anachronism, since the story of Pyramus and Thisbe took place in ancient Babylon, well before Rome existed. shield = protect.
244	But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.	
	O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss,	
246	Cursed be thy stones, for thus deceiving me.	
248	Thes. The wall, methinks, <u>being sensible</u> , should curse again.	= having senses, capable of perception. ^{3,4}
250	Pyra. No, in truth sir, he should not. "Deceiving me"	
252	is Thisbe's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to <u>spy</u>	251-4: Bottom (playing Pyramus) takes Theseus' joke literally, and breaks the theatre's "fourth wall" by addressing him directly! = see. = happen exactly. ^{1,5} = there.
254	her through the wall. You shall see, it will <u>fall pat</u> as I told you: <u>yonder</u> she comes.	

256	<i>Re-enter Thisbe.</i>	
258	Thisbe. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans, For parting my fair Pyramus and me.	
260	My cherry lips have often kissed thy <u>stones</u> ; Thy stones, with lime and hair <u>knit now again</u> .	260: this line could be taken unintentionally as quite bawdy, as stones was a slang term for a man's testicles. ¹ 261: knit = joined together. ⁶ For knit now again , the Folio prints knit now in thee , which is probably preferable for its rhyme with line 259.
262		
264	Pyra. I see a voice: now will I <u>to</u> the chink, To <u>spy and</u> I can hear my Thisbe's face. – Thisbe?	= ie. go to. = see if. In this speech, Bottom has confused see and hear .
266		
268	Thisbe. My love thou art, my love I think.	
268	Pyra. Think what thou wilt, I am <u>thy lover's grace</u> :	= ie. thy love. ⁴
270	And, like <u>Limander</u> , am I <u>trusty still</u> .	270: Limander = generally taken as a malapropism for Leander , the well-known lover of Greek myth who nightly swam across the Hellespont in Asia Minor to visit his beloved, Hero (see the next annotation below). ^{4,5} An early commentator, however, suggested that Limander is actually a mistake for Alisander , a common alternate spelling for Alexander ; in this case, the reference would be to Prince Paris of Troy , who was frequently called Alexander . It was with Paris that Helen of Troy eloped, precipitating the Trojan War. In this reading, Thisbe's comparison of herself to Helen in line 272 would not be erroneous. trusty = dependable. still = always.
272	Thisbe. <u>And I</u> , like <u>Helen</u> , <u>till the Fates me kill</u> .	272: And I = ie. "and I too remain reliable". Helen = blunder for Hero . till the Fates me kill = ie. "until I die." The Fates were the three sister-deities who controlled the course and length of every individual's life.
274	Pyra. Not <u>Shafalus to Procrus</u> , was so true.	274-6: though mangling the names, the lovers allude to the devoted married couple of Greek myth, Cephalus, an Athenian hunter, and his wife Procris. In separate stories, each suspected the other of infidelity, but ultimately, their love for each other was affirmed.
276	Thisbe. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.	
278	Pyra. O kiss me, through the hole of this <u>vild</u> wall!	= vile, a common variant.
280	Thisbe. I kiss the wall's hole; not your lips at all.	280: again, easily heard as bawdy.
282	Pyra. Wilt thou, at <u>Ninny's tomb</u> , meet me straightway?	= Bottom, as Pyramus, repeat's Flute's error of Act I.iii.131.
284	Thisbe. <u>'Tide life, 'tide death</u> , I come without delay.	= come life, come death, ie. "no matter what happens to me". ³ 'tide = betide, ie. happen, befall. ²
286	<i>[Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.]</i>	
288	Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part <u>dischargèd</u> so; And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.	= fulfilled, performed. ²
290		
292	<i>[Exit Wall.]</i>	

294	Thes. Now is the moon used between the two neighbours.	293-4: so reads the Quarto; in the Folio, Theseus says, " <i>Now is the morall downe between the two neighbours.</i> " Neither reading makes much sense. Of the numerous emendations that have been proposed, Alexander Pope's seems the soundest, taking moral to be a corruption of mural , an archaic word meaning "wall": ¹ " <i>Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.</i> "
		Durham observes that mure was another word meaning "wall" (but was more common than mural), suggesting the possible reading, " <i>Now is the mure all down between the neighbours.</i> " This interpretation is supported by the fact that Shakespeare used the word mure in another play, <i>Henry VI, Part II</i> .
		Other editors, seemingly throwing their hands in the air, simply insert wall into the line: " <i>Now is the wall down between the two neighbours.</i> " Regardless, given Demetrius' response, Theseus should be commenting on the wall, not the moon.
296	Demet. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful, to hear without warning.	296-7: No remedy...to = the sense is, "what can you do, when walls are so refractory (wilful) ⁶ as to..."
298		The question is: <i>as to</i> do what? The final clause here, to hear without warning , has attracted numerous interpretations: warning can mean:
		(1) "summoning", ¹ so the line could be interpreted as " <i>to listen in when it has not been asked to</i> ". Shakespeare used warn in this sense in <i>Richard III</i> : " <i>And sent to warn them to his royal presence;</i> " or
		(2) "informing", suggesting, " <i>to hear what went on without letting the lovers' parents know what they are doing.</i> " ⁷
		Elsewhere, one may find assertions (3) that hear means "speak"; and (4) that to hear without warning conveys the idea of eavesdropping.
		(5) finally, Bourus suggests that the clause refers to the proverbial expression, "walls have ears", but there is no evidence of any such proverb appearing in print before the 17th century.
300	Hippol. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.	
302	Thes. The best, <u>in this kind</u> , are but <u>shadows</u> ; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.	301: The best...shadows = even the finest plays of this sort (in this kind) are only illusions (shadows), ie. only reflections or imitations of real life.
		301-2: and the worst...them = and the worst performances are not so bad if the audience uses its imagination to smooth over their deficiencies. ⁵
304	Hippol. It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.	304-5: it must be Theseus' imagination that is improving the play, not the actors'.
306		
308	Thes. If we <u>imagine</u> no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for <u>excellent</u> men. –	307-8: ie. "if we judge (imagine) ⁶ the actors no more harshly than they judge themselves, then they may be accepted as praiseworthy (excellent) ⁹ men."
		= the man may be the Man in the Moon.
310	Here come two noble beasts, in a <u>man</u> and a lion.	
	<i>Re-enter Lion and Moonshine.</i>	
312		313-320 (below): reflecting the men's concern that a

314 **Lion.** You ladies, you (whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor)

316 May now, perchance, both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough, in wildest rage, doth roar.
318 Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;

For, if I should, as lion, come in strife,

320 Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

322 **Thes.** A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

324 **Demet.** The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I
saw.

326 **Lysan.** This lion is a very fox, for his valour.
328

Thes. True: and a goose for his discretion.

330 **Demet.** Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry

realistically-acted lion might be too terrifying for their audience, Snug, following the consensus the men reached back at Act III.i.59, proactively reassures the women in the audience that he is, in fact, harmless.

314: **monstrous mouse** = **monstrous** is a bit over-the-top as a way to describe a tiny **mouse**.

creeps on floor = **creeps** may seem to be a comically misapplied word here – we think of serpents and worms *creeping* – but surprisingly, mice were also frequently described as "creeping" in contemporary literature; the OED tells us that **creep** could mean moving "close to the ground, as a short-legged reptile" (sense 1a).

= perhaps.

317-8: Another sentence with uncertain meaning. One problem is the intended meaning of **fell**; a second is the unusual, indeed unique, construction, **nor else no**, which appears nowhere else that I could find in 16th-17th century literature.

(1) it would make most sense for **fell** to bear its now-lost meaning of "skin" or "hide"; thus, following Snug's attention-getting warning of lines 313-6, he can reassure the audience that he is but a lion's skin, not a real lion.

The last clause (**nor else no lion's dam**) may then mean, "nor am I a lion's mother (**dam**)", ie. a lioness. A more unusual interpretation has been to view Snug as the "offspring" inside the "pregnant" hide, when he suggests he is no lion's mother; see Furness, p. 224).⁹

(2) **fell** here might instead bear its more common sense of "cruel, savage"; but then the last clause becomes much harder to explain: "I, Snug the joiner, am a savage lion...but I am (or am not?) a lion's mother." The logic of the lines collapses with this interpretation.

319: **as lion** = as a real lion, ie. a more realistic lion.
in strife = contentiously, combat-ready.¹

= "it would be a great misfortune for me", ie. he could expect to be killed, as should any lion appearing suddenly in a crowd of humans. The usual expression was "**'twere pity of my life**."

322: Theseus wryly approves of the lion's kindly concern for the audience.

of a good conscience = ie. possessing a well-developed sense of right and wrong; a common expression.¹

= at playing or performing.

327: a fox was known for its cunning, but not **valour**.⁵

329: **goose** was a common term for a foolish person; such a person possesses no good judgment (**discretion**).

331-2: **his valour...discretion** = the sense is, Lion's courage is too feeble to support, ie. compensate for, his lack of

332	his discretion: and <u>the fox carries the goose</u> .	judgment.
334	<i>Thes.</i> His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. <u>It is well:</u>	= allusion to the fox literally stealing away a goose from a barnyard to make a meal.
336	<u>leave it to his discretion</u> , and let us listen to the moon.	334-5: <i>His discretion...valour</i> = Lion's judgment (which is lacking) cannot make up for his (absence of) courage. = "that is enough of that."
338	<i>Moon.</i> This <u>lanthorn</u> doth the <u>hornèd moon</u> <u>present</u> ; –	= Theseus humorously employs a still common expression, here meaning, "let Lion decide how to act", as a way to redirect attention to the next character to speak, the Moonshine.
340	<i>Demet.</i> He should have worn the horns on his head.	338: <i>lanthorn</i> = ie. lantern; as mentioned previously, the sides of a lantern were made of horn, so that <i>lanthorn</i> developed as a variant spelling. ⁴ <i>horned moon</i> = the crescent-shaped moon, a common collocation. ¹ <i>present</i> = represent. ⁵
342	<i>Thes.</i> He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible, within <u>the circumference</u> .	340: Demetrius makes the inevitable Elizabethan joke about the horns which were said to grow on the forehead of a cuckold.
344	<i>Moon.</i> This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present,	342-3: this Man in the Moon does not have the shape of a crescent; and if he does have any "horns", they cannot be seen within the lantern. <i>the circumference</i> = ie. its bounds or periphery. ^{1,6}
346	Myself, the man <u>ith</u> moon, do seem to be.	345: Moon repeats line 338, perhaps because he sensed the interruption.
348	<i>Thes.</i> This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else	= ie. "in the"; the OED does not recognize <i>ith</i> as a distinct word, though it appears regularly in contemporary litera- ture. There is, however, an entry for <i>i'th'</i> . Modern editors generally substitute " <i>i' th'</i> " here.
350	the man ith moon?	
352	<i>Demet.</i> He dares not <u>come there</u> , <u>for the candle</u> ; for, you see, it is already <u>in snuff</u> .	352: <i>come there</i> = ie. enter the lantern. ⁵ <i>for the candle</i> = ie. because of the burning candle inside. ⁵ = Demetrius puns: (1) a candle's <i>snuff</i> is the burnt or used- up portion of its wick; and (2) the common expression <i>to be in snuff</i> meant " <i>to take offense</i> ". ^{1,5}
354	<i>Hipp.</i> I am aweary of this moon. <u>Would</u> he would	355-6: <i>would he would change</i> = "I wish he would change;" Hippolyta, punning, expresses her desire for the character of the Man in the Moon to be gone. <i>change</i> = word commonly used to describe the moon cycling through its various phases. ¹
356	change.	
358	<i>Thes.</i> It appears, by his <u>small light</u> of <u>discretion</u> , that	358-9: <i>It appears...wane</i> = more wordplay: the Moon's judgment and discernment (<i>discretion</i>) seem weak and getting weaker. Shakespeare brilliantly intertwines the literal language of astronomy: <i>in the wane</i> (line 359) refers to a moon decreasing in illumination, hence its <i>small light</i> , which also (1) alludes to the dim light produced by the lantern, and (2) points out the Moon's minimal level of good

	he is in the wane: but yet in courtesy, <u>in all reason</u> ,	judgment.
360	we must <u>stay the time</u> .	= ie. according to sound judgment or logic; a common expression.
362	Lysan. Proceed, Moon.	= the sense is, "wait this out."
364	Moon. All that I have to say, is to tell you, that the	364-6: as Wall did before him, Moon breaks character to
366	lanthorn is the moon; I, the man ith moon; this	explain – of course, quite unnecessarily – himself and
368	thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.	his props!
368	Demet. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for	
370	all these are in the moon. – But silence: here comes	
372	Thisbe.	
372	<i>Re-enter Thisbe.</i>	
374	Thisbe. This is old <u>Ninny's tomb</u> . Where is my love?	= Flute, as Thisbe, still can't pronounce <i>Ninus'</i> correctly.
376	Lion. [<i>Roaring</i>] Oh –	
378	<i>[Thisbe runs off.]</i>	
380	Demet. Well roared, Lion.	
382	Thes. Well run, Thisbe.	
384	Hippol. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines	
386	<u>with a good grace</u> .	= in a pleasing manner. ¹
388	<i>[The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle,</i>	
390	<i>and exit.]</i>	
392	Thes. Well <u>mouzed</u> , Lion.	= ie. moused, meaning "handled as a cat would a mouse,
394	Demet. And then came Pyramus.	clawing and tearing it;" <i>mouze</i> was a rare alternate form
396	Lysan. And so the lion vanished.	of "mouse". ¹
398	<i>Re-enter Pyramus.</i>	
400	Pyra. Sweet Moon, I thank thee, for thy <u>sunny beams</u> .	= Pyramus' use of <i>sunny</i> for the moon is probably an
	I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;	unintentional <i>faux pas</i> , though the OED tells us that
	For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering <u>beams</u> ,	<i>sunny</i> could mean simply, "resembling the sun in
		brightness". ¹
		400: note the comically exaggerated alliteration.
		<i>beams</i> = appears here in both the Quarto and Folio.
		Editors generally view this second <i>beams</i> as an error (since
		<i>beams</i> was used to end line 398), and emend it to " <i>gleams</i> ",
		which (1) completes the rhyme with <i>beams</i> , and (2) adds to
		the grotesque alliteration of the line. We may note that both
		" <i>glittering beams</i> " and " <i>glittering gleams</i> " were common
		collocations in the late 16th and 17th centuries.
		On the other hand, as Furness points out, it is exactly
		because <i>beams</i> is so obviously wrong here that it should be
		retained: after all, why would we expect Bottom to recite his
		lines correctly?
	I trust to <u>take</u> of truest Thisbe sight. –	401: ie. "I expect to see my most faithful Thisbe."
		<i>take</i> = the Folio prints " <i>taste</i> " here; as a clear mis-

402	But <u>stay</u> : O <u>spite</u> !	match with sight , " taste " may be the preferred reading.
	But <u>mark</u> , poor <u>knight</u> ,	= wait. = "oh, cruel fate!" – a cry of anguish.
404	What dreadful <u>dole</u> is here?	403: mark = observe.
	Eyes, do you see!	knight = meaning himself; knight is anachronistic for
406	How can it be!	a story taking place in ancient Babylon.
	O <u>dainty duck</u> , O dear!	= grief. ⁵
408	Thy mantle good,	= a ridiculous term of endearment for Thisbe in this con-
	What, stained with blood?	text. Quite a few later 17th century authors adopted this
410	Approach <u>ye</u> Furies <u>fell</u> !	original expression in their works.
		408: ie. "your good cloak".
		410: Pyramus summons the Furies, a trio of avenging
		goddesses from classical mythology who pursued and
		tormented murderers to punish them. Pyramus assumes that
		Thisbe has been killed by a person, and calls on the Furies to
		take their revenge on the supposed slayer.
		ye = often used as the plural form of "you".
		fell = cruel.
	O <u>Fates</u> come, come,	411-3: in his grief, Pyramus calls on the Fates to take his
		own life. The Fates, as mentioned previously, were three
		sister deities who determined the length of humans' lives.
		The first Fate, Clotho, spun the thread of life; Lachesis
		measured the portion assigned to each person; and Atropos
		cut the thread with her shears to terminate each life.
412	Cut thread and <u>thrum</u> ,	= the tufted, unwoven ends of a weaver's thread that remain
	<u>Quail</u> , crush, <u>conclude</u> , and <u>quell</u> !	attach to a loom. ^{1,5}
		413: Pyramus is prepared to be utterly destroyed! Note the
		line's mixed alliteration.
		Quail = destroy, put an end to. ¹
		conclude = bring to an end. ¹
		quell = kill. ¹
414	Thes. This <u>passion</u> , and the death of a dear <u>friend</u> ,	= suffering or strong emotion, ¹ ie. extreme grief. = lover. ²
416	would <u>go near</u> to make a man look sad.	= would come close to, ie. might just about.
418	Hippol. <u>Beshrew</u> my heart, but I pity the man.	= a curse upon.
420	Pyra. O, <u>wherefore</u> , Nature, didst thou <u>lions frame</u> ?	420: Pyramus apostrophizes personified Nature.
		wherefore = why.
		lions frame = create lions.
	Since lion <u>vild</u> hath here <u>deflowered</u> my dear.	421: vild = vile.
		deflowered = a likely malapropism; Pyramus probably
		intends deflowered to mean something like "ruined" or
		"destroyed"; however, the word also bears a strong erotic
		overtone, unintentionally suggesting that the lion has
		sexually violated or ravaged Thisbe. ^{1,6}
422	<u>Which</u> is – no, no – which <u>was</u> the fairest dame	422: Which = ie. who.
		was = with was , Pyramus emphasizes that Thisbe no
		longer is .
	That lived, that loved, that liked, that <u>looked with cheer</u> .	= had a pleasant face or expression. ¹

424	Come tears, <u>confound</u> ;	424: Pyramus apostrophizes his tears, calling on them to bring him to ruin or destroy him (confound). Pyramus' phrasing is sloppy: while it was common to describe a person as "confounded in (or with) tears", it is strained to make the tears themselves the actors or causers of destruction.
	Out sword, and wound	425-8: Pyramus calls on his sword to stab him in the breast.
426	The <u>pap</u> of Pyramus:	= again, not really the most appropriate term to use here; pap usually referred to a woman's breast or nipple; however, Shakespeare did use pap for a man's breast in <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> : "Proceed, sweet Cupid: thou hast thumped him with thy bird-bolt under the left pap."
428	Ay, that left pap, Where heart doth <u>hop</u> :	428: leap, skip. ¹ Like pap in the previous two lines, the use of hop seems incongruous, even if not completely incorrect: there are a couple of examples in late 16th century literature in which one's heart was said to "hop".
430		
432	Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.	
434	Now am I dead, Now am I fled, My soul is in the sky.	
436	Tongue, lose thy light; Moon, take thy flight:	436-7: Pyramus is likely bidding his tongue to lose its power of speech and the moon to disappear, but the wording once again is somewhat nonsensical. Regardless, Moonshine takes Pyramus' instruction literally and exits.
438		
440		
442	Now die, die, die, die, die.	
444		
	Demet. No die, but an <u>ace</u> for him; <u>for he is but one</u> .	445: Demetrius puns on die , referring to the gaming cube: Pyramus only rolls a "one" (ace), since he is but one man. ⁵ Stevenson also suggests that ace was probably pronounced similarly to "ass", adding an extra layer of meaning to " for he is but one " (also see lines 450-1 below).
446		
448	Lysan. Less than <u>an ace</u> , man; for he is dead, he is nothing.	447: an ace = one. 447-8: he is nothing = that is, nothing – ie. zero – is less than one.
450	Thes. With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and <u>prove</u> an ass.	= ie. prove to be, ie. turn out to be.
452		
454	Hippol. How chance Moonshine is gone before? Thisbe comes back, and finds her lover.	453-4: Hippolyta notices that the Moonshine has exited prematurely: how else will Thisbe find Pyramus' body?
456	Thes. She will find him, by starlight. Here she comes, and her <u>passion</u> ends the play.	= violent grief. ¹
458		
460		
	<i>Re-enter Thisbe.</i>	
	Hippol. Methinks she should not use a long one, for	461-2: still impatient, Hippolyta hopes that Thisbe will not

462	such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.	give such a lengthy death speech as did Pyramus. 461-2: <i>for such a Pyramus</i> = this Pyramus is not worthy of a major death scene from Thisbe.
464	Demet. <u>A moth will turn the balance</u> , which	464-5: <i>A moth...better</i> = it is a very close-run thing as to who was the better performer, Pyramus or Thisbe. <i>A moth will turn the balance</i> = a mote (ie. the tiniest thing imaginable, a speck of dust, an atom) will tip the balance; <i>moth</i> was a common alternate form of <i>mote</i> . ¹ <i>which...which</i> = whether...or. ⁵
466	Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better: he for a man, God <u>warrant</u> us; she for a woman, God <u>bless</u> us.	465-6: <i>he for...bless us</i> = one interpretation has been, "from such a man, may God protect (<i>warrant</i>) us; and from such a woman, may God also protect (<i>bless</i>) us." ^{1,9} Another gloss might be, "either Pyramus, the man, is better – may God protect us! or Thisbe, the woman, is better – may God protect us!" This entire line is omitted from the Folio. <i>warrant</i> = the Quarto prints "warnd" (ie. warned), but this is generally emended to <i>warrant</i> ; Shakespeare used a variation of this expression in <i>As You Like It</i> : "Lord <i>warrant us</i> !" = seen.
468	Lysan. She hath <u>spied</u> him already, with those sweet eyes.	
470	Demet. And thus she <u>means</u> , <u>videlicet</u> : –	471: <i>means</i> = laments, mourns. ¹ Some editors gloss <i>means</i> as "moans", but this is not precisely correct, per the OED. Others have taken <i>means</i> in its common sense of "signifies", suggesting, perhaps, that Demetrius intends to interpret Thisbe's lines, but this reading is not convincing. <i>videlicet</i> = Latin for "that is to say", ie. <i>viz.</i> ^{1,5}
472		473-499 (below): you may wish to pick out the various rhyme schemes employed in these lines.
474	Thisbe. Asleep, my love? What, dead, my dove? O Pyramus, arise, Speak, speak. Quite <u>dumb</u> ? Dead, dead? A <u>tomb</u>	476-7: <i>dumb / tomb</i> = the Quarto's spellings of the lines' last words – <i>dumbe / tumbe</i> – signal an intended rhyme in Elizabethan pronunciation (probably both rhyming with modern <i>thumb</i>), now lost in modern spelling.
478	Must cover thy sweet eyes. These lily lips, This cherry nose,	479-480: Thisbe misspeaks: it is the lips which are <i>cherry</i> (red); the nose is <i>lily</i> (white).
480	These <u>yellow cowslip cheeks</u>	481: the <i>cowslip</i> is a common wild plant producing <i>yellow</i> flowers. In contemporary literature, we find occasional instances of <i>cheeks</i> described as <i>yellow</i> to indicate unhealthiness; in <i>Henry IV, Part II</i> , Shakespeare's Lord Chief Justice lists "a yellow cheek" as a characteristic of old age.
482	Are gone, are gone: Lovers <u>make moan</u> :	= lament, a common expression. ¹
484	His eyes were <u>green</u> , as <u>leeks</u> .	484: there are multiple references in Shakespeare's plays to the attractiveness of green eyes: e.g., in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ,

the nurse says, "*An eagle, madam, / Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye / As Paris hath.*"

It was actually quite common to compare an object's greenish colour to that of *leeks* in contemporary literature; only its application here to Pyramus' *eyes* seems hardly flattering.

485-490: as did Pyramus before her, Thisbe summons the *three sister* deities called the Fates.

487-490: an imperative imploring the Fates to figuratively immerse their hands in Pyramus' blood and gore, since they have already cut his thread of life. Thisbe's intent is to contrast the Fates' stark white hands and the bloody mess that is Pyramus.

shore = in contemporary usage, the usual past participle form of "shear" was "has (or have) shorn"; the construction "have shore" appears to be unique, found only here, in Shakespeare.

threed = ie. thread, a common alternate form, likely pronounced to rhyme with "feed"; the Folio prints *thred*, however, suggesting a modernized pronunciation.

491: ie. "I will say no more."

= stain, ie. with blood.¹

O sisters three,

486 Come, come, to me,
With hands as pale as milk,
488 Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
490 With shears, his threed of silk.

Tongue, not a word:
492 Come trusty sword,
Come blade, my breast imbrue:

[*Stabs herself.*]

496 And farewell friends:
498 Thus Thisbe ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu.

[*Dies.*]

500
502 **Thes.** Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

504 **Demet.** Ay, and Wall too.

506
Lion. No, I assure you, the wall is down, that parted

508 their fathers. – Will it please you, to see the Epilogue,
510 or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our
company?

507-510 (below): the Quarto assigns this speech admonishing Theseus and the noble audience to Lion. The Folio, however, gives it to Bottom, who would presumably have to stand up (Pyramus having died earlier in the scene) to address the spectators. Given Bottom's complete lack of inhibition, and the fact that he has already broken the fourth wall once, it may make more sense to assign the speech to him.

507-8: *that parted their fathers* = ie. the wall which separated the properties belonging to the fathers of Pyramus and Thisbe.

508-510: *Will it...company* = Bottom asks if Theseus would like to see the Epilogue or watch a dance: (1) the Epilogue would be spoken by a single actor, matching the Prologue who opened the play; (2) Elizabethan dramas often concluded with a staged dance.

Bergomask dance = a rustic dance, supposedly one

		imported from Bergamo, a province of the state of Venice. ¹ <i>between two</i> = ie. performed by two.
512	Thes. No Epilogue, <u>I pray you</u> ; for your play needs	= please.
514	no <u>excuse</u> . Never excuse: for when the players are all	= explanation, as a way to clear the actors of blame.
516	dead, there need none to be blamed. <u>Marry</u> , if he that	= common exclamation, derived from the Virgin Mary.
	writ it had played Pyramus, and hanged himself in	
518	Thisbe's <u>garter</u> , it would have been a fine tragedy: and	= band worn around the leg to keep one's stockings from falling. ¹
	so it is truly, and very <u>notably discharged</u> . But come,	= excellently performed. ⁶
520	your Bergomask: let your Epilogue alone.	518: Theseus surprisingly accepts the actors' offer of a dance, but declines the Epilogue.
	[A dance.]	
522	The <u>iron tongue</u> of midnight hath <u>told</u> twelve:	522f (below): Theseus, having dispensed with the day's silly entertainment, returns to speaking in verse, signaling the re-elevation of his language.
	<u>Lovers to bed</u> , 'tis almost fairy time.	522: the bell's clapper (<i>iron tongue</i>) has counted to (<i>told</i>) twelve, ie. has chimed twelve times.
524	I fear we shall <u>out-sleep the coming morn</u> ,	523: <i>Lovers to bed</i> = Theseus orders the couples to retire and enjoy the first carnal pleasures of marriage.
	As much as we this night have <u>overwatched</u> .	<i>'tis almost fairy time</i> = the human world should withdraw, before the time for the supernatural takes over!
526	This <u>palpable-gross</u> play hath well beguiled	= ie. oversleep in the morning.
	<u>The heavy gait of night</u> . Sweet friends, to bed.	525: ie. because they have remained awake too long. <i>overwatched</i> = "watched all through" (OED).
528	A fortnight hold we this <u>solemnity</u> ,	526-7: <i>This...night</i> = the sense is, "though obviously crude or awful (<i>palpable-gross</i>), ^{1,2,5} the play did a good job of helping to pass the time."
530	In nightly <u>revels</u> , and new <u>jollity</u> .	<i>beguiled...of night</i> = helped while away the night.
532	[Exeunt.]	<i>The heavy gait of night</i> = night is personified as moving slowly and sluggishly; <i>heavy gait</i> = slow motion. ¹
534	Enter Puck.	528: the wedding celebrations or festivities (<i>solemnity</i>) will continue for two weeks.
		= merrymaking or feasts. = forms or sources of enjoyment.
		531: thus ends the humans' part of the play.
		533: Puck may be carrying a broom; see lines 553-4 below.
		535f (below): Puck poetically describes various attributes of the night.
	Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,	535: I can find no reason, mythological or literary, for Shakespeare to associate lions specifically with the night.
536	And the wolf <u>beholds</u> the moon;	= <i>beholds</i> , which appears in both the Quarto and the Folio, is usually emended to <i>behovls</i> ; even the OED assumes that Shakespeare intended <i>behovls</i> here, crediting him with inventing this new word.
	Whilst the <u>heavy ploughman</u> snores,	= drowsy. ¹ = one who drives a plough, ie. farm labourer. ¹

538	All with <u>weary task foredone</u> . Now the <u>wasted brands</u> do glow,	= wearying. ¹ = work. = exhausted (past tense of <i>fordo</i>). ¹ = torches (or pieces of firewood) that have burnt themselves out. wasted = reduced in substance. ¹
540	Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,	540-2: Puck alludes to the night-owl, whose call was considered an omen of evil; the sorrowful (<i>in woe</i>) soul lying in bed, hearing the screech, is reminded of death and mortality through the mental image of a shroud .
542	Puts the wretch that lies <u>in woe</u> , <u>In remembrance of</u> a shroud.	In remembrance of = brings to mind. ²
544	Now it is the time of night, That the graves, all <u>gaping</u> wide,	543-6: Puck revives the play's earlier imagery of ghosts leaving their graves to wander during the night. gaping = opening.
546	Every one lets forth his <u>sprite</u> , In the church-way paths to <u>glide</u> .	sprite = common monosyllabic variant for <i>spirit</i> . glide = move smoothly and without apparent effort. ¹
548	And we fairies, that do run, By the <u>triple Hecate's team</u> ,	547-550: being night revelers, the fairies flee the rising sun, accompanying Hecate's chariot as they follow the receding darkness; team refers to the horses pulling her car. ^{1,4}
550	From the presence of the sun, Following darkness like a dream,	triple Hecate's = Hecate was a powerful female goddess of magic and the night; she was described in myth as having either three heads or three bodies; Elizabethan writers typically portrayed her as having three heads or faces.
552	Now are <u>frolic</u> : not a mouse Shall disturb this hallowed house.	551: frolic = frolicsome, merry. ^{3,4} 551-2: not a mouse...house = Puck's job is to protect the sanctity of the household (likely Theseus' palace, where the various newly-married couples are safely ensconced in their respective bedrooms).
554	I am sent, with broom, before, To sweep the dust behind the door.	553-4: Puck has also been assigned the job of cleaning the palace. It has been noted that fairies were "great lovers and patrons of cleanliness and propriety", rewarding those who kept things clean, while punishing those who were slovenly "by pinching them black and blue" (Thiselton-Dyer, p. 18). ¹⁹
556	<i>Enter Oberon and Titania with all their <u>train</u>.</i>	= attendants.
558	Ober. Through the house give glimmering light, By the dead and <u>drowsy</u> fire.	558-9: Oberon instructs the fairies to faintly illuminate the house as the fire dies down. drowsy = lethargic. ¹
560	Every elf and fairy <u>sprite</u> ,	= spirit.
562	<u>Hop</u> as light as bird <u>from</u> brier,	= skip or dance. = ie. "leaping from a".
564	And this ditty, after me, Sing, and dance it <u>trippingly</u> .	= in a light-footed or nimble manner. ¹
566	Titan. First rehearse your song <u>by rote</u> ,	565: Titania instructs the fairies to learn and practice their song from memory (by rote).
568	To each word a warbling note. Hand in hand, with fairy grace,	566: ie. to give each word a tuneful note. ¹
570	Will we sing and bless this place. [Song and dance.]	570: any specific song Shakespeare or the performing troupe had in mind here has long been lost. ⁹
572	Ober. Now, until the break of day,	

	Through this house, each fairy <u>stray</u> .	= wander, roam. ¹
574	To the best <u>bride-bed</u> will we, Which by us shall blessèd be:	574-5: the likely meaning is that the Fairy King and Queen will approach the bed of Theseus and Hippolyta to bless it. bride-bed = the bed upon which newlyweds consummate their marriage. ¹
576	And the <u>issue</u> , there <u>create</u> ,	576-7: any children (<i>issue</i>) conceived (<i>create</i> for "created")
578	Ever shall be fortunate: So shall all the couples three Ever true in loving be:	on this bed will be lucky and prosperous. ¹
580	And the blots of Nature's hand Shall not in their issue stand.	580-5: the children resulting from this marriage will be born without defect or disfigurement.
582	Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar, Nor mark <u>prodigious</u> , such as are	583-4: disfigurements appearing on offspring were considered ominous or portentous (<i>prodigious</i>). ¹
584	<u>Despisèd in nativity</u> ,	Despisèd in nativity = looked on with scorn or disfavour if present at birth.
	Shall upon their children be.	
586	With this field-dew <u>consecrate</u> ,	586-8: each fairy should visit various bedrooms in the palace and bless them with the hallowed or sanctified (<i>consecrate</i>) ¹ dew (perhaps a form of fairy holy-water) ⁴ from the field.
588	Every fairy <u>take his gait</u> , And each <u>several chamber</u> bless,	take his gait = go his way. ¹ several chamber = separate or individual bedroom. ^{1,2,5}
	Through this palace, with sweet peace,	
590	Ever shall in safety rest, And the owner of it blest.	
592	Trip away; make no stay: Meet me all, by break of day.	592: "get going, moving lightly; wait no longer."
594		
596	[<i>Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.</i>]	
		597-612 (below): with the final speech of the play, Puck addresses the audience with the traditional (and always slightly pathetic) appeal for the spectators' approval. Note that four separate times Puck uses the words <i>mend</i> or <i>amend</i> to signify his willingness to compensate for or remedy any faults of the play.
	Puck. If we <u>shadows</u> have <u>offended</u> ,	= spirits. ⁵ = annoyed or displeased (you). ¹
598	Think but this (and all is <u>mended</u>),	598-602: "just pretend you fell asleep and dreamed the whole thing."
600	That you have but slumbered here, While these visions did appear.	mended = made well.
	And this <u>weak and idle theme</u> ,	= insignificant and trivial subject matter. ^{1,2,6}
602	<u>No more yielding but a dream</u> ,	= producing no more than. ⁵
604	<u>Gentles</u> , do not <u>reprehend</u> .	= ladies and gentlemen. = condemn (us or the play). ¹
606	If you pardon, we will <u>mend</u> .	= make amends. ¹
	And, as I am an honest Puck,	
606	If we have unearned luck Now to scape the <u>serpent's tongue</u> ,	606-7: "if we have such undeserved good fortune as to escape your hisses;" a nice metaphor of the <i>serpent's tongue</i> producing the hissing sound that signals an

		audience's displeasure.
608	We will make amends, <u>ere long</u> :	= soon.
	<u>Else</u> , the Puck a liar call.	= otherwise.
610	So, good night unto you all.	
	Give me your <u>hands</u> , if we be friends:	= applause. ⁴
612	And Robin shall <u>restore amends</u> .	= make atonement for any offense, set matters right. ^{1,6}
614		
	[<i>Exit Puck.</i>]	
616	FINIS	

APPENDIX.

Peter Quince, as the author of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, is responsible for delivering the Prologue to his royal audience in Act V of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Unfortunately for Peter, he completely bungles his first speech (perhaps out of some initial stage-fright). The errors occur because he fails to follow the lines' punctuation: instead, by stopping when he should not stop, and reading straight through the pauses, he delivers a message that is the opposite of that he intended.

The published texts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* only print the *erroneous* versions of the Prologue. It is up to the reader to attempt to reconstruct the "correct" punctuation in the first speech.

Below, on the left, we reproduce the first Prologue as it was actually delivered by Quince; on the right, a possible "correct" version of the Prologue – how the author of *Pyramus and Thisbe* might have originally written it.

(Note: the lines are renumbered 1-10 to facilitate comparison).

[The "correct" version was created using a combination of the proposals suggested by Stevenson⁵ and the Variorum edition⁹ of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.]

The Prologue's first speech, as delivered
(see Act V, lines 151-160):

- 1 If we offend, it is with our good will.
- 2 That you should think, we come not to offend,
- 3 But with good will. To shew our simple skill,
- 4 That is the true beginning of our end.
- 5 Consider then, we come but in despite.
- 6 We do not come, as minding to content you,
- 7 Our true intent is. All for your delight,
- 8 We are not here. That you should here repent you,
- 9 The actors are at hand: and, by their show,
- 10 You shall know all, that you are like to know.

How Quince may have originally, and correctly,
punctuated the first Prologue when he wrote it:

- 1 If we offend, it is with our good will
- 2 That you should think we come not to offend;
- 3 But with good will to show our simple skill:
- 4 That is the true beginning of our end.
- 5 Consider then: we come; but in despite
- 6 We do not come. As, minding to content you,
- 7 Our true intent is all for your delight.
- 8 We are not here that you should here repent you.
- 9 The actors are at hand; and by their show
- 10 You shall know all that you are like to know.

FOOTNOTES.

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

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4. Durham, Willard H., ed., *A Midsummer Night's Dream. The Yale Shakespeare*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918.
5. Stevenson, O.J., ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Toronto: The Copp Clark Company Limited, 1918.
6. Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare-Lexicon*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 (originally published 1902).
7. Bourus, Terri, ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream. The New Oxford Shakespeare, Complete Works*, edited by Gary Taylor et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
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9. Furness, Horace H. *Midsommer Nights Dreame. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895.
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18. Reynolds, Lou Agnes, and Paul Sawyer. "Folk Medicine and the Four Fairies of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (autumn 1959): 513-21. Accessed 11/22/2025 from <https://www.enotes.com/topics/midsummer-nights-dream/criticism/midsummer-nights-dream-vol-82/criticism-character-studies/lou-agnes-reynolds-and-paul-sawyer-essay-date>.
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20. Sugden, Edward. *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists*. Manchester: The University Press, 1925.
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Optional Textual Changes.

The texts of the Scripts prepared for our website, www.ElizabethanDrama.org, generally lean towards retaining the language of the plays' earliest editions. This includes keeping archaic words and language that modern editors tend to modernize and correct. On the other hand, where obvious errors in typography have occurred, the emendations suggested by early and modern editors are usually accepted.

This edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is based on the text of the Quarto printed in 1600. The play appeared again in the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare's works. Comparison of the two editions shows a number of variations in wording and word choice, though not enough of them exist so as to cause the reader to lose sleep, wondering if he or she is missing anything by choosing one text over the other.

You will find below a fairly comprehensive list of changes a director may wish to consider applying to the text of our play, in order to make the language more sensible. These emendations are of several types:

- (1) modernization of archaic words;
- (2) substantive alternate wording found in the Folio; and
- (3) commonly-accepted emendations suggested by later editors and commentators.

Explanations for all these possible emendations can be found in the annotations to the play.

An asterisk (*) indicates an emendation based on alternative wording in the Folio.

Universal Emendations:

1. modernize *shew(s)(ed)* to *show(s)(ed)* everywhere:
2.1.197; 2.2.152; 3.2.448, 580; 5.1.153.
2. modernize *vild* to *vile* everywhere:
5.1.278, 421.
3. modernize *murther(er)* to *murder(er)* everywhere:
3.2.31, 70, 74.
4. modernize *lanthorn* to *lantern* everywhere:
5.1.338, 345, 349, 365, 368.

Act I, Scene i.

1. line 11: emend *Now bent* to *New-bent*.
2. line 165: omit *Ay me*.*
3. line 170: emend *to love* to *to low*.
4. line 176: emend *friends* to *merit*.*
5. line 200: emend *remote* to *removed*.*
6. line 235: emend *Your words I'll catch* to *yours would I catch*.
7. line 239: emend *I'll* to *I'd*.
8. line 255: emend *Helena* to *Helen* (or)
emend *is no fault of mine* to *is none of mine*.*
9. line 275: emend *swelled* to *sweet*.
10. line 278: emend *strange companions* to *stranger companies*.

Act I, Scene ii.

1. line 108: modernize *shrike* to *shriek*.
2. line 132: modernize *perfit* to *perfect*.*
3. line 147: modernize *perfit* to *perfect*.*

Act II, Scene i.

1. line 51: emend *filly foal* to *silly foal*.*
2. line 55: modernize *dewlop* to *dewlap*.
3. line 60: modernize *loffe* to *laugh*.
4. line 82: emend *steppe* to *steep*.*
5. line 106: emend *pelting* to *petty*.*
6. line 112: modernize *murrion* to *murrain*.
7. line 124: emend *chin* to *thin*.
8. line 226: emend *stay* and *stayeth* to *slay* and *slayeth*.
9. line 293: emend *I'll* to *I*.*
10. line 303: the original line as printed is:
Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.
Optional change 1: reverse the clauses:
Welcome, wanderer. Hast thou the flower there?
Option change 2: revise the punctuation:
Hast thou the flower there, welcome wanderer?

Act II, Scene ii.

1. line 4: modernize *leathren* to *leather*.
2. line 75: emend *we can make of it* to *can you make of it*.*
3. line 76: emend *interchained* to *interchanged*.*
4. line 102: emend *found* to *find*.*
5. line 212: modernize *swoun* to *swoon*.

Act III, Scene i.

1. line 43: emend *toote* to *to 't*.*
2. line 76: emend *lantern* to *lanthorn*.*
3. line 87: emend *or* to *and*.

Act III, Scene ii.

1. line 24: modernize *minnick* to *mimic*.
2. line 109: modernize *bankrout* to *bankrupt*.
3. line 510: emend *night's swift* to *night-swift*.*
4. line 554: repunctuate "*Speak in some bush.*" to "*Speak!*
[pause] *In some bush?*"
4. line 596: modernize *shat* to *shalt*.*
5. line 635: emend *Your eye* to *To your eye*.

Act IV, Scene i.

1. line 32: emend *Cobweb* to *Pease-blossom*.
2. line 44: modernize *mounch* to *munch*.*
3. line 52: emend *stirt* to *stir*.*
4. line 56: emend *always* to *all ways*.
5. line 73: emend *flavours* to *savours*.*
6. line 79: modernize *flouriets* to *flowerets*.
7. lines 265-6: omit *Are you sure / That we are awake?**
8. line 298: emend *a play* to *our play*.
9. line 300: emend *at her death* to *after death*.

Act IV, Scene ii.

1. line 52: modernize *ribands* to *ribbons*.

Act V, Scene i.

1. line 47: emend *Philostrate* to *Egeus*.*
2. Reassign the speeches of lines 49, 55, 82, 95, 102,

- and 143 to Egeus.*
3. line 55: emend *ripe* to *rife*.*
 4. Reassign the following pairs of lines to Lysander:
61-62; 66-67; 71-72; 76-77.*
 5. line 78: emend *strange snow* to *strange black snow*.
 6. line 117: modernize *duery* to *duty*.*
 7. line 185: emend *lantern* to *lanthorn*.*
 8. line 189: modernize *grizly* to *grisly*.
 9. line 261: emend *knit now again* to *knit now in thee*.*
 10. line 293: emend *moon used* to any of:
 - (a) *mural down*;
 - (b) *mure all down*; or
 - (c) *wall down*.
 11. lines 346, 350 and 365: emend *ith* to *i' th'*.
 12. line 390: modernize *mouzed* to *moused*.*
 13. line 400: emend *glittering beams* to *glittering gleams*.
 14. line 401: emend *take* to *taste*.*
 15. lines 465-6: omit *he for a man...God bless us*.*
 16. line 490: modernize *threed* to *thread*.*
 17. Reassign the speech beginning at line 507 to Bottom.*
 18. line 536: emend *beholds* to *behows*.