

ElizabethanDrama.org
presents
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.

Philostrate, 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, *Shakspere*), Edward Dowden wrote of the Bard's Fairy Land,

"No such fairy poetry existed anywhere in English literature before Shakspere. 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 decet – 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.
8	Hippol. Four days will quickly <u>steep</u> themselves in night; Four nights will quickly dream away the time;	<i>dowager</i> = a widow with a surviving interest in her husband's property. ¹ <i>withering out</i> = wasting away. ¹
10	And then the moon, like to a silver bow	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> "
12	Now bent in Heaven, shall <u>behold</u> the night Of our <u>solemnities</u> .	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.
14	Thes. Go, Philostrate,	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.
16	Stir up <u>the Athenian</u> youth to merriments, Awake the <u>pert</u> and <u>nimble</u> spirit of mirth;	
18	Turn melancholy forth to funerals: <u>The pale companion</u> is not for our <u>pomp</u> .—	= see, witness. ¹ = (wedding) ceremony. ¹
20	[Exit Philostrate.]	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.
22	Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, And won thy love, doing thee injuries:	= pronounced as <i>th' Athenian</i> . 16: Theseus wants a spirit of joy and playfulness to be brought to bear. <i>pert</i> = lively. ⁴ <i>nimble</i> = keen. ¹
		17: "gloom such as I have belongs at funerals."
		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: Philostrate actually doesn't get to speak until Act V.
		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.

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.

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

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

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

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.

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. –

= *Egeus* is stressed on its second syllable: *e-GE-us*.
= distressed.¹

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

= the line begins with *This* stressed.

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

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

44 And stol'n the impression of her fantasy;

43: *With feigning voice* = singing softly,¹ perhaps to escape detection.⁴

feigning love = dissembled or pretended true love.¹

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

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

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

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.

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,

= 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; <i>dispose of her</i> 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! <i>Immediately</i> = specifically, expressly. ^{3,4}
58	<i>Thes.</i> 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; <i>composed</i> = fashioned. ²
60		
62	To whom you are but as a form in wax, <u>By him imprinted</u> , and within his power To <u>leave the figure</u> , or <u>disfigure</u> it:	62-64: Hermia is like a figure of wax, whose form (<i>figure</i>) ¹ Egeus may preserve (<i>leave</i>) or mar (<i>disfigure</i>) ¹ at his pleasure. <i>By him imprinted</i> = Egeus is the one who has imparted to Hermia her form and character. ¹
64		
66	Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.	
68	<i>Herm.</i> So is Lysander.	
70	<i>Thes.</i> In himself he is: But <u>in this kind, 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		
74	<i>Herm.</i> I <u>would</u> my father <u>looked but with my eyes</u> .	= wish. = ie. "saw things as I see them."
76	<i>Thes.</i> Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.	75: Hermia must conform her vision of things to Egeus'.
78	<i>Herm.</i> 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. <i>power</i> = pronounced as a single-syllable word.
80		
82	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."
84		
86	<i>Thes.</i> 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. <i>die the death</i> = be executed, a common euphemistic expression. ¹ <i>abjure</i> = renounce.
88		
90	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 (<i>blood</i>), before deciding to defy her father.
92	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: <i>faint</i> = feeble, ^{1,2} perhaps suggesting "unenthusiastic". <i>fruitless</i> = "averse to love"; ⁶ <i>fruitless</i> also conveys a

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

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**).

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

106 The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,

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

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

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.

112 For aye, austerity and single life.

= 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)
 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
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

Egeus. With duty and desire, we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*]

Lysan. How now my love? why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Herm. Belike, for want of rain: which I could well
Beteem them, from the tempest of my eyes.

Lysan. Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth:

But either it was different in blood, –

Herm. O cross! too high to be enthralled to love.

Lysan. Or else misgrafted, in respect of years, –

Herm. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

Lysan. Or else, it stood upon the choice of friends, –

fact that he really wants, as he made clear in lines 141-3 above, to discuss their respective relations with Hermia.

Against = in preparation for.⁴

nearly that = that closely.⁴

= a metaphor for the blush or healthy pinkish hue of her cheek.

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.

Belike = likely.

want = lack.

Beteem = grant, allow,^{1,4} hence "pour upon".³

tempest = storm.

165-7: Lysander has never read or heard of any love story in which the course of true love ever flowed (did run) without obstacles; note the stream metaphor in course and did run.

Ay me! = expression of frustration.¹ This clause is omitted from the Folio. The Quarto prints "**Eigh me**", *eigh* being a seldom-used variant of "ay".

168-188 (below): Lysander lists the various ways the course of love can be thwarted.

168: "but there was either a difference in social class or rank (blood)"⁷ – at which point, Hermia interrupts Lysander.

170: "oh, how unlucky (cross),¹ that someone should be born with such high status (too high) that they should be above becoming enslaved or ruled (enthralled) by love!"

to love = appears in both the Quarto and Folio; however, many editors emend "*to love*" to "*too low*". 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: **misgrafted** = literally, unsuitably grafted,³ hence "badly mismatched".⁴

in respect of = in regards to.⁹

174: "what cruel fortune! that a man should be considered too old to marry a much younger woman."

spite = suggests a malicious thwarting of true love.

176: another reason love can be thwarted is that a match may not be approved by one's relatives (friends),² such as a parent.

The Folio prints, "*it stood upon the choice of merit*", 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 <u>a 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>momentany</u> as a sound, <u>Swift as a shadow</u> , short as any dream;	182-4: the course of true love is fleeting. momentany = momentary, ie. ephemeral; stressed on its first syllable. A common word in the 16th and 17th centuries, momentany 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
186	And, <u>ere</u> a man hath power to say "Behold!" The jaws of <u>darkness</u> do devour it up:	185: ie. lightning, in a sudden impulse (<i>in a spleen</i>), ² briefly reveals (<u>unfolds</u>) ¹ both the sky and earth.
188	So <u>quick</u> bright <u>things</u> come to <u>confusön</u> .	Heaven = here and everywhere going forward, pronounced as a monosyllable, the medial <i>v</i> elided: <i>He'a'n</i> .
190	Herm. If then true lovers have been <u>ever crossed</u> , It stands as an <u>edict</u> , in <u>destiny</u> :	186: and before (<i>ere</i>) a man can say, "Look!" 187: note the intense but brief metaphor of darkness as a greedy eater. = ie. quickly. = ie. like love and lightning. = ruin. ⁴
192	Then let us teach <u>our trial</u> patiēnce: Because it is a <u>customary cross</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.
194	As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs, Wishes, and tears, <u>poor fancy's followers</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."
196	Lysan. <u>A good persuasion</u> : therefore, hear me, Hermia:	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>). = 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>révénue</u> , and she hath no child:	= a widow with a property interest in her deceased husband's estate. ¹
200	From Athens is her house <u>remote seven leagues</u> ;	= income; révénue was usually stressed, as here, on the second syllable.
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	200: remote = distant; the Folio prints "removed", also acceptable. seven = pronounced as a monosyllable: <i>se'en</i> . leagues = a league was about 3 miles, or 5 kilometers. ¹
204	Cannot pursue us. If thou <u>lov'st</u> me, then	= considers, regards. ^{1,7}
206	Steal forth <u>thy</u> father's house, to-morrow night; And in the wood, <u>a league without</u> the town, (Where I did meet thee once with Helena, To do observance to a morn of May),	= harsh, severe. ¹
208	There will I <u>stay</u> for thee.	= 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.
210	Herm. My good Lysander,	= ie. from thy. = ie. "three miles outside".
212	I swear to thee, by <u>Cupid's</u> strongest bow, By his <u>best arrow</u> , with the <u>golden</u> head,	208: to take part in the customary games and celebrations of May Day, the popular holiday observed annually on May 1. = wait.
214	By the <u>simplicity</u> of Venus' <u>doves</u> , By <u>that</u> which <u>knitteth</u> souls, and prospers loves,	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. = Cupid is the cherubic boy-god who mischievously fires his arrows at his victims, causing them to fall in love.
216	And by that fire which burned the <u>Carthage</u> queen, When the <u>false Troyan</u> under sail was seen,	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> .
		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.
		215: Hermia swears by the power (that) which joins (knitteth) souls and makes love prosper.
		216-7: when the Trojan (Troyan) prince Aeneus 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 Aeneus 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.

		false = 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, Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.	= ie. self-same.
222		
224	Lysan. 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	Herm. <u>God speed</u> fair 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. God speed = a general wish for success to another person, typically stated upon parting. ¹
228		fair = attractive, beautiful.
230	Helena. Call you me "fair"? that "fair" again <u>unsay</u> . Demetrius loves your <u>fair</u> : O <u>happy fair</u> !	whither away = where are you going? = take back. 230: fair = ie. fairness.
		happy fair = ie. "how fortunate (happy) 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.
		231: lode-stars = guiding stars; Hermia's eyes are captivating. tongue's sweet air = Hermia's melodious and pleasing (sweet) ¹ manner of speaking and expression (air). 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 (tuneable), 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 (favour) ⁵ were catching too! Furness poses that favour 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: Your words I'd catch = "I would then catch your words". The Folio emends the Quarto's "Your words I catch", which doesn't really make sense. Some editors emend this to "Yours would I catch", referring to Hermia's favour of the previous line. ere = before.

236	<p><u>My ear should catch your voice</u>, my eye your eye, My tongue should catch your tongue's <u>sweet melody</u>.</p>	<p>= by listening carefully to Hermia, Helena hopes to "catch," or acquire, the musical and charming style of her speech.</p>
236-7	<p>= 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.</p>	
236-7	<p>236-7: Shakespeare neatly rotates through the organs of sight and sound – the ear, eye, and tongue.</p>	
236-7 (above)	<p>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.</p>	
236-7	<p>But what about pairings such as that found in lines 236-7: could <i>eye</i> and <i>melody</i> have really rhymed?</p>	
236-7	<p>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."</p>	
236-7	<p>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.</p>	
238	<p>Were the world mine, Demetrius being <u>bated</u>, The rest <u>I'll</u> give to be to you <u>translated</u>.</p>	<p>238-9: "if I owned the whole world, I would give you everything in it, Demetrius excepted (bated)."³ Helena's desperate longing for Demetrius is made clear.</p>
238-9	<p><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</p>	
240	<p>O, teach me <u>how you look</u>, and with what <u>art</u> You <u>sway</u> the motion of Demetrius' heart!</p>	<p>240: how you look = ie. "how to use your eyes so expressively". <i>art</i> = technique, skill. = steer the direction of, ie. control, influence.</p>
242	<p>Herm. I frown upon him; yet he loves me still.</p>	<p>243: Hermia discourages Demetrius' advances, yet he continues to love her.</p>
244	<p>Helena. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!</p>	<p>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.</p>
246	<p>Herm. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.</p>	<p>= stir, excite.¹</p>
248	<p>Helena. O that my prayers could such affection <u>move</u>!</p>	<p>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-</p>
250		

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

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

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

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

262 **Herm.** Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
264 Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
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

276 There my Lysander and myself shall meet,
And thence from Athens, turn away our eyes,
278 To seek new friends and strange companiöns.

280 Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us:
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius! –
282 Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

284 **Lysan.** I will, my Hermia.

[Exit Hermia.]

288 Helena, adieu:
290 As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

[Exit Lysander.]

292 **Helena.** How happy some o'er other some can be!

294 Through Athens, I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so:

century edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, scholar Lewis Theobald emended *swelled* to *sweet* to rhyme with *meet* 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 *counsel* being described as *sweet*.⁹

277: metaphorically, "and leave Athens".

= foreign companions; Theobald here too dares to emend the text to *stranger companies* ("the company of strangers or foreigners"), noting that Shakespeare regularly used the word *company* to mean "companion".⁹

See the note after line 237 above for an explanation of how *eyes* and *companies* would have likely rhymed in Shakespeare's day.

= playmate.¹

280: ie. "may good fortune help you win Demetrius' love!"

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.

289: "may Demetrius love you as much as you love him!"

293: "how fortunate (**happy**) some people are compared to others!"

o'er other some = over some others;¹ *other some* was actually a single word – *othersome* – though it was often broken into two.

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>
302	And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.	301: a variation on the common conceit that "love is blind".
	Nor hath <u>Love's</u> mind of any judgement taste:	302-8 (below): as was common in Elizabethan poetry, Cupid is portrayed as personified Love ; Helena's critiques of Cupid are therefore meant metaphorically to shine light on the irrationality, and hence unfairness, of love in general.
304	Wings, and no eyes, <u>figure unheedy haste</u> :	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. = ie. Cupid, as personified love.
	And therefore is Love said to be a child,	304: Cupid's possessing wings but no sight represents how love can strike a person quickly and impulsively, without rational judgment.
306	Because, in choice, he is so oft beguiled.	<i>figure unheedy haste</i> = represent heedless haste (Stevenson, p. 77). ⁵
308	As <u>waggish</u> boys, <u>in game</u> , themselves <u>forswear</u> , So the boy, Love, is <u>perjured</u> everywhere.	305: Cupid is usually portrayed as a little boy to symbolize his, and therefore love's, lack of mature judgment. 306: because he is so often deceived in choosing whom to strike with his arrows (Stevenson, p. 77). ⁵
	For, ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's <u>eyne</u> , He hailed down oaths, that he was only mine;	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		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.
314	I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight: Then, to the wood, will he, tomorrow night,	313: Helena will reveal to Demetrius Hermia's plan to elope with Lysander.
316	Pursue her: and for <u>this intelligence</u> , If I have thanks, it is <u>a dear expense</u> :	314-5: Then to...her = she expects Demetrius will appear in the woods himself at the appointed time to stop the couple's escape.
318	But herein mean I to <u>enrich my pain</u> , To have his sight <u>thither</u> , and back again.	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).
		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.
		<i>[Exit Helena.]</i>

ACT I, SCENE II

A Room in Quince's House.

*Enter Quince the carpenter; Snug the joiner;
Bottom the weaver, Flute the bellows-mender;
Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor.*

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
2

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bottom. You were best to call them generally,

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

4 man by man, according to the scrip.

"severally"⁷ or "particularly",⁹ meaning "individually".

6 **Quin.** Here is the scroll of every man's name, which
8 is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our
10 interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his
12 wedding-day at night.

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 = list of names.¹ = who.⁵
8 = suited, ie. qualified.²
10 = light dramatic entertainment.^{1,3}

12 **Bottom.** First, good Peter Quince, say what the play
14 treats on; then read the names of the actors: and so

11-12: **say...treats on** = ie. "tell us what the play is about".

16 The common expression "to treat on" was primarily used
in the period to mean (1) "speak on" or "address", e.g., "then
lise (cease)¹ they not to treate on earnest affayres" (1577); or
(2) "negotiate" or "raise", e.g. "the king of Fraunce sent his
Ambassadours to the Emperour, to treate on the marriage
betwene her and his eldest Sonne" (1588).

18 grow to a point.

14 = the OED suggests "come to a conclusion".

16 **Quin.** Marry, our play is, "The Most Lamentable
18 Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and

15: **Marry** = a common oath, derived from the name of the
Virgin Mary.

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).

18 = the Quarto and Folio generally spell the name as *Thisby*,
but we will use the modernized spelling, *Thisbe*, still a
two-syllable word.

Thisbe."

Digression on *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Source and Influence: the story of these "star-crossed
lovers" appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 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 *Romeo and Juliet*, which the
Bard might have been working on in the same period as *A
Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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., *The Troublesome
Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second*, etc., by
Christopher Marlowe (1590); and *The Spanish Tragedy,
Containing the Lamentable End of Don Horatio and
Bel-imperia*, 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
36 love.

38 **Bottom.** That will ask some tears in the true
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.

*The raging rocks,
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison-gates;
And Phibbus' car*

*Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.*

This was lofty. Now, name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein: a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

Flute. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

Flute. What is Thisbe? a wandering knight?

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flute. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman: I have a beard coming.

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 roring 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}

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

= 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

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?

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

= common expression for "please".

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

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

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.

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,
104 that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let
him roar again."

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

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

= 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
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.	Mistress Quickly misuses aggravate in exactly the same way in Shakespeare's <i>Henry IV, Part II</i> , when she says, "Good Captain Peesel, be quiet; 'tis very late, i' beseech you now, aggravate your choler."
118	Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus: for	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.
120	Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a <u>proper</u> man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely,	roar you = ie. roar; a common Elizabethan construction. and 'twere = as if it were. ⁴
122	gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.	119-120: a proper...day = Shakespeare almost certainly borrowed this linguistic conceit from John Llyl, who wrote in his play "Mother Bombie" (1594), "he is as goodly a youth as one shall see in a summer's day." The use of "as one shall see on a summer's day" became proverbial.
124	Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?	proper = handsome. ⁴
126	Quin. Why, <u>what you will</u> .	
128		= ie., "whichever you like."
130	Bottom. I will <u>discharge</u> it in either your straw colour beard, your <u>orange-tawny</u> beard, your <u>purple-in-grain</u>	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.
	beard, or your <u>French crown colour</u> beard, your	= perform. ⁵
		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.
		= the colour of a French gold coin. ¹

132	<u>perfif</u> yellow.	= perfect, a common alternate form; the Folio reads "perfect".
134	Quin. Some of your <u>French crowns</u> have no hair at all; and then <u>you will play barefaced</u> . – But masters,	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 <i>French crown</i>) and, of course, the head. you will play barefaced = "you would play the part with no beard at all."
136	here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to <u>con</u> them by tomorrow night:	= memorize.
138	and meet me in the <u>palace wood</u> , a mile <u>without</u> the	138: palace wood = royal forest, ie. woods belonging to the duke. without = outside.
140	town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse: for if we meet in the city, we shall be <u>dogged</u> with company, and our <u>devices</u> known. In the mean time, I will	140-1: 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
142	<u>draw a bill of properties</u> , such as our play <u>wants</u> . I pray you, fail me not.	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
144	Bottom. We will meet, and there we may rehearse most <u>obscenely</u> and courageously. <u>Take pains</u> ; be	= prepare a list of stage equipment. ^{3,5} = lacks, ie. needs.
146		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 <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> – the only times the word appears in Shakespeare's works.
	<u>perfif</u> : adieu.	Take pains = make an effort, work hard.
148	Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.	= perfect, as at line 132 above; the Folio reads "perfect".
150	Bottom. Enough: <u>hold, or cut bow-strings</u> .	= "be there without fail" (Durham, p. 150), ⁴ or "hold to the agreement at all costs" (Ridley, p. 95). ³
152		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.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT I.

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

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

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

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 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

5 Over park, over pale,
6 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

10

And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.

12

In their gold coats, spots you see:
Those be rubies, fairy favours:

14

In those freckles, live their savours.

16

I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. —

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 *moon's* and *sphere*. 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 *moon's* should be pronounced as a disyllable: *MOON-es*.

The difficulty with this claim is that in both the Quarto and Folio, *moon's* is spelled — "*moons*". If Shakespeare had intended a disyllabic pronunciation, one would expect the spelling *moones*.

H.H. Furness proposes a simpler explanation: the speaker may allow the extra unstressed beat to arise naturally through a slight pause between *moon's* and *sphere*. 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: *dew* = sprinkle with dew, water.^{1,5}

orbs = ie. fairy-rings; rings or circles of grass which appeared in fields and pastures, *orbs* were believed to be created by fairies as they danced in a ring or otherwise went about their duties.^{2,4,5}

green = grassy ground.¹

11: ie. the Fairy Queen's pensioners are cowslips.

cowslips = common wild plant producing yellow flowers, hence the *gold coats* of line 12.¹

pensioners = bodyguards; Queen Elizabeth was assigned a company of bodyguards made up of tall and attractive men, called her **Pensioners**.⁴

= a large reddish spot appears in the middle of each yellow petal of the cowslip.

13: *Those* = ie. the *spots* of line 12.

fairy favours = gifts from the fairies (to the cowslips for doing their jobs).⁵

14: in the red spots (*freckles*) of the cowslips' petals, the flowers' fragrance or scent (*savours*) will be found.⁵

In *Henry V* too, Shakespeare refers to the "*freckled cowslip*".

16: a *pearl* 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.	= will be here shortly.
	<u>Take heed</u> the queen come not within his sight:	20: The king = Oberon, the Fairy King. doth keep his revels = holds a festive celebration. ¹
22	For Oberon is <u>passing fell and wrath,</u>	21: be careful (Take heed) not to let the Fairy King see the Fairy Queen.
		= 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:	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.
	She never had so sweet a <u>changeling.</u>	= ie. kidnapped.
26	And jealous Oberon <u>would</u> have the child <u>Knight of his train,</u> to <u>trace</u> the forests wild;	= 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}
28	But she, <u>perforce,</u> withholds the <u>lovèd</u> boy,	Note that changeling is trisyllabic: <i>CHANGE-e-ling.</i>
	Crowns him with <u>flowers,</u> and makes him all her joy.	= wishes to.
30	And now, <u>they</u> never meet in grove or green,	= a knight in his retinue or group of followers. = cross. ⁴
	By <u>fountain</u> clear, or <u>spangled starlight sheen,</u>	= forcibly. ⁵ = beloved.
		= pronounced in a single syllable.
		= ie. the Fairy King and Queen.
32	But they do <u>square,</u> <u>that</u> all their elves, <u>for</u> fear,	31: fountain = spring.
34	Creep into acorn cups, and hide <u>them</u> there.	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 stars.
36	Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and <u>making</u> quite,	= quarrel. ⁴ = ie. so that. ⁴ = out of.
	Or else you are that <u>shrewd</u> and <u>knavish sprite,</u>	= ie. themselves.
		35: ie. "either I am mistaken in who you look like".
		making = form. ⁴
38	Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he	36: shrewd = mischievous. ⁵
	That <u>frights</u> the maidens of the <u>yillagery?</u>	knavish = roguish. ¹
		sprite = common monosyllabic alternate form of <i>spirit.</i>
		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

	Skim milk, 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 <i>quern</i> (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, And sometime make <u>the drink</u> to bear no <u>barm</u> ,	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 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. Are not you he?	43-44: for those who acknowledge him (line 43), Puck can be a benevolent 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		
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. "for your horse for service in the wars, or the horse kept for highway trauelling, or long journeys, your best provender is beans and oats well kiln-dried and mingled together" (1607). beguile = catch the attention of, divert. ¹ filly foal = the Folio prints "silly foal", 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> , In very likeness of a roasted <u>crab</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. = 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 dewlop</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.
56	The wisest <u>aunt</u> , telling the <u>saddest</u> tale, Sometime, for three-foot stool, mistaketh me: Then slip I from her bum, down topples she, <u>And "tailor"</u> cries, and falls into a cough;	<u>withered dewlop</u> = 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.
58		= old woman. ¹ = soberest, most serious. ⁴
60	And then the whole <u>quire</u> hold their hips, and <u>loffe</u> ;	= why she would cry out "Tailor!" has never been understood or fully explained.
62	And <u>waxen in their mirth</u> , and <u>neeze</u> , and swear	60: <i>quire</i> = company. ⁴ <i>loffe</i> = ie. laugh; a possibly unique variant, used here by Shakespeare to indicate a rhyme with <i>cough</i> , spelled "coffe" in the texts.
64	A merrier hour was never <u>wasted</u> there. – But <u>room</u> , fairy! – here comes Oberon.	61: <i>waxen in their mirth</i> = wax, or grow, in amusement, ie. laugh louder and louder. ^{1,4} <i>neeze</i> = 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 Jonson's <i>Every Man in His Humour</i> (1598), we find "I was at supper with him, and he neezed at every jest, as if the very laughter had struck his nose."
66	<i>Fairy.</i> And here, my mistress! Would that he were gone!	= spent. ¹ = ie. "make room!", a common cry upon the arrival of an important personage in a crowd.
68	<i>Enter Oberon at one door, with his train;</i> <i>Titania, at another, with hers.</i>	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.
70	<i>Ober.</i> <u>Ill met</u> by moonlight, proud Titania.	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.
72	<i>Titan.</i> <u>What, jealous</u> Oberon? – Fairies, <u>skip hence</u> :	Entering Characters: <i>Oberon</i> is the Fairy King, <i>Titania</i> the Fairy Queen. <i>at one door</i> = through one stage door. <i>train</i> = followers, attendants. Shakespeare borrowed the name of his Fairy King from <i>The Faerie Queene</i> (1590), in which Edmund Spenser wrote, "when with king oberon he came to fary land".
74		70: <i>Ill met</i> = a contrast to the usual friendly greeting, "well met"; Oberon is not pleased to run into Titania. <i>Titania</i> = stressed on its second syllable: <i>ti-TA-ni-a</i> .
76		72: <i>What, jealous Oberon?</i> = ie. "hey, is that the suspicious (<i>jealous</i>) ² Oberon I see?" Titania is not speaking to Oberon here, but rather indicating irritation at running into him. <i>skip hence</i> = ie. "let us get away or hasten (<i>skip</i>) ¹

74

I have forsworn his bed and company.

Ober. Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

76

Titan. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stol'n away from Fairy Land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,

80

Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love,

82

To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steppe of India?

84

Your buskined mistress, and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded; and you come,
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

88

Ober. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

from here."

= sworn to do without.

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.

77-86 (below): Titania is piqued over Oberon's infidelities. Her tone throughout the speech is sarcastic and accusatory.

= stealthily or secretly left.

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

80: **pipes of corn** = ie. a wind instrument comprised of a reed or cornstalk. Both Chaucer and Spenser wrote of "pipes made of green corn". Compare *Love's Labour's Lost*, in which Shakespeare writes, "When shepherds pipe on oaten straws..."

versing love = writing or reciting love poetry.⁴

= conventional name for a shepherdess.⁴

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.

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}

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.

88-94 (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 **for shame**, multiple examples from the 16th century suggest it was used this way: e.g., "dare we **for shame** our stained faces

		<i>shew?" (1590).</i>
90	Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, 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".
92	Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night From Perigenia, whom he <u>ravishèd</u> ?	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.
94	And make him with fair <i>Ægles</i> break his faith With Ariadne, and Antíopa?	= violated. ¹ 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).
96	Titan. These are the forgeries of jealousy:	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).
98	And never, since <u>the middle summer's spring</u> , Met we on hill, in <u>dale</u> , forest, or <u>mead</u> ,	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 "lay with him." Shakespeare's use of <i>ravished</i> suggests a more violent and coercive violation of the lady's virtue.
	By <u>pavèd fountain</u> , or by <u>rushy brook</u> ,	2. <i>Ægles</i> = a "nymph" whom Theseus "loved".
100	Or in the <u>beachèd margent of the sea</u> ,	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 "had two children by Theseus." Plutarch also opined that Theseus was much to blame for leaving "his wife Ariadne for the love of <i>Ægles</i> ."
		4. <i>Antíopa</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: Oberon's accusations are the inventions of a suspicious mind. ⁵
		= the beginning (<i>spring</i>) ⁴ of midsummer, with obvious pun. = valley. = meadow.
		99: <i>paved fountain</i> = spring whose bottom is covered with pebbles. ^{1,4} <i>rushy brook</i> = stream filled with rushes. = 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>piping 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</u> their <u>continents</u> .	= overflowed their banks; ⁵ <i>continents</i> = enclosures. ¹
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>	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.
		= strained (to pull). ¹ = ie. because the crop has failed. ⁵
109	Hath rotted, <u>ere his youth attained</u> a <u>beard</u> :	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
	The <u>fold</u> stands empty in the drowned field,	= 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.
110		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
	Hath rotted, <u>ere his youth attained</u> a <u>beard</u> :	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}
112	And crows are fatted with the <u>murrion</u> flock;	= a marked area on the ground where people played the outdoor board game "nine men's morris". ^{2,3}
	The <u>nine men's morris</u> is filled up with mud:	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}
114	And the <u>quaint mazes</u> , in the <u>wanton</u> green, For <u>lack of tread</u> , are undistinguishable.	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} want = lack. blest = ie. blessed.
118	<u>Therefore</u> the moon (the governess of floods)	118: the moon has long been recognized for its influence on the tides (<u>floods</u>). Therefore = 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.
	<u>Pale in her anger, washes all the air,</u>	119: Pale in her anger = a pale countenance was frequently associated with anger. washes all the air = saturates the air with moisture. ¹
120	That <u>rheumatic diseases</u> do abound.	= cold-like illnesses; ⁴ rheumatic is stressed on its first syllable.
	And, <u>thorough this distemperature</u> , we see	= ie. on account of this quarrel of ours", ⁵ or "on account of this unwholesome weather"; distemperature 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 thorough = ie. through, a disyllabic variant.
122	<u>The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts</u> Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,	122: The seasons alter = the normal progression of the seasons has changed. 122-3: hoary-headed...rose = winter is now encroaching on spring. The compound word hoary-headed typically was used to refer to the white hair of an older man (thus creating a linguistic connection to <i>Hiems' 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: And on...set = 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,	Hiëms' = Hiems was a common personification of winter; <i>hiems</i> is Latin for winter. chin = appears in both the Quarto and Folio; usually emended to "thin". The idea of a chaplet adorning Hiems' <i>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. An odorous = a fragrant. ¹ chaplet = wreath or garland, as of flowers. ¹
		122-6 (above): hoary-headed...set = 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 frosts of winter appearing on the roses of spring on the one hand, and summer buds growing on personified winter on the other; but the Bard inserts a symbolic anatomical contrast as well, of the lap of the roses and the crown 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 (<u>change</u>) their accustomed (<u>wonted</u>) 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}
130	And this <u>same</u> progeny of evils <u>comes</u>	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).
132	From our <u>debate</u> , from our dissensiōn; We are their parents and <u>original</u> .	<i>which is which</i> = ie. which is winter and which is autumn. ⁹
134	<i>Ober.</i> <u>Do you amend it</u> then: it lies in you. Why should Titania <u>cross</u> her Oberon?	130-2: and the source (<i>original</i>) of the unnatural disorder of the seasons is the discord between Oberon and Titania. <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
136	I do but beg a little changeling boy, To be my <u>henchman</u> .	<i>comes</i> = stems. <i>debate</i> = wrangling, quarreling. ¹
138		= an imperative: ie. "you should remedy the situation".
140	<i>Titan.</i> <u>Set your heart at rest</u> : The Fairy Land buys not the child of me.	= thwart (the wishes of).
	His mother was <u>a votress of my order</u> :	= high-ranking servant, page of honour. ^{1,4}
142	And, in the <u>spicèd Indian air</u> , by night, Full often <u>hath she gossiped by my side</u> ,	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."
144	And sat with me on <u>Neptune's yellow sands</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
		= 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
		= 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

146 Marking th' embarked traders on the flood;
148 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive,
And grow big-bellied, with the wanton wind:
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,

Following (her womb then rich with my young squire)

150 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
152 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,

154 And, for her sake, do I rear up her boy:
And, for her sake, I will not part with him.

156 *Ober.* How long, within this wood, intend you stay?

158 *Titan.* Perchance, till after Theseus' wedding-day.
160 If you will patiently dance in our round,

162 And see our moonlight revels, go with us:
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

164 *Ober.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

166 *Titan.* Not for thy fairy kingdom. – Fairies, away! –
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

168 [Exit *Titania and her train.*]

170 *Ober.* Well: go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove,
172 Till I torment thee for this injury. –

My gentle Puck, come hither: thou rememberest,

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).

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

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

= ie. the mother would imitate the ships.

153: **mortal** = ie. human; unlike the immortal spirits of the fairy world.

of that boy did die = the mother died during childbirth.

= maybe.²

160: **patiently** = tolerantly,¹ ie. without being quarrelsome.
round = a circular dance, typically performed while holding hands.¹

= merrymaking.¹

162: **shun me** = ie. "keep away from me".¹

spare your haunts = "avoid your usual hangouts."¹

= argue or quarrel straightaway or directly.^{1,2}

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.

174	Since once I sat upon a <u>promontory</u> ,	174: <i>Since</i> = when. ⁴ <i>promontory</i> = "a point of highland which juts out into the sea" (OED).
176	And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back, <u>Uttering</u> such <u>dulcet and harmonious breath</u> ,	176: <i>Uttering</i> = giving voice to; ¹ in <i>The Winter's Tale</i> too, Shakespeare uses the word <i>utter</i> in connection with singing: "He sings several tunes faster than you'll tell money: he utters them as he had eaten ballads..." <i>dulcet and harmonious</i> = sweet or pleasing and melodious. ^{1,5} <i>breath</i> = voice or song. ²
178	That the <u>rude</u> sea grew <u>civil</u> at her song, And certain stars shot madly from their <u>spheres</u> ,	177: the mermaid's singing pacified the rough (<i>rude</i>) ¹ sea. <i>civil</i> = calm. ⁵
180	To hear the sea-maid's music.	178: Shakespeare used the same imagery in his long poem <i>Lucrece</i> (1594): "... and little stars shot from their fixed places." See the note at line 8 above for the <i>spheres</i> of the heavenly bodies.
182	Puck. I remember.	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 <i>vestal</i> is Queen Elizabeth I, the unmarried English monarch famed for her chastity. But beyond that, no satisfactory explanation has been established.
184	Ober. That very time, I saw (but thou couldst not) Flying between the <u>cold moon</u> and the earth,	= in ancient cosmology (which assigned attributes like cold or hot, and dry or moist, to heavenly bodies), the moon was regarded as <i>cold</i> and moist.
186	Cupid, all armed: a <u>certain</u> aim he took At a fair <u>vestal</u> , <u>thronèd by [the] west</u> ,	= sure, accurate. ²
188	And <u>loosed his love-shaft</u> smartly from his bow, As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:	186: <i>vestal</i> = the <i>vestals</i> were famous virgin-priestesses of ancient Rome. <i>thronèd by the west</i> = 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 <i>by</i> doesn't really work. ³
	But I might see young Cupid's fiery <u>shaft</u>	= 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 (<i>shaft</i>) 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> .	= religious devotee, bound by vows, ie. the vestal.
194	Yet <u>marked</u> I where the <u>bolt</u> of Cupid fell: It fell upon a little western flower;	= ie. untainted by feelings of love (fancy).
196	Before, milk-white; now purple, with love's wound, And maidens call it <u>love-in-idleness</u> .	= ie. "I noted". = arrow.
	Fetch me that flower; the herb I <u>shewed</u> thee once.	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
198	<u>The juice of it, on sleeping eye-lids laid,</u>	= ie. showed; <i>shew</i> was the older and more common alternate form of <i>show</i> .
200	Will make <u>or</u> man <u>or</u> woman madly dote Upon the next live creature that it sees.	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.
202	Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again Ere the <u>leviathan</u> can swim a <u>league</u> .	199: or...or = either...or.
204	Puck. I'll <u>put a girdle round about the earth</u> ,	199-200: date / Upon = fall excessively in love with, become infatuated with. ¹
206	In forty minutes.	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}
208		= go around the earth; ¹ this expression first appeared in published literature here, and was soon adopted by subsequent authors.
210	Ober. <u>Having once</u> this juice, I'll watch Titania, when she is asleep, And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:	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
212	The next thing then she, waking, looks upon, (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, On <u>meddling</u> monkey, or on <u>busy</u> ape)	= ie. "once I have".
214		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, <u>nor I cannot</u> love you?		<i>entice</i> = allure. ¹ <i>speak you fair</i> = "speak kindly to you?" ¹
240	Helena. And <u>even for that</u> , do I love you the more.		= double negatives were common and acceptable in Elizabethan English.
242	I am your <u>spaniel</u> : and, Demetrius, The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:		= precisely; ¹ pronounced as <i>e'en.</i> = ie. for that reason. ¹
244	Use me but as your spaniel: <u>spurn</u> me, strike me, Neglect me, lose me: only give me <u>leave</u>		242-9: the spaniel was commonly used metaphorically to describe one who fawns submissively on another; ¹ Shakespeare had used this exact conceit in <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> (written c. 1590):
246	(Unworthy as I am) to follow you.		<i>Yet, spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love, The more it grows and fawneth on her still.</i>
248	What worser place can I beg, in your love, (And yet, a place of high respect with me) Than to be <u>used</u> as you use your dog?		= treat. = kick. = permission.
250	Demet. Tempt not, too much, the hatred of my spirit.		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.
252	For I am sick, when I do look on thee.		251: ie. Demetrius warns Helena not to push him too hard.
254	Helena. And I am sick when I look not on you.		
256	Demet. You do <u>impeach</u> your <u>modesty</u> too much, To leave the city, and commit yourself		256-8: by chasing Demetrius so obviously, Helena is opening herself up to accusations of immodesty, and even promiscuity.
258	Into the hands of one that loves you not;		<i>impeach</i> = call into question, cast doubt upon. ⁴ <i>modesty</i> = chastity, propriety of behaviour.
	To trust the opportunity of night,		259-261 (below): Demetrius rebukes Helena for putting herself into such a dangerous position when her chastity is at stake.
260	And the ill counsel of a <u>desert</u> place,		259: to risk being out after dark, when there is greater chance for immorality.
	With the rich worth of your virginity.		260: and trusting for her safety in the face of any evil plans or designs (<i>ill counsel</i>) that likely exist in such a deserted or desolate (<i>desert</i>) location. ^{1,2}
262	Helena. <u>Your virtue is my privilege: for that</u>		261: to put her precious virginity at risk.
			263: <i>Your virtue...privilege</i> = Helena responds that she is in fact protected from harm thanks to Demetrius' upright moral nature; privilege = sanctuary, protection. ^{1,2} <i>for that</i> = because. ⁵
264	It is not night, when I do see your face. Therefore, I think, I am not in the night;		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	Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company. For you, <u>in my respect</u> , are all the world.		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!).
268	Then how can it be said I am alone, When all the world is here, to look on me?		<i>in my respect</i> (line 267) = "in my view", ie. "as far as I am concerned". ⁹
270			

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> :	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
280	Demet. I will <u>not stay thy questions</u> . Let me go:	278: <i>Makes speed</i> = hurries, makes haste. ¹
282	Or if thou follow me, do not believe, But I shall <u>do thee mischief</u> in the wood.	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.
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:	= 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 "stay (meaning "avoid") foolish questions".
288	We cannot fight for love, as men may do: We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.	= ie. "cause thee harm".
290	[Exit Demetrius.]	= for shame.
292	<u>I'll</u> follow thee, and <u>make a Heaven of hell</u> , <u>To die upon the hand</u> I love so well.	287: "your cruelty towards me forces me to act in a way (ie. chasing him) which is unbecoming for my sex." = ie. women.
294		293ff: the remainder of the scene is spoken, mostly, in rhyming couplets.
296	[Exit Helena.]	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.
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. –	<i>I'll</i> = the Folio prints "I".
300		<i>make a Heaven of hell</i> = an interesting inversion of Hermia's exclamation at Act I.i.264 that Lysander "hath turned a Heaven unto a hell." <i>To die upon the hand</i> = in dying by the hand. ^{5,9}
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.		

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
306	Puck. Ay, there it is.	<i>the flower</i> = ie. the love-in-idleness; see line 196 above.
308	Ober. <u>I pray thee</u> give it me. I know a <u>bank</u> where the <u>wild thyme blows</u> ,	= please. 308: a syllable seems to be missing from this line, unless <i>where</i> or <i>wild</i> is to be treated as a disyllable. <i>bank</i> = ie. shore of a stream. ¹ <i>wild thyme</i> = species name for <i>Thymus serpyllum</i> . <i>blows</i> = blooms or blossoms. ²
310	Where <u>oxlips</u> , and the <u>nodding violet</u> grows,	309: <i>oxlips</i> = plant whose flower resembles the cowslip. ¹ <i>nodding violet</i> = likely <i>nodding</i> because of the way the violet's flower can droop: a 1631 work writes, "I asked a nodding violet why it sadly hung the head..." ¹⁰
312	Quite <u>over-canopied</u> with <u>luscious woodbine</u> ,	310: <i>over-canopied</i> = overhung. ¹ <i>luscious</i> = highly pleasant to the sense of smell. ¹ <i>woodbine</i> = honeysuckle. ¹
314	With sweet <u>musk-roses</u> , and with <u>eglantine</u> :	311: <i>musk-roses</i> = species of rose with large, white flowers possessing a musk scent. ² <i>eglantine</i> = ie. the eglantine rose, or sweet-briar. ^{2,3}
316	There sleeps Titania, <u>sometime of the night</u> , Lulled in these flowers, with <u>dances and delight</u> : And there the snake <u>throws</u> her <u>enamelled</u> skin, <u>Weed wide enough</u> to wrap a fairy in.	= at some time or another during the night. ¹ = "dances that give delight." ⁵ = sheds. = hard polished, ¹ glossy, ⁶ and/or multi-coloured. ²
318	And, with the juice of this, I'll <u>streak</u> her eyes, And <u>make her full of hateful fantasies</u> .	315: the cast-off skin of a snake is just <i>wide enough</i> to make a garment or covering (<i>Weed</i>) ^{1,4} for a fairy.
320		316-7: Oberon himself will rub (<i>streak</i>) 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.
322	Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove: A sweet <u>Athenian lady</u> is in love With a <u>disdainful youth</u> : anoint his eyes. But do it, <u>when the next</u> thing he <u>espies</u> , May be the lady: thou shalt know the man	<i>make her full of hateful fantasies</i> = fill her with disgusting or repulsive hallucinations or conceits. ^{1,2,6}
		318-325 (below): on the other hand, Oberon, showing compassion for Helena, instructs Puck to smear Demetrius' eyes with the same juice, in order to cause him to fall in love with her when he wakes up and sees her next to him.
		= ie. Helena. = ie. Demetrius. = so that. = the sense is "first". = sees.
		322-3: <i>thou shalt...hath on</i> = 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 (<u>her love</u> , ie. Demetrius). <u>fond</u> = 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 <u>hence</u> = 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: Some war...coats = some of the fairies should battle bats (<u>rere-mice</u> , a disyllable, pronounced <i>rear-mice</i>) to collect their wings from which coats can be made for elves. leathren = 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 leather-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: and some...spirits = other fairies should keep away the owls, with their noisy (clamorous) hooting and intrusive curiosity at the fairies' doings. ⁵ wonders = marvels. ¹ quaint = 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.	
13	<i>You spotted snakes, with <u>double</u> tongue,</i>	= ie. forked. ⁵
14	<i>Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen,</i>	= covered with spines. ⁵
15	<i>Newts 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

Chorus.

Philomel, with melody,

*Sing in our sweet lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:*

*Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So good night, with lullaby.*

*Ist Fairy. Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near:
Worm nor snail, do no offence.*

*Chorus.
Philomel, with melody, &c.*

*2nd Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
One aloof, stand sentinel.*

[*Exeunt Fairies*]

[*Titania sleeps.*]

*Enter Oberon,
and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

thought to be poisonous.

= 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.

21: *lulla* is the older word, transformed into *lullaby* in the late 16th century.¹

24: ie. come near (*nigh*) the lovely Fairy Queen.

= away!

36: one fairy should remain, standing apart (*aloof*), acting as a guard to watch over Titania.

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.

Note how Oberon, in this speech, employs a pair of rhyming triplets surrounding a rhyming couplet.

45-46: whoever (*What* = who) Titania sees first upon waking, she will take for her true love.

47: Oberon desires that Titania not just love, but pine and yearn (*languish*) for, the object of her affection.

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.

ounce = lynx.³

cat = wildcat.⁴

*Ober. What thou seest, when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take:*

Love and languish for his sake.

*Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,*

		<i>pard</i> = leopard. ³
50	In thy eye, <u>that</u> shall appear When thou wak'st, it is thy dear: Wake, when some vile thing is near.	= ie. that which.
52		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	We'll rest us, 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		=ie. yourself.
64	Herm. Be it so, Lysander: find <u>you out</u> a bed: For I, upon this bank, will rest my head.	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.
66	Lysan. One <u>turf</u> shall serve as pillow for us both:	67: Lysander explains the meaning of this line at lines 74-77 below.
	One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.	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
68		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
70	Herm. Nay, good Lysander: for my sake, my dear, Lie further off, <u>yet</u> ; <u>do not lie so near</u> .	74-75: Lysander explains " one heart " from line 67 above.
72	Lysan. O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence. Love takes the meaning in love's conferēnce.	75: the Folio prints, "So that but one heart can you make of it", 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.
74	I mean that my heart unto yours is knit, So that but one heart we can make of it:	76: <i>bosoms</i> = commonly used, as here, to refer to the breast or heart as the seat of emotions. ^{1,2}
76	Two <u>bosoms interchainèd</u> with an oath:	

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

80 **Herm.** Lysander riddles very prettily.

82 Now much beshrew 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!

98 **Puck.** Through the forest have I gone,
100 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)
Despisèd 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.

[*They sleep.*]

Enter Puck.

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

152 Transparent Helena, nature shews art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

154 Where is Demetrius? Oh how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

156 **Helena.** Do not say so, Lysander, say not so.
158 What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

160

162 **Lysan.** Content with Hermia? No: I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena I love.

164 Who will not change a raven for a dove?

166 The will of man is by his reason swayed:
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe, until their season:
168 So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.

170 And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will,

And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook

into water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place").

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

154-5: knowing that Helena loves Demetrius, Lysander expresses a desire to kill his rival, even though Demetrius does not return her feelings.

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.

= wearisome, annoying.¹

= 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.

= desire.² = directed.¹

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.

169: "and now that I have reached the summit (**point**)² of mature adult judgment and discretion (**skill**).⁴
touching = attaining.²

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 *marshal* – 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.

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 eyes being a book from Sir Philip Sydney's linguistically influential <i>The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia</i> : "are your eyes a fit book (think you) to read a tale upon?" (1590). In <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> (written about the same time as <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>) Shakespeare wrote, "and makes his book thine eyes".
174	Helena. <u>Wherfore</u> was I to this <u>keen</u> mockery born?	174: "why (<i>Wherfore</i>) was I born to endure this harsh and cutting (<u>keen</u>) ² mockery?" = ie. "from you". ¹
176	When, <u>at your hands</u> , did I deserve this scorn? Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,	179: Helena feels that Lysander is deliberately ridiculing her, and feels the humiliation keenly.
178	That I did never, no nor never can, Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye, But you must <u>flout my insufficiency</u> ?	<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)	180: both Good troth and good sooth have the sense of, "truly" or "really".
182	In such disdainful manner me to woo. But, fare you well: <u>perforce I must confess</u> ,	= ie. "I am forced to admit".
	I thought you lord of more true <u>gentleness</u> .	183: Helena expected Lysander to behave with more politeness and courtesy (<u>gentleness</u>) 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	[Exit Helena.]	
188	Lysan. She sees not Hermia. – Hermia, sleep thou there,	190: Lysander wants Hermia to stay away from him!
190	And never mayst thou come Lysander near!	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.
192	For, as a <u>surfeit</u> of the sweetest things The deepest loathing to the stomach brings:	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
194	Or, as the <u>heresies</u> , that men do leave, Are hated most <u>of</u> those they did deceive:	193-4: false doctrines (<u>heresies</u>) are hated most by those who once believed them, but, upon realizing they have been misled, give them up. ⁵ <i>of</i> = by.
	So thou, my <u>surfeit</u> , and my <u>heresy</u> ,	195: Hermia, whom Lysander once loved, is now the object of both his own excess (<u>surfeit</u>) and error (<u>heresy</u>): his former affection now nauseates him, and he regards that love as an emotional wrong.
196	Of all be hated; but the most, of me! –	196: ie. Hermia should be hated by everyone, but most of all, by Lysander!

		<i>Of...of</i> = by...by.
198	And all my powers, <u>address</u> your love and might, To honour <u>Helen</u> , and to be her knight!	197-8: Lysander apostrophizes his own faculties: all their efforts should be directed toward honouring Helena. <i>address</i> = direct. <i>Helen</i> = Shakespeare varies the form of the name (<i>Helen</i> vs. <i>Helena</i>) depending on a line's meter or the number of syllables he needs.
200		[<i>Exit Lysander.</i>]
202	Herm. [Awaking.]	
204	Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast! –	
206	Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here! – Lysander look, how I do <u>quake with fear</u> .	= the expression "quake for fear" was very common, but "quake with fear" much less so.
208	Methought a serpent <u>ate</u> my heart away,	= the Quarto and Folio both print " <i>eate</i> " (ie. eat) here. We make the expected emendation to the past tense.
210	And you sat smiling at his cruēl <u>prey</u> . –	= the editors generally agree that the meaning of <i>prey</i> here is "preying", though the OED does not record this sense.
	Lysander! what, <u>removed</u> ? Lysander! lord!	209: Hermia suddenly realized Lysander is not nearby. <i>removed</i> = gone, departed.
212	What, <u>out of hearing</u> ? gone? no sound, no word? <u>Alack</u> , where are you? speak, <u>and if</u> you hear;	= common expression meaning, "out of hearing distance". ¹
	Speak, <u>of all loves</u> ! – I <u>swoun</u> almost with fear. –	211: <i>Alack</i> = like "alas", a common interjection used to express grief and regret. ¹ <i>and if</i> = ie. if. ⁵
214	No? then I well perceive, you are not <u>nigh</u> : Either death, or you, I'll find immediately.	212: <i>of all loves</i> = ie. "for my sake" ³ or "for the sake of all loves." ⁴ <i>swoun</i> = ie. swoon, meaning "faint". The spelling <i>swoon</i> was not used until the 1640s or so. <i>Swoun</i> suggests a bit of a diphthong in the original pronunciation: <i>swuh-oon</i> . Listen to Paul Meier's pronunciation of analogous words at https://www.paulmeier.com/OP.pdf . ²²
216		= near. 214: Hermia will at once set out to find Lysander, or die trying.
		[<i>Exit Hermia.</i>]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The wood. Titania lying asleep.

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

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

2 **Quin.** Pat, pat: and here's a marvellous convenient
4 place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our
6 stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house, and we
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
14 and Thisbe, that will never please. First, Pyramus
must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies
cannot abide. How answer you that?

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

18 **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.
24 Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to
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,
but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

28 **Quin.** Well: we will have such a prologue, and it
30 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
36
38

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeared of the lion?

Starv. I fear it, I promise you.

40
42

yourselfs, to bring in (God shield us) a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living: and we ought to look toote.

44
46

Snout. Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

48
50

Bottom. Nay: you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect: "Ladies," or, "Fair ladies, I would wish

of poetry.

= assure.⁵

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: "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)" – that is, the planners feared the lion might have terrified those closest to it, and that the bright lights would have spooked the lion (*commoved his tameness; commoved* = disturbed or excited violently).^{1,3,9}

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.

= ie. that to.⁹ = ie. protect.

= obvious malapropism. = colloquial use of "your".⁵

= "look to it", ie. address or deal with this.

Instead of "to it", poets usually wrote "to 't" if they wished to indicate that *to it* 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 *toote* with *to 't*.

The word's earliest appearance in print was actually in the 1597 Quarto of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "Thinke ont, looke toot, i doe not vse to iest."

Subsequent writers adopted *toote* for "to 't", including Thomas Middleton, in 1607's *A Trick to Catch Old One*: "nay looke toote."

45-46: Snout's absurd solution is to present a second 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.

= upon entering the stage in a lion's costume, Snug should let the audience know who he really is!

= ie. effect, a malapropism.

52	you," or, "I would request you," or, "I would <u>entreat</u> you, not to fear, not to tremble: <u>my life for yours</u> . If	= beseech. ²
54	you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing: I am a man as other men are": and there indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug, the joiner.	= "I'll bet my life against yours." This expression was used to express a certainty.
56		54-55: <i>it were pity of my life</i> = it would be a matter of great regret. ¹
58	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: for you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.	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		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.
64	Snout. Doth the moon shine, that night we play our play?	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.	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.
68		= window which opens on hinges. ⁵
70	Quin. Yes: it doth shine that night.	= 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 " <i>his majesty's household</i> ", which included the " <i>bed-chamber</i> ".
72	Bottom. Why then, may you leave a <u>casement</u> of the <u>great chamber</u> window (where we play) open; and the	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
74	moon may shine in at the casement.	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".
	Quin. Ay: or else, one must come in, with a bush	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
82 the story) did talk through the chink of a wall.

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
90 Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

92 **Quin.** If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit
94 down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts.
Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your
speech, enter into that brake, and so every one
96 according to his cue.

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 <u>odious savours</u> sweet, –	attempts at elevated language into a very funny scene.
108	Quin. Odours, odours.	You may wish to note that the speeches of the craftsmen's play are written in iambic pentameter.
110	Bottom. – odours savours sweet:	= obvious malapropism. = smells.
112	So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear. But <u>hark</u> , a voice! <u>stay</u> thou but here awhile, And <u>by and by</u> I will to thee appear.	108: Quince corrects Bottom's error. The text here reflects the Folio's version; the Quarto reads, "Odours, <i>odorous</i> ."
114		= listen. = wait.
116		= presently, shortly. ¹
118		
120		
122	Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.	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.
124		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.
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128		119: Puck follows Bottom off-stage and into the brush.
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138	Flute. O – As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.	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 "did agree at Ninus Tumb to meet without the town".
140		<i>Re-enter Puck, and Bottom with an ass's head.</i>
142		
144	Bottom. If I were <u>fair</u> , Thisbe, I were only thine.	141: Puck has transformed Bottom's head into that of a donkey!
146	Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted! Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!	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
148		Bottom delivers his line without realizing the metamorphosis he has just undergone.
150		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.
152	Puck. I'll follow you: I'll lead you <u>about a round</u> , Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier: Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound, A hog, a headless bear, sometime a <u>fire</u> ,	<i>fair</i> = pronounced as a disyllable if line 143 is accepted as written: <i>FAY-er</i> .
154		
156	And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.	148-9: Bottom remains on the stage. However, the stage direction in the Folio reads simply, "The clowns all exit", 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.
158		= around in circles; ⁵ Puck intends to mischievously get the men to run about in confusion.
160	Bottom. Why do they run away? this is a <u>knavery</u> of them to make me afeard.	= 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> .
162		
164		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).
166	Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?	= mischievous trick, prank. ^{1,5}

168 **Bottom.** What do you see? you see an ass-head of
170 your own, do you?

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.

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 *A Flourish Upon Fancy* (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 – "You shall have an fool's-head of your own" – in *The Merry Wife's of Windsor*, written just a couple of years after *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

172 [Exit Snout.]

174 Re-enter Quince.

176 **Quin.** Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! thou art
178 translated.

= elliptically, "God protect thee".¹

= transformed.

180 [Exit Quince.]

182 **Bottom.** I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of
184 me, to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir
from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and
down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am
not afraid.

= ie. frighten.

186 *Sings.*

188 *The woosel cock, so black of hue,*

= male European blackbird;⁴ **woosel** was a common variant of **ouzel**, both used for the blackbird.

With orange-tawny 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 throstle, with his note so true,*

= thrush.¹

The wren, with little quill;

= quiet voice.^{1,3}

192 **Titan.** [Awaking.]

194 What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

= perhaps describing the cuckoo's song as a simple melody.^{1,5}

196 **Bottom.** [Sings.]

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,

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

198 *The plain-song cuckoo gray:*

mark = take notice of.¹

200 *Whose note full many a man doth mark,*
And dares not answer nay; –

202	For indeed, who would <u>set his wit</u> to so foolish a bird? who would <u>give a bird the lie</u> , though he cry "cuckoo" <u>never so?</u>	= pit his intelligence or mind against, ie. waste his time arguing with. ¹ = accuse the bird of lying. ¹ = ever so, ie. persistently.
204		
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}
	<u>Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note:</u>	There is much humour here in Titania addressing the ridiculous Bottom, with his ass's head, in such dignified verse.
208	So is mine eye <u>enthralled to thy shape</u> ,	207: mine = my. enamoured of thy note = delighted or in love with Bottom's song (note); ¹ of = by.
	<u>And thy fair virtue's force (perforce) doth move me</u>	= made a willing slave to (ie. captivated by) Bottom's (attractive) appearance or looks. ^{1,2}
210	On <u>the first view</u> to say, to swear, I love thee.	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}
212	Bottom. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and	= "my looking upon you for the first time".
214	love keep little company together, now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not	213-4: reason and...now-a-days = metaphorically, "these days, people fall in love for no reason", ie. love does not follow logic. ⁵
216	make them friends. – <u>Nay, I can gleek, upon occasion.</u>	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.
218	Titan. Thou art as wise, as thou art beautiful.	= Bottom is proud of his witticism about reason and love. gleek = quip, jest. ^{3,4}
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>jewëls</u> , <u>from the deep</u> , And sing, while thou, on <u>pressèd 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 (<i>purge</i>) Bottom's human materiality (<i>mortal grossness</i>), 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 <i>airy</i> = 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. <i>Moth</i> = pronounced "mote", which clarifies the name's suitability for a fairy.
236		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.
	<u>Hop</u> in his walks, and <u>gambol</u> in his eyes,	249-258 (below): note Titania's remarkable rhyming decet — ten consecutive rhyming lines (even with the repetition of <i>eyes</i>). See the note at Act I.i.237 above for a brief discussion of how words like <i>eyes</i> would have reasonably rhymed with words like <i>dewberries</i> in Shakespeare's day.
250	Feed him with <u>apricocks</u> , and <u>dewberries</u> , With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;	249: the fairies are instructed to skip (<i>Hop</i>) along the paths Bottom frequents, and even frolic (<i>gambol</i>) where he can see them. ^{1,2,6}
252	The <u>honey-bags</u> steal from the <u>humble-bees</u> ,	= apricots, a common variant. = blackberries. ¹
	<u>And for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs</u> ,	252: <i>honey-bags</i> = 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". <i>humble-bees</i> = <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
		253: <i>night-tapers</i> = candles to be used at night. <i>crop their waxen thighs</i> = 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
beseech your worship's name.
270
272 **Cob.** Cobweb.

274 **Bottom.** I shall desire you of more acquaintance,
good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make
bold with you. – Your name, honest gentleman?
276
278 **Pease.** Pease-blossom.
280 **Bottom.** I pray you, commend me to Mistress
Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your
father. Good Master Pease-blossom, I shall desire
you of more acquaintance, too. – Your name, I
beseech you, sir?
284
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 patience well. That same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I

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".

290 promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water

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

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.

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,

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

		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., "the Moone imprinteth her moisture in the earth, & is cause of gendring and dew therein..." (1582, <i>Batman Upon Bartholome</i>).
	Lamenting some enforced chastity.	
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		= 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
		<i>[Exeunt.]</i>
	<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;	2-3: Oberon is eager to learn upon whom Titania has first
2	Then <u>what</u> it was that next came in her eye,	set her eyes, knowing that she will fall madly in love
3	Which she must <u>dote on, in extremity.</u>	with him.
4		what = who. dote on = love excessively, be infatuated with. ² in extremity = to the utmost degree.
		<i>Enter Puck.</i>
6	Here comes my messenger. –	= "how are things now?" ¹ = wild, gay. ⁶
8	<u>How now, mad</u> spirit?	
	What <u>night-rule</u> now about this <u>haunted</u> grove?	9: "what night-time revelries or diversions (night-rule) ^{2,4,6} have been going on in this much-frequented (haunted) ⁴ woods?
10		Line 9 begins an extended period of rhyming (mostly in couplets) that extends for several hundred lines.
	Puck. <u>My mistress</u> with a <u>monster</u> is in love,	11: My mistress = ie. Titania. a monster = an unnatural creature, ⁵ ie. Bottom with his ass's head. However, Shakespeare may have been using the word monster 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</u> bower.	= private or secret. ⁵ = sacred sleeping space. ²
	While she was <u>in her dull and sleeping hour,</u>	= ie. asleep. dull = weary, sleepy; ⁶ dull could also refer to the insensibility experienced during sleep. ¹ The collocation dull sleep appears frequently in the 16th and 17th centuries.
14	A crew of <u>patches</u> , <u>rude</u> <u>mechanicals</u> ,	14: patches = clowns, simpletons. ^{1,4} rude = ignorant, uneducated. ²

		mechanicals = craftsmen or manual labourers. ¹
16	That work for <u>bread</u> upon Athenian <u>stalls</u> ,	15: bread = ie. food. ⁶ upon = at, by. stalls = small shops or sheds where tradesmen carry on their work. ⁵
18	Were met together to rehearse a play, Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day: The <u>shallowest</u> <u>thick-skin</u> of that <u>barren sort</u> ,	18: Puck alludes to Bottom here. shallowest = most lacking in depth of mind, stupidest. ^{1,5} thick-skin = dull or slow fellow. ^{1,5} barren sort = 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
22	When I did him at this advantage take, An ass's <u>nole</u> I fixèd on his head.	= left, walked away from. = bush.
24	Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,	21: "when I caught him at this favourable moment". ² = head. ¹
		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</u> my <u>minnick</u> comes. When they him <u>spy</u> ,	24: forth my minnick comes = Bottom comes forth, out of the brush. minnick = burlesque actor, or actor; rare variant of "mimic". ^{1,2} spy = see.
26	As wild geese that <u>the creeping fowler</u> eye;	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 (choughs) who hear a gun fired (26-27), both flocks flying away in panic (28).
		= see the stealthily approaching (creeping) ⁶ wild-bird hunter (fowler). We may note that a fowler usually looked to catch birds with a net. ¹
26	Or russet-pated <u>choughs</u> , <u>many</u> in <u>sort</u> ,	26: russet-pated choughs = jackdaws (choughs) with grey (russet) heads; russet usually means reddish-brown, but there are numerous contemporary examples of russet used for grey. ^{1,3,5} pated = headed. many in sort = in a great crowd, many together; in sort = in a body. ¹
28	<u>Rising</u> and cawing at the gun's <u>report</u> ; Sever themselves, and <u>madly sweep</u> the sky: So, <u>at his sight</u> , away his <u>fellows</u> <u>fly</u> ,	27: taking flight (Rising) and calling out when they hear a gunshot (report). = scatter. ¹ = frantically move swiftly across. ¹
		29f: the simile now shifts to the craftsmen. at his sight = upon seeing Bottom. fellows = companions. ² fly = flee; but fly also connects subtly back to the literal flying away of the scattering birds of the double-

		simile.
30	And at <u>our</u> stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls:	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.
	He " <u>murther!</u> " cries, and help from Athens calls.	<u>our</u> = why Puck uses "our" here is unclear, as he was the only fairy present at the tradesmen's rehearsal.
32	Their sense, thus weak, lost with their fears, thus strong, Made <u>senseless</u> things begin to do them wrong:	31: <i>He</i> = another one of the men. ⁵ <i>murther</i> = common alternate form of "murder".
		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 briers and thorns, at their apparel, <u>snatch</u> : Some sleeves, some hats; <u>from yielders, all things catch</u> .	= catch, snag. ¹ = ie. the briers 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: When in that moment (so it came to pass)	= ie. Bottom. = transformed. ⁵
40	Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.	
42	<i>Ober.</i> This <u>falls out</u> better than I could <u>devise</u> . – But hast thou yet <u>latched</u> the Athenian's 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	<i>Puck.</i> 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	<i>Ober.</i> <u>Stand close</u> : this is the same Athenian.	= stand still (so as to remain unnoticed). ⁵
54	<i>Puck.</i> 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?
57 Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

58 **Herm.** Now I but chide: but I should use thee worse,
59 For thou (I fear) hast given me cause to curse.
60 If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
61 Being o'er-shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,

62 And kill me too.
63 The sun was not so true unto the day
64 As he to me: would he have stolen away
65 From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
66 This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
67 May through the centre creep, and so displease
68 Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.

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

72 **Demet.** So should the murdered look, and so should I,
73 Pierced through the heart, with your stern cruëltý:
74 Yet you, the murtherer, look as bright, as clear,
75 As yonder Venus, in her glimmering sphere.

76 **Herm.** What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
77 Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?
78 **Demet.** I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.
79 **Herm.** Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
80 Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
81 Henceforth be never numbered among men. –
82 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."

		<i>even</i> = pronounced "e'en".
86	Durst thou have looked upon him, <u>being awake?</u> And hast thou killed him, sleeping? O <u>brave touch!</u> Could not a <u>worm</u> , an adder, do so much?	= ie. "have you dared". = ie. Demetrius being awake. = "what a valiant deed or achievement!" (ironic). ^{2,5,6} = snake. ²
88	<u>An adder did it:</u> for with <u>doubler tongue</u>	89: <i>An adder did it</i> = Lysander's murderer was in fact a snake – Demetrius! <i>doubler tongue</i> = ie. greater deceit; the common expression <i>double-tongued</i> meant "deceitful" and "insincere", ¹ but also alludes to the serpent's forked tongue.
90	Than thine (thou <u>serpent</u>) never adder stung.	= the <i>serpent</i> was sometimes used by Shakespeare as a symbol of deceit (OED).
92	Demet. You <u>spend</u> your <u>passion</u> on a <u>misprised mood</u> : I am not guilty of <u>Lysander's blood</u> : Nor is he dead, <u>for aught that I can tell</u> .	= use up, waste. ¹ = emotion. ¹ = misplaced anger or fancy. ^{1,5} = ie. spilling Lysander's blood. = ie. "for all that I know." ¹
94		= please.
96	Herm. <u>I pray thee</u> , tell me then, that he is well.	= ie. if. = ie. get for that, ie. receive in return. ¹
98	Demet. <u>And if</u> I could, what should I <u>get therefore</u> ?	= right, benefit. ^{1,6}
100	Herm. A <u>privilege</u> , never to see me more: And from thy <u>hated</u> presence part I [<u>so</u>]:	101: <i>hated</i> = loathed, hateful. ¹ <i>so = so</i> 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	See me no more, <u>whether he</u> be dead or <u>no</u> .	102: <i>whether</i> = pronounced as a monosyllable: <i>whe'er</i> . <i>he</i> = ie. Lysander. <i>no</i> = ie. not.
104		106: "there is no use following Hermia while she is in this fierce mood" (Stevenson, p. 92). ⁵
106	Demet. There is no following her in this fierce vein:	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.
108	Here therefore, for a while, I will remain. So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow For debt that <u>bankrout sleep</u> doth sorrow owe:	<i>bankrout</i> = bankrupt, a common alternate form. <i>sleep</i> = printed as <i>slippe</i> and <i>slip</i> in the Quarto and Folio respectively, and generally emended to <i>sleep</i> .
110	<u>Which</u> now <u>in some slight measure</u> it will pay, If for <u>his tender</u> here I <u>make some stay</u> .	= ie. the debt. = a small or partial amount. = ie. sleep. 111: if I pause here (<i>make some stay</i>) ¹ to accept sleep's (<i>his</i>) offer (<i>tender</i>) (of partial payment).
112		= ie. applied. = ie. Lysander's.
114		117-8: "the result of your mistake (<i>misprision</i>) must necessarily be that a faithful lover (this would be Lysander) has rejected his or her beloved (<i>some true love turned</i> ; the beloved here is Hermia), rather than someone becoming
116	Ober. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite, And <u>laid</u> the love-juice on <u>some true-love's</u> sight.	
118	Of thy <u>misprision</u> must <u>perforce</u> ensue <u>Some true love turned</u> , and not a <u>false</u> turned true.	

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.
126 All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
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,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

134 [Exit Puck.]

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.

perfuse = 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, And the youth, <u>mistook by me</u> ,		146: Puck addresses Oberon.
148			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!		
152	Ober. Stand aside. The noise <u>they</u> make		= ie. Lysander and Helena.
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 (<i>sport</i>) without equal (<i>alone</i>). 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		<i>Enter Lysander and Helena.</i>	
162			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 <u>I 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.		170: Lysander's deceit is escalating. advance = show. ^{2,5}
	<u>When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!</u>		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

		combat (<i>fray</i>) is evil or damnable (<i>devilish</i>). ^{1,2,6}
172	These vows are Hermia's. Will you <u>give her o'er</u> ?	= abandon or give up Hermia. ¹
174	Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh. Your vows to her and me, put in two scales, Will even weigh; and both as <u>light as tales</u> .	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. <i>light as tales</i> = as of little value (<i>light</i>) as are idle stories or fictional narratives (<i>tales</i>); ¹ <i>light</i> also bears the literal sense of being low in weight.
176		= discretion, good sense, wisdom. ²
178	Lysan. I had no <u>judgement</u> , when to her I swore.	= nor any.
180	Helena. <u>Nor none</u> , in my mind, now you give her o'er.	
182	Lysan. Demetrius loves her: and he loves not you.	
184	Demet. [Awaking.] O Helen, goddess, <u>nymph</u> , <u>perfect divine</u> ,	184: <i>nymph</i> = beautiful maiden. ¹ <i>perfect divine</i> = sacred or ideal godlike one; ^{1,2} <i>perfect</i> is stressed on its second syllable, not uncommon in Elizabethan verse. = "your eyes"; <i>eyne</i> is the old poetic form of "eyes".
	To what, my love, shall I compare <u>thine eyne</u> ?	
186	<u>Crystal is muddy.</u> O, how <u>ripe</u> in show Thy <u>lips</u> , those kissing <u>cherries</u> , <u>tempting grow</u> !	186: <i>Crystal is muddy</i> = "compared to the brightness of your eyes, crystal is dull and dirty." ^{1,5} 186-7: <i>how ripe...grow</i> = a brief but dense metaphor, by which Demetrius compares Helena's <i>lips</i> to <i>cherries</i> , describing them both as red and full (<i>ripe</i>) ¹ and tempting. We may note that the comparison of a woman's lips to cherries was ubiquitous in Elizabethan poetry. <i>tempting grow</i> = becoming increasingly enticing; but <i>grow</i> also carries an agricultural sense, suggesting the ripening or growth of the cherries on the tree.
188	That pure <u>congealèd</u> white, high <u>Taurus</u> ' snow,	188-190: <i>That pure...hand</i> = compared to Helena's white hand, even the snows of the Taurus mountains, blown by the cold wind, appear black. ⁵ <i>congealed</i> = frozen. ¹
	Fanned with <u>the eastern wind</u> , <u>turns to a crow</u> ,	<i>Taurus</i> = large and lofty mountain range in southeast Asia Minor; Sugden notes that the peaks are snow-covered all year round. ²⁰
190	When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss <u>This princess</u> of pure white, this <u>seal of bliss</u> !	189: <i>the eastern wind</i> = an east wind was considered harsh and sharp. <i>turns to a crow</i> = metaphorically, appears black in comparison. A dark complexion was considered unattractive by Elizabethan standards.
192	Helena. O spite! O hell! I see, <u>you all</u> are <u>bent</u>	191: <i>This princess</i> = this paragon ² (ie. the hand). <i>seal of bliss</i> = pledge or symbol of happiness. ^{1,5}
194	To <u>set against</u> me, for your merriment.	193-4: Helena couldn't be more indignant, now that both Lysander and Demetrius (<i>you all</i>) are mocking her by pretending to be in love with her. <i>bent</i> = inclined.

196 If you were civil, and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
198 But you must join in souls to mock me too?

200 If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
202 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
204 You both are rivals, and love Hermia:
And now both rivals, to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
206 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort

208 Would so offend a virgin, and extort

210 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

212 **Lysan.** You are unkind, Demetrius: be not so.
For you love Hermia: this you know I know.
214 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part:
And yours of Helena, to me bequeath:

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: I will none.
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
222 My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen is it home returned,
224 There to remain.

226 **Lysan.** Helen, it is not so.

228 **Demet.** Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril, thou aby it dear. –
230 Look, where thy love comes: yonder is thy dear.

232 *Re-enter Hermia.*

set against = attack, act hostile toward.¹

= decent, well-behaved.⁶ = ie. had good manners.²

= ie. act as one, or "conspire together".⁵

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

= a fine deed (ironic).^{2,5}

= bring tears to.

= no person of virtuous nature or high birth.⁵

208: **virgin** = maiden.

208-9: **extort...patience** = exhaust Helena's patience,⁵
ie. push to the limit her capacity to endure the men's
cruelty; **extort** = wrest away through intimidation.^{1,4}

= "amuse you."

214-5: because Lysander no longer loves Hermia, he
willingly gives up his share (**part**) of her love to
Demetrius, and asks Demetrius in return to give him
his share of Helena's love (**yours of Helena**).

= I want nothing to do with her."

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.

guest-wise = like a guest.¹

sojourned = travelled, perhaps with sense of remaining
elsewhere only for a time.^{1,2}

228: "do not scorn or vilify (**Disparage**)⁶ the sincerity of a
love that you don't understand."

= "you will pay or atone for (**aby**)^{2,5} it dearly."

= ie. there. = over there.

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 "doth invert the attest of eyes and ears / As if those organs had deceptious functions..."
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. – Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found: Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound. But why, unkindly, didst thou leave me so?	= perception. ³ = ie. dark night.
238		238-9: Hermia was able to find Lysander by hearing him, not seeing him, in the night.
240		
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 love</u> , 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 "oes and eyes" ("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 derision</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, <i>sister</i> 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. <i>hours</i> = pronounced as a single syllable.	
262	When we have <u>chid</u> the hasty-footed time For parting us: – O, is all forgot?	262-3: <i>When we...us</i> = the girls would scold time for moving too quickly, prematurely ending their moments together. <i>chid</i> = 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}	
264	All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence? We, Hermia, like two <u>artificial</u> gods,	266-7: have embroidered together. <i>needles</i> = as here, <i>needle</i> was usually pronounced as a single syllable in Shakespeare's verse. <i>Sampler</i> = a sample of embroidery work, used to demonstrate a woman's skill. ^{1,5}	
266	Have with our <u>needles</u> created both one flower, Both on one <u>Sampler</u> , sitting on one cushion,	268: ie. singing the same song together, in unison (<i>in one key</i>) rather than in harmony. = the precise meaning of <i>sides</i> 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.	
268	Both warbling of one song, both <u>in one key</u> ; As if our hands, our <u>sides</u> , voices, and minds	270 Had been <u>incorporate</u> . So we grew together, 272 <i>Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;</i> But yet <u>an union in partition</u> , Two lovely berries <u>moulded</u> on one stem; 274 So with two seeming bodies, but one heart; 276 <u>Two of the first</u> , like coats in heraldry, <u>Due but to one</u> , and <u>crownèd</u> with one <u>crest</u> .	= 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 (<i>in partition</i>) but joined (forming <i>an union</i>), distinct yet united. <i>Like to</i> = like. <i>seeming parted</i> = seemingly separate. <i>moulded</i> = 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 <i>crest</i> . 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 (<i>crest</i>) such as a crown or wreath. <i>Two of the first</i> = ie. with two bodies (<i>first</i> = former, referring to the <i>bodies</i> of the previous line, line 274). <i>Due but to one</i> = belonging to one family or lineage. ⁵

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? Wherfore 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) affectiön,
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:
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.
Wherfore = why.

292-5: *wherfore...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		= feeble entreaties
322	Lysan. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat: Thy threats have no more strength than her <u>weak prayers</u> .	<i>prayers</i> = both the Quarto and Folio print <i>praise</i> , which is generally emended to <i>prayers</i> , as here.
324	— Helen, I love thee, <u>by my life</u> , I do: I swear by that which I will lose for thee,	= an oath.
326	To prove him false that says I love thee not.	324: Lysander swears again by his <i>life</i> , which he would willingly sacrifice for Helena.
328	Demet. I say, I love thee more than he can do.	
330	Lysan. If thou say so, <u>withdraw</u> , and prove it too.	330: = 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
332	Demet. Quick, come!	331: Demetrius is as eager as Lysander to settle this.
334	Herm. Lysander, <u>whereto tends all this</u> ?	= "what is the object of all this?" (Stevenson, p.95). ⁵
336	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).
338	Demet. No, no: he'll	<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.
340	Seem to break loose: — <u>take on</u> as you would follow,	337-8: <i>he'll...loose</i> = Lysander will only pretend (<i>Seem</i>) to try to break free from Hermia to fight Demetrius.
342	But yet come not. You are a <u>tame</u> man, <u>go</u> !	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).
	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> !	= meek, submissive; ¹ an insult. = ie. "get out of here!"
		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!"

344	Herm. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this, Sweet love?	
346	Lysan. Thy love! <u>out, 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, loathèd <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? Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.	= an exclamation expressing astonishment and indignation. ¹
360		
362	Herm. <u>What</u> ? can you do me greater harm than hate? Hate me, <u>wherefore</u> ? O me! <u>what news</u> , my love?	= Hermia mocks Lysander's use of "What?" in line 359.
364	Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander? I am as <u>fair</u> now as I was <u>erewhile</u> .	= why. = "what novelty is this?" ^{1,5}
366	Since <u>night</u> , you loved me; yet since night, you left me: Why then, you left me (O, the gods forbid)	= beautiful. = before, previously. ^{1,5}
368	<u>In earnest</u> , shall I say?	= nightfall. ⁵
370	Lysan. Ay, <u>by my life</u> :	367-8: the sense is, "am I supposed to conclude that you genuinely (In earnest) ¹ left me?"
372	And never did desire to see thee more. Therefore be <u>out of hope, of questiön, of doubt</u> ;	= an oath.
374	Be certain: nothing truer: 'tis no jest, That I do hate thee, and love Helena.	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".

376ff (below): Hermia's understanding of the situation

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

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.

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!

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.

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

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

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

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.

388 Between our statures: she hath urged her height,

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

390 And with her personage, her tall personage,

= figure, appearance.^{4,5}

392 Her height (forsooth) she hath prevailed with him.

= verily, truly. = ie. Lysander.

And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

= ie. short.

How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak:

= 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}

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

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

396

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:

402 Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
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.

416 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
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 <u>she is</u> angry, she is <u>keen</u> and <u>shrewd</u> !	432: she is = pronounced as "she's". keen = sharp, cutting. ² shrewd = shrewish, bad-tempered, malicious. ¹
434	She was <u>a vixen</u> when she went to school: And though she be but little, she is fierce.	= figuratively, a quarrelsome and shrewish girl; a vixen is a she-fox. ¹
436	Herm. Little again? nothing but low and little? Why will you <u>suffer</u> her to <u>flout</u> me thus?	= allow. = abuse, insult. ²
438	Let me come <u>to</u> her.	= at.
440	Lysan. Get you gone, you dwarf; You <u>minimus</u> , of <u>hindering knot-grass</u> made;	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}
442	You bead, you acorn.	
444	Demet. You are too <u>officious</u> In her behalf that scorns your services.	444-5: Demetrius is annoyed that Lysander is so zealous (officious) ¹ in speaking for Helena, even though she rejects his attention.
446	Let her alone: speak not of Helena, Take not her part; for if thou dost <u>intend</u>	= some editors suggest intend means "pretend". ^{4,5}
448	Never so little <u>shew</u> of love to her,	448: ie. "to show even the slightest sign of affection towards her"; shew = show, a common alternate form.
450	Thou shalt <u>aby</u> it.	= pay or atone for.
452	Lysan. Now <u>she</u> holds me not:	451-3: ie. now that Lysander is free from the clutches of Hermia (she), he is free to confront Demetrius over Helena.
454	Now follow, if thou dar'st, to <u>try</u> whose right, Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.	452-3: to try...Helena = to find out (try) which of the two of them has the best claim to Helena. ^{2,5}
456	Demet. Follow? nay: I'll go with thee, <u>cheek by jowl</u> .	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.
458	<i>[Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.]</i>	
460	Herm. You, <u>mistress</u> , <u>all this coil</u> is 'long of you. –	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."
462	Helena. I will not trust you, I, Nor longer stay in your <u>curst</u> company.	' long of ' = along of, meaning "on account of"; ¹ ' long ' is an aphetic form of <i>along</i> (meaning that the initial short unstressed vowel of <i>along</i> has been dropped).
464	Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray. My legs are longer though, to run away.	= 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.

[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.

Herm. I am amazed, and know not what to say.

[Exit Hermia.]

= dumbfounded.^{2,3}

Ober. This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
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 'hointed an Athenian's eyes:

And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

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

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.

= ie. "you are always (*still*) making mistakes."

= mischievous tricks.¹

= spirits.⁵ = erred.

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.

= turned out (*did sort*)⁴ the way it did.

482: ie. "because all their bickering (*jangling*) I consider or judge (*esteem*) to be great entertainment (*sport*).^{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).

= Lysander and Demetrius.

= hurry.² = cover the dark sky with clouds.⁵

486: an imperative: "cover the starry sky (*welkin*)".

anon = immediately after.⁶

Ober. Thou see'st, these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night,
The starry welkin cover thou anon

With drooping fog, as black as Acheron,

487: *drooping* = descending, sinking.^{1,6} There are instances in earlier 16th century literature of fog described as falling or descending upon the landscape.

Acheron = 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 charmèd eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.
508
510 **Puck.** My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
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

512 At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,

514 Troop home to churchyards: damnèd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,

Already to their wormy beds are gone:

516 For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,

518 And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

520 **Ober.** But we are spirits of another sort:
I, with the morning's love, have oft made sport;

522 And, like a forester, the groves may tread

524 Even till the eastern gate all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune, with fair blessèd beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams. –

has a separate entry for this compound word, recognizing it perhaps as the "official" option.

Aurora's harbinger = ie. the brightly-shining planet Venus, the morning star, and forerunner (**harbinger**) of the dawn; **Aurora** was the goddess of the dawn.

512-3: **At whose...churchyards** = as dawn approaches, the ghosts who haunt the night return to their graves.

Troop (line 513) = go, walk.¹

513-4: **damned...burial** = Puck refers to the bodies of:

(1) suicides, who were buried at crossroads (**crossways**), denied proper internment in consecrated ground because of the sinful nature of their self-murders; thus they were considered **damned**, unable to enter Heaven;¹⁹ and

(2) those who drowned at sea (**floods**), 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

damned spirits all = despite the wording, the **damned spirits** are distinct from the **ghosts** of line 512 who get to return to the churchyards.

= ie. graves.

516-8: the damned spirits deliberately avoid daylight to hide their sinful crimes (**shames**) in darkness.

exile = sometimes stressed on the second syllable, as here, in Shakespeare's work.

518: and must forever (**for aye**) keep company (**consort**)¹ with dark night.

black-browed = dark-faced.¹

= 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 (**the morning's love**) comes up.

There have been other interpretations of this line: for example, some commentators believe that **morning's love** is a figurative description of Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, whom Oberon is describing as having courted.⁴

oft made sport = often found diversion;¹ a common expression.

522: **forester** = an officer having charge for a forest.¹

the groves may tread = ie. "I can walk through the woods".

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.

Even = pronounced *E'en*, a monosyllable.

eastern gate = Shakespeare imagines the eastern horizon as a gate through which the sun rises at dawn.

Opening on Neptune = the **gate**, or eastern horizon, of line 523 opens onto the sea; **Neptune** was the god of the sea.

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

572	The villain is much <u>lighter-heeled</u> than I; I followed fast: but faster he did <u>fly</u> ;	= ie. swifter. = flee, run away.
574	That fall'n am I in dark <u>uneven</u> way,	574: Lysander, exhausted, finds himself on a dark and irregular (<u>uneven</u>) path. ¹
	And here will rest me.	
576		[<i>Lies down.</i>]
578	Come, thou gentle day!	577: this stage direction is only in the Folio.
580	For if but once thou <u>shew</u> me thy <u>grey light</u> ,	579-581: Lysander apostrophizes the day. = ie. show. = ie. first light of dawn.
	I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this <u>spite</u> .	= vexation; ² Lysander is now peeved that Demetrius is avoiding him, thus frustrating Lysander's attempt to confront him.
582		[<i>Sleeps.</i>]
584		<i>Re-enter Puck and Demetrius.</i>
586	Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?	
588	Demet. <u>Abide</u> me, if thou dar'st; for well I <u>wot</u> ,	= could mean "face" or "await". ^{1,2} = know.
590	Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,	
592	And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face. Where art thou now?	
594	Puck. Come <u>hither</u> : I am here.	= properly, "to here".
596	Demet. Nay then, thou mock'st me. Thou <u>shat</u> buy this dear,	596: shat = shalt, a common alternate form. This is the Quarto's reading. The Folio prints "shalt", but there is no reason to emend <i>shat</i> to <i>shalt</i> , if one is following the Quarto's language. buy this dear = pay dearly for this.
598	If ever I thy face by daylight see. Now, go thy way. Faintness <u>constraineth</u> me	598-9: Faintness...visited = Demetrius' weakness and light-headedness compel (constraineth) him to lie down.
	To <u>measure out my length</u> on this cold bed:	599: to lie down on the cold ground. measure out my length = the expression "to measure (or measure out) one's length" meant "to lie down". ¹
600	By day's approach look to be visited.	600: Demetrius apostrophizes Lysander, warning him that Demetrius will confront him at day's arrival.
602		[<i>Lies down and sleeps.</i>]
604		<i>Re-enter Helena.</i>
606	Helena. O weary night, O long and tedious night, <u>Abate</u> thy hours; <u>shine comforts</u> from the east,	= shorten. ⁴ = "shine your encouraging and cheering rays". ⁵
608	That I may <u>back</u> to Athens by daylight,	= ie. go back, return.
610	From these that my poor company detest: And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,	610: a common conceit: sleep allows one to temporarily escape one's miseries.
	Steal me awhile from mine own company.	611: a lovely metaphor for the unconsciousness of sleep, and the relief it brings.
612		[<i>Lies down and sleeps.</i>]
614	Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;	615: Hermia is still missing.
616	<u>Two of both kinds</u> makes up four. -	= ie. two men and two women.

	Here she comes, <u>curst</u> and sad.	= shrewish, ill-tempered.
618	Cupid is a <u>knavish</u> lad, Thus to <u>make poor females mad</u> .	= mischievous. = 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.
620		
622		<i>Re-enter Hermia.</i>
624	Herm. Never so weary, never so <u>in woe</u> . <u>Bedabbled</u> with the dew, and torn with briers:	= grieved, sorrowful.
626	I can no further crawl, no further go: My legs can keep no pace with my desires.	= made wet. ¹
628	Here will I rest <u>me</u> , till the break of day: Heavens <u>shield</u> Lysander, if <u>they mean a fray</u> !	626: "my legs cannot go as fast as I want them to go." = myself. = protect. = Lysander and Demetrius intend to fight.
630		<i>[Lies down and sleeps.]</i>
632	Puck. On the ground Sleep sound: I'll apply <u>Your eye</u> ,	
634	Gentle lover, remedy.	= ie. to your; most editions emend this line to " <i>To your eye</i> ".
636		
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 eye</u> :	= ie. Hermia's.
646	And the country proverb known, 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. "Jack shall have Jill" 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".
652	And all shall be well.	
	<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
18 you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-
20 hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle: and good

18 mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret
22 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,

Pray you, leave your curtsey, good mounseur.

Must. What's your will?

Bottom. Nothing, good mounseur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's,

mounseur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do

but tickle me, I must scratch.

Titan. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bottom. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

Titan. Or, say sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.

Bottom. Truly a peck of provender: I could mounch

your good dry oats. Methinks, I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Titan. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bottom. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you: let none of your people stirt me:

"Sweet knight, I kiss thy neaf."

= "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: **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.

= 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.

= ie. "would you like to".

= 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, "*Musicke Tongs, Rurall Musicke*", suggesting that some such primitive music plays throughout the following dialogue.

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: **bottle of hay** = bundle of hay;⁴ a common collocation.

good hay...fellow = the sense is, "nothing beats good, sweet hay;" **fellow** = equal.²

= adventurous, bold.¹

= possibly a disyllable.

= wake abruptly, rouse;^{1,2}

stirt = **stirt** (or **stirte**, as it appears in the Quarto) was a variant of "start", and as such is perfectly acceptable. However, modern editions usually print "stir", which

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

110

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

112

Titan. Music, ho, music: such as charmeth sleep!

114

[*Music, still.*]

116

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

118

120

Ober. Sound, music! – Come, my queen, take hands
with me,
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,
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".

= enamored 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	<i>Ober.</i> Then my queen, in <u>silence</u> sad,	= solemn silence. ³
132	<u>Trip</u> we after [the] <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. <i>Trip</i> = move lightly, skip, or dance. ^{1,6} <i>the</i> = appears only in the Folio.
134	Swifter than the <u>wandering</u> moon.	= 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	<i>Titan.</i> Come my lord, and in our flight, Tell me how it came this night,	
138	That I sleeping here was found, With these mortals on the ground.	
140		[<i>Exeunt.</i>]
142		[<i>Wind horn.</i>]
144	<i>Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.</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!
146	<i>Thes.</i> Go one of you, <u>find</u> out the <u>forester</u> :	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.
148	For now our <u>observation</u> is performed.	= ie. find. = officer in charge of the forest.
150	And since we have the <u>vaward</u> of the day, My love shall hear the music of my hounds. –	148: the rites (observation) ² are concluded; the reference is to May Day celebrations (see lines 183-4 below).
	<u>Uncouple</u> , in the western valley, let them go: –	= beginning, early part; ^{3,4} day is just breaking.
152	<u>Dispatch</u> I say, and find the forester. –	150: Theseus intends to go on a hunt with Hippolyta, and expects his betrothed to enjoy the baying of the hunting dogs.
154		= an instruction to one of the attendants to unleash one or more pairs of hounds.
156	We will, fair queen, <u>up</u> to the mountain's top,	= make haste, hurry.
158	And mark the musical confusiön Of hounds and echo in conjunctiön.	= ie. go up.
		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,

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.

When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear,

162 With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear

164 Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seeme[d] all one mutual cry. I never heard

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 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

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

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

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 flewed** = 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

170 **So flewed**, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;

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

		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: soft = wait a moment.
176	Judge when you hear. – But, <u>soft!</u> <u>what nymphs are these?</u>	what nymphs are these = Theseus stumbles upon the sleeping Athenians; nymphs = specifically, the maidens, Helena and Hermia. ¹
		= ie. Hermia.
178	Egeus. My lord, this is <u>my daughter</u> here asleep,	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.
	And this Lysander, this Demetrius is,	they rose up early = festivities to honour May Day usually began right after midnight. ⁹
180	This Helena, <u>old Nedar's Helena</u> .	in grace of our solemnity = "to do us honour us in these rites". ⁵
	I <u>wonder</u> of their being here together.	
182	Thes. No doubt, <u>they rose up early</u> , to observe	186-7: today is the deadline for Hermia to decide whether to marry Demetrius (as her father wishes), enter a convent, or face death.
184	The rite of May: and hearing our intent,	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!
	Came here, <u>in grace of our solemnity</u> .	
186	But speak, Egeus, is not this the day	
	That Hermia should give answer of her choice?	
188		
190	Egeus. It is, my lord.	
192	Thes. Go, <u>bid</u> the huntsmen wake them with their horns.	
194		
196		
198	<u>Good</u> <u>morrow</u> , friends. <u>Saint Valentine</u> is past:	197: Good morrow = customary morning greeting.
	Begin <u>these</u> <u>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 **Egeus.** Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough.
218 I beg the law, the law, upon his head: –

220 They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me;
222 You of your wife, and me, of my consent:
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:

234 And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
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 valentyns 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	<p>Is only Helena. To her, my lord, Was I betrothed <u>ere</u> I saw Hermia:</p>	<p>= before.</p>
238	<p>But, <u>like a sickness</u>, did I loathe <u>this food</u>; But, as in health, <u>come</u> to my <u>natural taste</u>, Now I do wish <u>it</u>, love it, long for it, And will for evermore be true to it.</p>	<p>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.</p>
240		<p>= ie. like one who is sick.⁹ = metaphorically, Helena. = having returned.⁵ = true preference or appetite. = his normal food preferences, ie. Helena.</p>
242	<p>Thes. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.</p>	<p>242: it is good fortune that the young Athenians have come together like this.</p>
244	<p>Of this <u>discourse</u>, we more will hear <u>anon</u>. —</p>	<p>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.</p>
246	<p>Egeus, I will <u>overbear</u> your will:</p>	<p>discourse = story, narration. anon = soon, shortly.</p>
248	<p>For in the temple, <u>by and by</u>, <u>with us</u>, These couples shall eternally be <u>knit</u>. And, <u>for</u> the morning now is <u>something worn</u>, Our <u>purposed</u> hunting shall be set aside. —</p>	<p>244: Theseus will override (overbear) Egeus' desire that Hermia marry Demetrius.¹</p>
250	<p>Away, with us, to Athens! <u>three and three</u>, We'll hold a feast in great <u>solemnity</u>. —</p>	<p>= presently. = ie. Theseus and Hippolyta.</p>
252	<p>Come, Hippolyta.</p>	<p>= united;¹ Theseus plans a triple-marriage!</p>
254	<p>[<i>Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and train.</i>]</p>	<p>= because. = somewhat spent.^{1,5} = intended.¹ = three men and three women, ie. three couples. = ceremony.⁵</p>
256	<p>Demet. <u>These things</u> seem <u>small and undistinguishable</u>, Like far-off mountains <u>turnèd into</u> clouds.</p>	<p>255ff (below): the lovers are disoriented, their perception distorted and vision blurred, as they try to make sense of the night's events.</p>
258	<p>Herm. Methinks I see these things with <u>parted eye</u>, When every thing seems double.</p>	<p>= ie. the details of what exactly has happened. = ie. unclear. = ie. that seem like or appear to be.</p>
260		<p>= divided or separated, hence "unfocused", eyes.²</p>
262	<p>Helena. So methinks: And I have found Demetrius, like a <u>jewel</u>, Mine own, and not mine own.</p>	<p>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</p>
264	<p>Demet. Are you sure</p>	<p>265-6: Are you...awake = omitted from the Folio.</p>
266	<p>That we are awake? It seems to me</p>	

268 That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?

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 by the way let us recount our dreams.

278 [Exeunt *Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.*]

280 **Bottom.** [Awaking.]

282 When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer:
my next is, "Most fair Pyramus." – Hey ho! Peter

284 Quince? Flute, the bellows-mender? Snout, the
tinker? Starveling? Gods my life! stolen hence, and

286 left me asleep? I have had a most rare vision. I have
had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it

288 was. Man is but an ass, if he go about [to] expound
this dream. Methought I was – there is no man can tell

290 what. Methought I was, – and methought I had, –
but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say

292 what methought I had. The eye of man hath not
heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not
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 it hath no bottom: and

298 I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the
duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious,
300 I shall sing it at her death.

= Demetrius seeks affirmation of what just happened.
= ie. "asked us to".

= ie. along the way.

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?"

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: **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.

288-9: **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.

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 "*patcht a fool*".
offer = make an attempt.¹

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: "*The thinges which*
eye hath not seene, neither eare hath heard, neither came
into mans heart, are, which God hath prepared for them that
loue him." (Geneva Bible).

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.

298-300: 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

[Exit Bottom.]

ACT IV, SCENE II.

*Athens, Quince's house.
The afternoon of the same day.*

Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Starv. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flute. If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible. You have not a man, in all Athens, able to discharge Pyramus, but he.

Flute. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quin. Yea, and the best person too, and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute. You must say “paragon”: a paramour is (God bless us) a thing of naught.

Enter Snug.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all

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

28	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
30	Flute. O sweet <u>bully</u> Bottom! Thus hath he lost	made men = men with assured success in life. ¹ 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!
32	<u>sixpence a day</u> during his life; he could not have	= 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> ".
34	<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
36	him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be	and = if.
38	hanged. He would have deserved it: sixpence a day,	= ie. for playing.
40	<u>in</u> Pyramus, or nothing.	
42	<i>Enter Bottom.</i>	
44	Bottom. Where are these lads? where are these	= good fellows. ⁴
46	<u>hearts</u> ?	= a malapropism, but what word Quince intended here is unknowable. ⁹
48	Quin. Bottom! O most <u>courageous</u> day! O most	= fortunate.
50	happy hour!	= relate, recount. ²
52	Bottom. Masters, I am to <u>discourse</u> wonders: but ask	= exactly as it happened. ⁵ Note how Bottom comically contradicts himself.
54	me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I	= from.
56	will tell you every thing <u>right as it fell out</u> .	= eaten. = ie. costumes.
58	Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.	52: good strings...beards = ie. the strings were used to tie on prop beards. ribands = ie. ribbons, a common variant.
60	Bottom. Not a word <u>of</u> me. All that I will tell you is,	= heelless or low-heeled shoes. ¹ = promptly, immediately. ¹ = in sum. ¹
62	that the Duke hath <u>dined</u> . Get your <u>apparel</u> together,	
64	<u>good strings to your beards</u> , new <u>ribands</u> to your	
66	<u>pumps</u> , meet <u>presently</u> at the palace, every man look	
68	o'er his part. For <u>the short and the long is</u> , our play is	
70	<u>preferred</u> . In any case let Thisbe have clean <u>linen</u> ;	
72	and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails: for	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
74	they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most	let Thisbe...linen = Bottom is concerned for the actors' hygiene; linen = undergarments. ¹
76	dear actors, eat no onions, nor garlic: for we are to	

60	<p><u>utter sweet breath</u>: and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words. Away, go, away!</p>	= speak their lines with pleasant breath.
62	<p>[<i>Exeunt.</i>] END OF ACT IV.</p>	

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.

6 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
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:

12 That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
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* = "imaginings 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: <i>And as...shapes</i> : and in his mind's eye, the poet first gives outline or figure to (<i>bodies forth</i>) 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: <i>and gives...a name</i> = and gives the insubstantial and non-existent a place to exist (<i>local habitation</i>) and a name; ¹ <i>local</i> = 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 (<i>tricks</i>)". ¹
22	Or in the night, imagining some <u>fear</u> , How easy is a bush <u>supposed</u> a bear!	20-21: that if one's mind merely imagines (<i>apprehends</i>) something pleasurable, then it inevitably conjures up or incorporates (<i>comprehends</i>) a mental image of a person or thing (the <i>bringer</i>) 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> .
24		22-23: ie. similarly, <i>fear</i> is as capable as joy of causing the mind to imagine things. ⁵ <i>supposed</i> = ie. perceived or thought to be.
26	<i>Hippol.</i> But, all the story of the night <u>told over</u> , And all their minds <u>transfigured</u> so together,	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. = ie. told and retold (by each of the participants). ¹
28	More witnesseth than <u>fancy's images</u> , And <u>grows to</u> something of great <u>constancy</u> :	26: the sense is, all of their minds experienced the alterations of reality the same way; <i>transfigured</i> = changed, transformed. ¹ 27: provides evidence of being more than creations of the imagination (<i>fancy's images</i>). ^{3,4}
30	But <u>howsoever</u> , <u>strange</u> and <u>admirable</u> .	28: ie. the stories, considered together, are very consistent. <i>grows to</i> = ie. becomes. <i>constancy</i> = coherency, consistency. ^{3,4}
32	<i>Thes.</i> Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.	29: <i>howsoever</i> = nevertheless. ³ <i>strange</i> = remarkable, singular. ² <i>admirable</i> = wonderful, to be wondered at. ^{1,3,5}
34	<i>Enter Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.</i>	
36	Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love Accompany your hearts!	
38	<i>Lysan.</i> 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. <i>Wait in</i> = attend. <i>board</i> = meals, feasting. ^{2,5}

Thes. Come now: what masques, what dances shall we have,

42 To wear away this long age of three hours,

44 Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?

46 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

48 **Philo.** Here, mighty Theseus.

50 **Thes.** Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?
52 What masque, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

54 **Philo.** There is a brief, how many sports are ripe.

56 Make choice, of which your highness will see first.

58 [Giving a paper.]

60 **Thes.** [Reads.]
The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung,
62 By an Athenian eunuch to the harp? –
64 We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

bed = where the conjugal rights of marriage are enjoyed.¹

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.

= entertainments typically comprised of allegorical characters and dancing.

= while away the long period of time.¹

wear away = precursor to **while away**, which did not appear until the early 17th century.

= the time after supper.¹

= alliteratively referring to Philostrate, the Master of the Revels.

= entertainments. = here, present.²

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.

= pastime, entertainment.¹

52-53: **beguile...time** = "distract ourselves so that we no longer notice how slowly time is moving".

lazy time = time seems sluggish because it passes so slowly.

delight = source of pleasure.¹

55: "here (**There**) is a list (**brief**) of the various entertainments (**sports**) that have been prepared, or are ready to be presented (**are ripe**)."^{1,2,5}

Instead of **ripe**, the Folio prints "**rife**", which can mean "ready", so it too is acceptable.

58: ie. Philostrate hands the list to Theseus; stage direction not in Quarto or Folio.

60ff (below): Theseus rejects several of the offerings before settling on the presentation of the craftsmen.

In the Folio, it is Lysander who reads aloud the titles of the short entertainments, to which Theseus only responds, yay or nay.

61-64: **The battle with the Centaurs** = the song was probably about the well-known mythological episode in which the king of the Lapiths invited the **Centaurs** (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

66

[Reads.]

*The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage? –*

68

That is an old device: and it was played,
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

70

[Reads.]

*The thrice three Muses, mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary? –*

72

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

74

[Reads.]

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.

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.

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.

my kinsman Hercules = any familial relationship between the two heroes would have been very distant.

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.

68-69: Theseus has previously seen this story presented in a play.

device = play or masque, theatrical show.¹

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*.

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.

It has been surmised that these lines refer either to

(1) Edmund Spenser's poem *The Teares of the Muses* (1591), in which the nine Muses lament the neglect of learning and the arts, or

(2) Shakespeare's fellow author and playwright Robert Greene, who had died in extreme poverty in 1592.

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.

76-80 (below): Theseus is struck by the contradictions and utter lack of sophistication in the description, presumably

76

A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus

78

*And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth? –
Merry, and tragical? Tedious, and brief?
That is hot ice, and wondrous strange snow.*

80

How shall we find the concord of this discord?

82

Philo. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long;
Which is as brief as I have known a play:
But, by ten words, my lord, it is too long:
Which makes it tedious. For in all the play,
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

88

And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus, therein, doth kill himself.
Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,

90

Made mine eyes water: but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

92

Thes. What are they, that do play it?

94

Philo. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never laboured in their minds till now:
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories,

written by Peter Quince, of the tradesmen's play.

= 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 *All's Well That Ends Well* ("that is the brief and the tedious of it") and *Richard III* ("it is better to be brief than tedious").

= 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, "wondrous strange **black** snow."

80: ie. "how can we make these contradictory words agree?"⁵

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 *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

= 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 unpractised (**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

		<i>toiled</i> = fatigued with work. ²
98	With this same play, <u>against</u> your nuptial.	= in anticipation of.
100	Thes. And <u>we</u> will hear it.	= ie. "I"; Theseus uses the royal "we".
102	Philo. No, my noble lord, It is <u>not</u> for you: I have <u>heard it over</u> ,	= 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".
104	And it is <u>nothing</u> , nothing <u>in the world</u> :	= 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: " <i>an idol is nothing in the world.</i> "
106	Unless you can find <u>sport</u> in their <u>intents</u> <u>Extremely stretched</u> , and <u>conned</u> with <u>cruēl pain</u> , To do you service.	105-7: sport = amusement. intents = in lines 105-7, Shakespeare employs an interesting bit of parallel structure: intents has a double sense, because the craftsmen
108		(1) find their intents , meaning "efforts" or "endeavours", stretched to the limit (Extremely stretched), especially as they work under great hardship (cruēl pain) to memorize (conned = memorized) their parts (line 106); ^{1,5} and (2) <i>intend</i> to honour and serve Theseus (line 107). ^{3,4}
110	Thes. I will hear that play. For <u>never anything</u> can be <u>amiss</u> , When <u>simpleness</u> and <u>duty</u> <u>tender</u> it.	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.
112	Go bring them in, and take your places, ladies.	
114		[Exit Philostrate.]
116	Hippol. I love not to see <u>wretchedness</u> <u>o'ercharged</u> , And <u>duery</u> , in his service, <u>perishing</u> .	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.
118		However, there are numerous examples of duery being used for duty in the 16th and 17th centuries: (1) in the influential <i>The Palace of Pleasure</i> (1566), we find a reference to " <i>the bounden duery that i</i> " have " <i>to my Lorde the duke;</i> " and (2) from John Foxe's <i>Acts and Monuments</i> (1583), we find an admonition to " <i>the common people: whose duery is, to beare their good mindes & true obedience, to the aforesayd ministers of god.</i> "
120	Thes. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.	
	Hippol. He says they can do nothing in this kind.	121: ie. Philostrate said the men could not competently perform this type of play.

122	<p>Thes. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.</p>	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	<p>Our <u>sport</u> shall be to <u>take what they mistake</u>:</p>	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	<p>And what <u>poor duty</u> cannot do, noble Respect takes it in <u>might</u>, not <u>merit</u>.</p>	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}
	<p>Where I have come, great <u>clerks</u> have purposèd To greet me with <u>premeditated welcomes</u>;</p>	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	<p>Where I have seen them shiver and look pale, Make periods in the midst of sentences, <u>Throttle their practised accent</u> in their fears,</p>	127: "in places I have visited, great scholars (<i>clerks</i>) have intended". ^{4,5} = carefully prepared speeches of welcome. ⁵
130	<p>And in conclusion <u>dumbly</u> have broke off, Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,</p>	= 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	<p>Out of this silence, yet, I <u>picked</u> a welcome:</p>	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	<p>And in the <u>modesty of fearful</u> duty, I read as much as from the <u>rattling</u> tongue Of <u>saucy</u> and <u>audacious</u> eloquence.</p>	= discerned. ¹
136	<p>Love, therefore, and <u>tongue-tied simplicity</u>, <u>In least</u> speak most, to my <u>capacity</u>.</p>	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		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	<p><i>Re-enter Philostrate.</i></p>	
144	<p>Philo. So please your Grace, the Prologue is <u>addressed</u>.</p>	= ready to begin. ^{4,5}
146	<p>Thes. Let him approach.</p>	
148	<p>[<i>Flourish of trumpets.</i>]</p>	147: the play is about to begin! This stage direction appears only in the Folio.

Enter Quince for the Prologue.

150

Prol. If we offend, it is with our good will.
152 That you should think, we come not to offend,

154 But with good will. To shew our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then, we come but in despite.
156 We do not come, as minding to content you,

158 Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,

160 The actors are at hand: and, by their show,
You shall know all, that you are like to know.

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.

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.

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.

You may enjoy trying to work out what the "correct" punctuation *should* be. One possible such version of the "correct" speech is presented in an appendix at the end of this play.

Note the Prologue's rhyming scheme: *abab* 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 *abab* pattern, before concluding with a rhyming couplet.

151: "If we offend you, it is with enthusiasm or willingness (good will)^{1,6} that we do so."

152-3: **That you...good will**: "you should believe that we came here but to offend you willingly."

153-4: **To shew...end** = the sense may be taken to be, "to present our average or limited, or absence of, abilities (simple skill)^{1,6} is our true purpose (end)."¹

shew = common alternate form of *show*.

beginning of our end = might be interpreted to mean "the Prologue represents the start of the conclusion of the show"; *end* might also suggest "demise" or "downfall".

= with scorn.

156-7: **We do...intent is** = the audience might take this to mean something like, "we do not come here intending (*minding*)² to please (*content*) you, this is our true intent", but the sentence stalls, not really making much sense.

157-8: **All for...here** = "we are not here to delight you."

158-9: **That you...at hand** = "so that you shall regret (*repent*) being here, the actors are close by (ie. ready to perform)."

159-160: **and, by...know** = and through their performance, you will learn all that you are likely to learn."

151-160 (above): Shakespeare may have gotten the idea for the mispunctuated speech from *Ralph Roister Doister*, Nicholas Udall's well-known comic play of a few decades earlier.

Here is the beginning of a certain love letter from Udall's

play, as written:

*Sweet mistress, whereas I love you; nothing at all
Regarding your richesse 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 richesse 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 **Thes.** This fellow doth not stand upon points.

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 **Lysan.** He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt: he

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

166 knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak; but to speak true.

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}

168 **Hippol.** Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

170-1 **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

172 **Thes.** His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

174 **Enter Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine, and Lion.**

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

Prol. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
178 But, wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know:
180 This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present

182 Wall, that vile Wall, which did these lovers sunder:

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
184 To whisper. At the which, let no man wonder.

This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
186 Presenteth Moonshine. For if you will know,

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

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
 188 To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
 This grizly beast (which Lion hight by name)
 190 The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,
 Did scare away, or rather did affright:
 192 And as she fled, her mantle she did fall:
 Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
 194 Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth, and tall,
 And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain:
 196 Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
 He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.
 198 And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
 200 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain.
 202 **Thes.** I wonder, if the lion be to speak.
 204 **Demet.** No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when
 206 many asses do.
 208 [Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe,
 Lion, and Moonshine.]
 210
 212 **Wall.** In this same interlude it doth befall,
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall:
 214 And such a wall, as I would have you think,
 That had in it a crannied hole or chink:
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
 216 Did whisper often very secretly.

thy dog and thy bush."
bush of thorn = the traditional bundle of sticks carried by the Man in the Moon; see Act III.i.75-76 above.

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

189: **grizly** = fear-inducing, horrible to behold; a variant of **grisly**.¹
hight = is called; an archaic word.^{1,4}

190: **trusty** = reliable,¹ because she kept her appointment.
coming = arriving.
by night = during the night.¹

191: ie. the lion frightened Thisbe.
 = cloak. = ie. let fall.⁴

= 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.

196-7: 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

= 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.

= ie. the two lovers.
 = tell in full or thoroughly.^{1,2}

= ie. will.

208-9: only Wall remains on-stage.

211-220 (below): note how Snout's speech is hilariously filled with redundancy.

= short and light dramatic presentation.^{1,2} = happens.
 = the Quarto incorrectly prints *Flute* 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! <i>loam</i> = a compound used for plaster; see Act III.i.86 above. <i>rough-cast</i> = another compound used for plaster; see Act III.1.87 above. <i>stone</i> = 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> , Through which the <u>fearful</u> lovers are to whisper.	219-220: Snout demonstrates the crannies along the wall by spreading the fingers of his right and left (<i>sinister</i>) hands. <i>sinister</i> = stressed on its second, or middle, syllable. <i>fearful</i> = frightened, timid; literally "full of fear".
220		
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? <i>lime and hair</i> = "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		
226	Demet. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard <u>discourse</u> , my lord.	
228	Thes. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence.	
230	<i>Re-enter Pyramus.</i>	232f: the play-within-a-play continues to employ quatrains with an <i>abab</i> rhyme scheme.
232	Pyra. O <u>grim</u> -looked night! O night, with <u>hue</u> so black, O night, which ever <u>art</u> , when day is not: O night, O night, <u>alack</u> , alack, alack, I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.	= grim looking, forbidding. ¹ = colour. = is. = expression of grief.
234		235: has Thisbe forgotten to appear at the wall tonight?
236	And thou O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall, That stands't between her father's <u>ground</u> and mine, Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall, Show me thy chink, to <u>blink</u> through, with <u>mine eyne</u> ,	
238		
240		
242	[<i>Wall holds up his fingers.</i>]	
	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." <i>Jove</i> = Roman king of the gods; an anachronism, since the story of Pyramus and Thisbe took place in ancient Babylon, well before Rome existed. <i>shield</i> = protect.
244	But what see I? No Thisbe do I see. O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss, Cursed be thy stones, for thus deceiving me.	
246		
248	Thes. The wall, methinks, <u>being sensible</u> , should curse again.	
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> her through the wall. You shall see, it will <u>fall pat</u> as I told you: <u>yonder</u> she comes.	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		

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> .	
262		260: this line could be taken unintentionally as quite bawdy, as <u>stones</u> was a slang term for a man's testicles. ¹
264	Pyra. I see a voice: now will I <u>to</u> the chink, To <u>spy and I</u> can hear my Thisbe's face. –	
266	Thisbe?	261: knit = joined together. ⁶
268	Thisbe. My love thou art, my love I think.	For knit now again , the Folio prints knit now in thee , which is probably preferable for its rhyme with line 259.
270	Pyra. Think what thou wilt, I am <u>thy lover's grace</u> : And, like <u>Limander</u> , am I <u>trusty still</u> .	= ie. go to. = see if. In this speech, Bottom has confused see and hear . = ie. thy love. ⁴
272	Thisbe. <u>And I</u> , like <u>Helen</u> , <u>till the Fates me kill</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.
274	Pyra. Not <u>Shafalus to Procrus</u> , was so true.	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.
276	Thisbe. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.	
278	Pyra. O kiss me, through the hole of this <u>vild</u> wall!	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.
280	Thisbe. I kiss the wall's hole; not your lips at all.	= vile, a common variant.
282	Pyra. Wilt thou, at <u>Ninny's tomb</u> , meet me straightway?	280: again, easily heard as bawdy.
284	Thisbe. <u>'Tide life, 'tide death</u> , I come without delay.	= Bottom, as Pyramus, repeat's Flute's error of Act I.iii.131. = 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>discharged</u> so; And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.	= fulfilled, performed. ²
290		
292	[<i>Exit Wall.</i>]	

294	<p>Thes. Now is the moon used between the two neighbours.</p>	<p>293-4: so reads the Quarto; in the Folio, Theseus says, "Now is the <i>morall downe</i> between the two neighbours." Neither reading makes much sense. Of the numerous emendations that have been proposed, Alexander Pope's seems the soundest, taking <i>moral</i> to be a corruption of <i>mural</i>, an archaic word meaning "wall":¹ "Now is the <i>mural</i> down between the two neighbours."</p> <p>Durham observes that <i>mure</i> was another word meaning "wall" (but was more common than <i>mural</i>), suggesting the possible reading, "Now is the <i>mure</i> all down between the neighbours." This interpretation is supported by the fact that Shakespeare used the word <i>mure</i> in another play, <i>Henry VI, Part II</i>.</p> <p>Other editors, seemingly throwing their hands in the air, simply insert <i>wall</i> into the line: "Now is the <i>wall</i> down between the two neighbours." Regardless, given Demetrius' response, Theseus should be commenting on the wall, not the moon.</p> <p>296-7: No remedy...to = the sense is, "what can you do, when walls are so refractory (<i>wilful</i>)⁶ as to..."</p> <p>The question is: <i>as to</i> do what? The final clause here, to hear without warning, has attracted numerous interpretations: warning can mean:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) "summoning",¹ so the line could be interpreted as "to listen in when it has not been asked to". Shakespeare used warn in this sense in <i>Richard III</i>: "And sent to warn them to his royal presence;" or (2) "informing", suggesting, "to hear what went on without letting the lovers' parents know what they are doing."⁷ <p>Elsewhere, one may find assertions (3) that hear means "speak"; and (4) that to hear without warning conveys the idea of eavesdropping.</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>300</p> <p>Hippol. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.</p> <p>302</p> <p>Thes. The best, <u>in this kind</u>, are but <u>shadows</u>: and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.</p> <p>304</p> <p>Hippol. It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.</p> <p>306</p> <p>Thes. If we <u>imagine</u> no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for <u>excellent</u> men. —</p> <p>310</p> <p>Here come two noble beasts, in a <u>man</u> and a lion.</p> <p>312</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Re-enter Lion and Moonshine.</i></p>

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.
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;

318

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

		judgment.
332	his discretion: and <u>the fox carries the goose.</u>	= allusion to the fox literally stealing away a goose from a barnyard to make a meal.
334	Thes. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. <u>It is well:</u>	334-5: His discretion...valour = Lion's judgment (which is lacking) cannot make up for his (absence of) courage. = "that is enough of that."
336	<u>leave it to his discretion</u> , and let us listen to the moon.	= 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.
338	Moon. This <u>lanthorn</u> doth the <u>hornèd moon</u> present; –	338: lanthorn = ie. lantern; as mentioned previously, the sides of a lantern were made of horn, so that lanthorn developed as a variant spelling. ⁴ horned moon = the crescent-shaped moon, a common collocation. ¹ present = represent. ⁵
340	Demet. He should have worn the horns on his head.	340: Demetrius makes the inevitable Elizabethan joke about the horns which were said to grow on the forehead of a cuckold.
342	Thes. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible, within <u>the circumference</u> .	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. the circumference = ie. its bounds or periphery. ^{1,6}
344	Moon. This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present,	345: Moon repeats line 338, perhaps because he sensed the interruption.
346	Myself, the man <u>ith</u> moon, do seem to be.	= ie. "in the"; the OED does not recognize ith as a distinct word, though it appears regularly in contemporary literature. There is, however, an entry for i'th . Modern editors generally substitute "i' th" here.
348	Thes. This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man <u>ith</u> moon?	352: come there = ie. enter the lantern. ⁵ for the candle = ie. because of the burning candle inside. ⁵
350		= Demetrius puns: (1) a candle's snuff is the burnt or used-up portion of its wick; and (2) the common expression to be in snuff meant "to take offense". ^{1,5}
352	Demet. He dares not <u>come there</u> , <u>for the candle</u> ; for, you see, it is already <u>in snuff</u> .	355-6: would he would change = "I wish he would change;" Hippolyta, punning, expresses her desire for the character of the Man in the Moon to be gone. change = word commonly used to describe the moon cycling through its various phases. ¹
354		
356	Hipp. I am aweary of this moon. <u>Would</u> he would change.	
358	Thes. It appears, by his <u>small light</u> of <u>discretion</u> , that	358-9: It appears...wane = more wordplay: the Moon's judgment and discernment (discretion) seem weak and getting weaker. Shakespeare brilliantly intertwines the literal language of astronomy: in the wane (line 359) refers to a moon decreasing in illumination, hence its small light , which also (1) alludes to the dim light produced by the lantern, and (2) points out the Moon's minimal level of good

		judgment.
360	he is in the wane: but yet in courtesy, <u>in all reason</u> , we must <u>stay the time</u> .	= ie. according to sound judgment or logic; a common expression. = the sense is, "wait this out."
362	Lysan. Proceed, Moon.	
364	Moon. All that I have to say, is to tell you, that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man ith moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.	364-6: as Wall did before him, Moon breaks character to explain – of course, quite unnecessarily – himself and his props!
366		
368	Demet. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon. – But silence: here comes Thisbe.	
370		
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. [Roaring] 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 <u>with a good grace</u> .	= in a pleasing manner. ¹
386		
388		[<i>The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.</i>]
390	Thes. Well <u>mouzed</u> , Lion.	= ie. moused, meaning "handled as a cat would a mouse, clawing and tearing it;" <i>mouze</i> was a rare alternate form of "mouse". ¹
392	Demet. And then came Pyramus.	
394	Lysan. And so the lion vanished.	
396		<i>Re-enter Pyramus.</i>
398	Pyra. Sweet Moon, I thank thee, for thy <u>sunny beams</u> .	= Pyramus' use of <i>sunny</i> for the moon is probably an unintentional <i>faux pas</i> , though the OED tells us that <i>sunny</i> could mean simply, "resembling the sun in brightness". ¹
400	I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright; For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering <u>beams</u> ,	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 "gleams", which (1) completes the rhyme with <i>beams</i> , and (2) adds to the grotesque alliteration of the line. We may note that both "glittering beams" and "glittering gleams" 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 "taste" here; as a clear mis-

		match with <i>sight</i> , "taste" may be the preferred reading.
402	But <u>stay</u> : O <u>spite</u> ! But <u>mark</u> , poor <u>knight</u> ,	= wait. = "oh, cruel fate!" – a cry of anguish.
404	What dreadful <u>dole</u> is here? Eyes, do you see!	403: mark = observe. <i>knight</i> = meaning himself; knight is anachronistic for a story taking place in ancient Babylon.
406	How can it be! O <u>dainty duck</u> , O dear!	= grief. ⁵
408	Thy mantle good, What, stained with blood?	= a ridiculous term of endearment for Thisbe in this context. Quite a few later 17th century authors adopted this original expression in their works.
410	Approach ye Furies <u>fell</u> !	408: ie. "your good cloak".
412	O <u>Fates</u> come, come, Cut thread and <u>thrum</u> ,	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. <i>ye</i> = often used as the plural form of "you". <i>fell</i> = cruel.
414	<u>Quail</u> , crush, <u>conclude</u> , and <u>quell</u> !	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.
416	Thes. This <u>passion</u> , and the death of a dear <u>friend</u> , <u>would go near</u> to make a man look sad.	= the tufted, unwoven ends of a weaver's thread that remain attach to a loom. ^{1,5}
418	Hippol. <u>Beshrew</u> my heart, but I pity the man.	413: Pyramus is prepared to be utterly destroyed! Note the line's mixed alliteration.
420	Pyra. O, <u>wherefore</u> , Nature, didst thou <u>lions frame</u> ?	<i>Quail</i> = destroy, put an end to. ¹ <i>conclude</i> = bring to an end. ¹ <i>quell</i> = kill. ¹
422	Since lion <u>vild</u> hath here <u>deflowered</u> my dear. Which is – no, no – which <u>was</u> the fairest dame That lived, that loved, that liked, that <u>looked with cheer</u> .	= suffering or strong emotion, ¹ ie. extreme grief. = lover. ² = would come close to, ie. might just about. = a curse upon. 420: Pyramus apostrophizes personified Nature. <i>wherefore</i> = why. <i>lions frame</i> = create lions. 421: <i>vild</i> = vile. <i>deflowered</i> = a likely malapropism; Pyramus probably intends <i>deflowered</i> 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: <i>Which</i> = ie. who. <i>was</i> = with <i>was</i> , Pyramus emphasizes that Thisbe no longer <i>is</i> . = 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 causes 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 <u>pap</u> , 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		[<i>Stabs himself.</i>]
432	Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. Now am I dead,	
434	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		[<i>Exit Moonshine.</i>]
442	Now die, die, die, die, die.	
444		[<i>Dies.</i>]
446	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).
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	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.
464	Demet. <u>A moth will turn the balance</u> , which	461-2: for such a Pyramus = this Pyramus is not worthy of a major death scene from Thisbe.
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.	464-5: A moth...better = it is a very close-run thing as to who was the better performer, Pyramus or Thisbe. A moth will turn the balance = a mote (ie. the tiniest thing imaginable, a speck of dust, an atom) will tip the balance; moth was a common alternate form of mote . ¹ which...which = whether...or. ⁵
468	Lysan. She hath <u>spied</u> him already, with those sweet eyes.	465-6: he for...bless us = one interpretation has been, "from such a man, may God protect (warrant) us; and from such a woman, may God also protect (bless) 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.
470	Demet. And thus she <u>means</u> , <u>videlicet</u> : –	warrant = the Quarto prints "warnd" (ie. warned), but this is generally emended to warrant ; Shakespeare used a variation of this expression in <i>As You Like It</i> : "Lord warrant us! "
472	Thisbe. Asleep, my love? What, dead, my dove? O Pyramus, arise, Speak, speak. Quite <u>dumb</u> ? Dead, dead? A <u>tomb</u>	471: means = laments, mourns. ¹ Some editors gloss means as "moans", but this is not precisely correct, per the OED. Others have taken means in its common sense of "signifies", suggesting, perhaps, that Demetrius intends to interpret Thisbe's lines, but this reading is not convincing. videlicet = Latin for "that is to say", ie. <i>viz.</i> ^{1,5}
474	Must cover thy sweet eyes. These lily lips,	473-499 (below): you may wish to pick out the various rhyme schemes employed in these lines.
476	This cherry nose,	
478	These <u>yellow cowslip cheeks</u>	
480		476-7: dumb / tomb = 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.
482	Are gone, are gone: Lovers <u>make moan</u> :	479-480: Thisbe misspeaks: it is the lips which are cherry (red); the nose is lily (white).
484	His eyes were <u>green</u> , as <u>leeks</u> .	481: the cowslip is a common wild plant producing yellow flowers. In contemporary literature, we find occasional instances of cheeks described as yellow 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.
		= lament, a common expression. ¹
		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 <i>leeks</i> in contemporary literature; only its application here to Pyramus' <i>eyes</i> seems hardly flattering.
486	O <u>sisters three</u> ,	485-490: as did Pyramus before her, Thisbe summons the <i>three sister</i> deities called the Fates.
488	Come, come, to me, With hands as pale as milk,	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.
490	Lay them in gore, Since you have <u>shore</u> With shears, his <u>threed</u> of silk.	<i>shore</i> = 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.
492	Tongue, not a word: Come trusty sword,	<i>threed</i> = ie. thread, a common alternate form, likely pronounced to rhyme with "feed"; the Folio prints <i>thred</i> , however, suggesting a modernized pronunciation.
494	Come blade, my breast <u>imbrue</u> :	491: ie. "I will say no more."
496		= stain, ie. with blood. ¹
498	And farewell friends: Thus Thisbe ends:	[<i>Stabs herself.</i>]
500	Adieu, adieu, adieu.	[<i>Dies.</i>]
502	Thes. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.	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.
504	Demet. Ay, and Wall too.	507-8: <i>that parted their fathers</i> = ie. the wall which separated the properties belonging to the fathers of Pyramus and Thisbe.
506	Lion. No, I assure you, the wall is down, that parted	508-510: <i>Will it...company</i> = 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.
508	their fathers. – Will it please you, to see the Epilogue,	<i>Bergomask dance</i> = a rustic dance, supposedly one
510	or to hear a <u>Bergomask dance between two</u> of our company?	

512 **Thes.** No Epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs
514 no excuse. Never excuse: for when the players are all
516 dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that
518 writ it had played Pyramus, and hanged himself in
Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and
so it is truly, and very notably discharged. But come,
your Bergomask: let your Epilogue alone.

520 [A dance.]

522 The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers to bed, 'tis almost fairy time.

524 I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatched.

526 This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

528 A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels, and new jollity.

530 [Exeunt.]

532 Enter Puck.

534 **Puck.** Now the hungry lion roars,
536 And the wolf beholds the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

imported from Bergamo, a province of the state of Venice.¹
between two = ie. performed by two.

= please.
= explanation, as a way to clear the actors of blame.
= common exclamation, derived from the Virgin Mary.

= band worn around the leg to keep one's stockings from
falling.¹
= excellently performed.⁶
518: Theseus surprisingly accepts the actors' offer of a
dance, but declines the Epilogue.

522f (below): Theseus, having dispensed with the day's silly
entertainment, returns to speaking in verse, signaling the
re-elevation of his language.

522: the bell's clapper (iron tongue) has counted to (told)
twelve, ie. has chimed twelve times.

523: **Lovers to bed** = Theseus orders the couples to retire
and enjoy the first carnal pleasures of marriage.
'tis almost fairy time = the human world should withdraw,
before the time for the supernatural takes over!

= ie. oversleep in the morning.
525: ie. because they have remained awake too long.
overwatched = "watched all through" (OED).

526-7: **This...night** = the sense is, "though obviously crude
or awful (palpable-gross),^{1,2,5} the play did a good job of
helping to pass the time."

beguiled...of night = helped while away the night.
The heavy gait of night = night is personified as
moving slowly and sluggishly; **heavy gait** = slow
motion.¹

528: the wedding celebrations or festivities (solemnity) 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.

535: I can find no reason, mythological or literary, for
Shakespeare to associate lions specifically with the night.

= **beholds**, which appears in both the Quarto and the Folio,
is usually emended to **behowls**; even the OED assumes
that Shakespeare intended **behowls** here, crediting him
with inventing this new word.

= 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. <i>wasted</i> = reduced in substance. ¹
540	Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud, Puts the wretch that lies <u>in woe</u> ,	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 <i>shroud</i> .
542	<u>In remembrance of</u> a shroud.	<i>In remembrance of</i> = brings to mind. ²
544	Now it is the time of night, That the graves, all <u>gaping</u> wide, Every one lets forth his <u>sprite</u> ,	543-6: Puck revives the play's earlier imagery of ghosts leaving their graves to wander during the night. <i>gaping</i> = opening. <i>sprite</i> = common monosyllabic variant for <i>spirit</i> . <i>glide</i> = move smoothly and without apparent effort. ¹
546	In the church-way paths to <u>glide</u> .	
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; <i>team</i> refers to the horses pulling her car. ^{1,4}
550	From the presence of the sun, Following darkness like a dream,	<i>triple Hecate's</i> = <i>Hecate</i> 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: <i>frolic</i> = frolicsome, merry. ^{3,4} 551-2: <i>not a mouse...house</i> = 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 train.</i>	
558	Ober. Through the house give glimmering light, By the dead and <u>drowsy</u> fire.	= attendants.
560	Every elf and fairy <u>sprite</u> ,	558-9: Oberon instructs the fairies to faintly illuminate the house as the fire dies down. <i>drowsy</i> = lethargic. ¹
562	<u>Hop</u> as light as bird <u>from</u> brier,	= spirit.
564	And this ditty, after me, Sing, and dance it <u>trippingly</u> .	= skip or dance. = ie. "leaping from a". = 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 (<i>by rote</i>). 566: ie. to give each word a tuneful note. ¹
568	To each word a warbling note. Hand in hand, with fairy grace,	
570	Will we sing and bless this place.	570: any specific song Shakespeare or the performing troupe had in mind here has long been lost. ⁹
572	<i>[Song and dance.]</i>	
	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 blessed 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> , Ever shall be fortunate:	576-7: any children (issue) conceived (create for "created") on this bed will be lucky and prosperous. ¹
578	So shall all the couples three Ever true in loving be:	
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 (prodigious). 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 (consecrate) 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}
590	Through this palace, with sweet peace,	
592	Ever shall in safety rest, And the owner of it blest. 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 mend or amend 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>), That you have but slumbered here, While these visions did appear.	598-602: "just pretend you fell asleep and dreamed the whole thing." mended = made well.
600		
602	And this <u>weak and idle theme</u> , <u>No more yielding</u> but a dream, <u>Gentles</u> , do not <u>reprehend</u> .	= insignificant and trivial subject matter. ^{1,2,6} = producing no more than. ⁵
604	If you pardon, we will <u>mend</u> .	= ladies and gentlemen. = condemn (us or the play). ¹
606	And, as I am an honest Puck, If we have unearnèd luck Now to scape the <u>serpent's tongue</u> ,	= make amends. ¹
		606-7: "if we have such undeserved good fortune as to escape your hisses;" a nice metaphor of the serpent's tongue producing the hissing sound that signals an

		audience's displeasure.
608	We will make amends, <u>ere</u> long: <u>Else</u> , the Puck a liar call.	= soon.
610	So, good night unto you all.	= otherwise.
612	Give me your <u>hands</u> , if we be friends: And Robin shall <u>restore</u> amends.	= applause. ⁴ = 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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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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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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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 *behowls*.