

- OBERON Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania! 60
- TITANIA What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.
- OBERON Tarry, rash wanton! Am not I thy lord?
- TITANIA Then I must be thy lady. But I know
When thou hast stol'n away from Fairyland, 65
And in the shape of Corin sat all day
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here
Come from the farthest step of India? –
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, 70
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded; and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.
- OBERON How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, 75
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished,
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,

61 Fairies] *Theobald*; Fairy QQ, F 65 hast] QQ; wast F 69 step] Q1 (steppe); steepe Q2, F 79 Aegles] Chambers; Eagles QQ, F; *Ægle Rowe*

perform in the play. Perhaps here the six 'fairies' (including Puck) who have speaking-parts were simply divided between Oberon and Titania; in any case, all but Puck must leave with Titania at 145, so that Oberon can be left alone on stage at 176. See pp. 3–4 above for further comment.

60 The entry of Oberon and Titania is marked by a change from rhyming couplets to blank verse.

61 Fairies 'Fairy' (QQ, F) may be correct if, as Wells thinks, Titania is addressing the Fairy who has been talking with Puck, but it makes more sense if she calls all her 'train' to leave. A compositor memorising a phrase might easily elide an 's' from 'Fairies, skip', which sounds virtually the same as 'Fairy, skip' (Cunningham).

63 wanton rebel. Properly, a spoiled child, someone who is unmanageable.

63–4 lord...lady i.e. husband and wife, with appropriate rights and duties.

66–8 Corin...Phillida Typical names for a shepherd and shepherdess in Arcadian pastoral verse, derived from the Corydon and Phyllis of Virgil's *Eclogues*.

67 pipes of corn i.e. made of straw. Brooks

compares *LLL* 5.2.903: 'pipe on oaten straws'.

69 step Perhaps 'utmost limit of travel or exploration' (Onions); 'steppe' (Q1) cannot mean 'plain' as in Russia, for the word was introduced into English in the late seventeenth century, but may be a variant of 'steep' (Q2, F), meaning 'mountain', if, as is possible, Shakespeare was thinking of the Himalayas.

71 buskined wearing calf- or knee-length hunting-boots. Hippolyta's prowess in hunting is touched on again in 4.1, and provides a pointer to the costume for this part.

75 Glance at Allude critically to.

78–80 Perigenia...Aegles...Ariadne... Antiopa Shakespeare probably found these names in North's translation of Plutarch's 'Life of Theseus', where 'Perigenia' is called 'Perigouna'. 'Eagles' (QQ, F) is simply a corruption of 'Aegles'. All were loved and deserted by Theseus. The legend of Ariadne, who helped Theseus to find his way through the labyrinth to destroy the Minotaur, was well known, but the other stories were not familiar. 'Antiopa' North says was an Amazon, perhaps to be identified with Hippolyta (p. 15), a connection Shakespeare omits.

With Ariadne, and Antiopa? 80

TITANIA These are the forgeries of jealousy:

And never since the middle summer's spring

Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,

By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,

Or in the beachèd margent of the sea 85

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,

But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge have sucked up from the sea

Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land, 90

Hath every pelting river made so proud

That they have overborne their continents.

The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,

The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn

Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard. 95

The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,

And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;

The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,

And the quaint mazes in the wanton green

For lack of tread are undistinguishable. 100

80 Antiopa] qq; Atiopa F 91 pelting] qq; petty F

82 **middle summer's spring** the beginning of midsummer. Compare *2H4* 4.4.35: 'the spring of day'.

84 **pavèd** flowing over stones or pebbles.

85 **margent** The usual form of 'margin' in Shakespeare's age, and the one he always used.

86 **ringlets** Circular dances, marking fairy rings. See 9 above and n.

87 **brawls** clamour. But also a dance (from the French 'bransle') which involved men and women holding hands in a ring (so Randall Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611), cited in *OED* sv *sb*³ 2), and this sense no doubt prompted the link with 'ringlets'.

90 **Contagious** Pestilential, breeding disease.

91 **pelting** paltry.

92 **continents** banks. Literally, what contains the rivers. Compare *Ant.* 4.14.40: 'Heart, once be stronger than thy continent.'

95 **beard** Compare *Sonnets* 12.8: 'sheaves / Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard'.

97 **murrion** Infected with the 'murrain', a fatal sheep disease.

98 **nine-men's-morris** A game for two, each player having nine pins or stones called 'men', and

formerly played out of doors in grooves cut in turf. Three concentric squares were cut, and the midpoints of each side were joined. The 'men' could be placed at corners or midpoints, and the aim was to remove the opponent's men by forming a line of three. The word 'morris' is a corruption of 'merels', from Old French, recorded still in R. Cotgrave's *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611); see *Shakespeare's England*, II, 466-7.

99 **quaint mazes** A number of turf mazes still survive (see Janet Bord, *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World*, 1976, pp. 46-58), and they were numerous in Shakespeare's time. The earliest maze was traditionally the labyrinth at Knossos, associated with Theseus's rescue of Ariadne from the Minotaur. Mazes had ritual or magical associations: the penetration to the centre of a maze and the exit from it may be related to rites of initiation, and has been interpreted as analogous to death and rebirth; but their origin and full significance remain mysterious. See also W. H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, 1922, reprinted 1970.

99 **wanton green** lush grass.

The human mortals want their winter cheer;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound; 105
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter; hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown 110
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
 The childing autumn, angry winter change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world
 By their increase now knows not which is which.
 And this same progeny of evils comes 115
 From our debate, from our dissension.
 We are their parents and original.

OBERON Do you amend it, then: it lies in you.
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
 I do but beg a little changeling boy 120
 To be my henchman.

TITANIA Set your heart at rest.
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.

101 cheer] *Hanmer, conj. Theobald*; heere Qq, F 106 thorough] Q1, through Q2, F 107 hoary-headed] Q1 (hoary headed); hoared headed Q2, F 109 thin] *Halliwell, conj. Tyrwhitt*; chinne Qq, F 115-16] *So F2; divided at evils, / Comes in Qq, F*

101 want...cheer *Hanmer's* emendation of 'heare' (Qq, F) is generally accepted as strengthening a limp phrase, and linking with the next line; 'here' makes sense, and could be correct, but a 'c' might easily have dropped out through misreading. The line leads rather abruptly into a passage on the confusion of the seasons, and implies that people have to endure unseasonable winter weather in summer, but lack the cheer, the carols and festivity, that belong to Christmas.

103 Therefore Repeating the 'Therefore' of 88 above.

103 governess of floods By extension from the association of the moon with tides.

105 rheumatic Characterised by discharge of 'rheum', or watery matter, like the common cold. Accented on the first syllable.

106 distemperature disorder, both of the weather and of the body.

109 old Hiems Winter personified, as at *LLL* 5.2.891. The image of winter as an old man with 'snowie frozen crowne' comes, as *Brooks* notes, from *Ovid's Metamorphoses* 11, 39 (*Golding's* translation).

109 thin *Halliwell's* emendation of 'chinne' (Qq, F) is generally accepted; in Secretary hand 'c' and 't' are easily confused, and the error is a common one. Various editors have tried ingeniously to defend 'chin', but it is difficult to see how frosts could 'fall' simultaneously on chin and crown.

112 childing fruitful. Knight compares *Sonnets* 97.6: 'teeming autumn, big with rich increase'.

112 change exchange.

113 wonted usual.

113 mazed bewildered.

114 increase produce. (See 112 above and n.)

116 debate quarrel.

His mother was a votress of my order,
 And in the spicèd Indian air by night
 Full often hath she gossiped by my side, 125
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands
 Marking th'embarkèd traders on the flood,
 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 130
 Following (her womb then rich with my young squire),
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 To fetch me trifles, and return again
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die, 135
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
 If you will patiently dance in our round, 140
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us:
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

TITANIA Not for thy fairy kingdom! Fairies, away.
 We shall chide downright if I longer stay. 145

Exeunt [Titania and her train]

OBERON Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
 Till I torment thee for this injury. **END**
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back 150
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath

136 do I] QQ; I do F 145 SD] *So Theobald; Exeunt.* QQ, F 150 mermaid] QQ, F (Mearemaide Q1; Mearemaide Q2, F)

123 *votress of my order* As if she had taken vows in a religious order.

127 *traders* trading ships. The sense is unambiguous, but is first recorded in *OED* in 1712.

130 *with swimming gait* with a smooth gliding motion.

131 *Following* Resembling.

140 *round* The fairies dance in a ring; compare 'orbs' and 'ringlets', 9 and 86 above.

142 *spare* avoid (*OED* sv *v*¹ 7b, citing this passage).

145 *chide* quarrel.

149 *Since* When. A Shakespearean usage, as at *WT* 5.1.219–20: 'Remember since you ow'd no more to time / Than I do now.'

150 *mermaid...dolphin's back* An image perhaps suggested by the legend of Arion the bard who escaped from sailors intending to murder him by leaping into the sea, where he was carried to safety on the back of a dolphin (see *TN* 1.2.15).