

**Ben Jonson's *Epicene, or*
The Silent Woman:
A Retelling**

David Bruce

DEDICATED TO MOM AND DAD

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOROSE, *a gentleman who loves no noise.*

SIR DAUPHINE EUGENIE, *a knight, his nephew.*

NED CLERIMONT, *a gentleman, his friend.*

TRUEWIT, *another friend.*

EPICENE, *the Silent Woman.*

SIR JOHN "JACK" DAW, *a knight, her servant.*

SIR AMOROUS LA FOOLE, *a knight also.*

MR. THOMAS OTTER, *a land- and sea-captain.*

CUTBEARD, *a barber.*

MUTE, *one of Morose's servants.*

MADAM HAUGHTY, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MADAM CENTAUR, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MISTRESS DOL MAVIS, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MISTRESS TRUSTY, *the Lady Haughty's serving-woman. (Pretender).*

MRS. OTTER, *The Captain's Wife (Pretender).*

PARSON.

BOY *and other* PAGES.

SERVANTS.

MUSICIANS.

THE SCENE: LONDON

NOTES:

The Latin word *morosus* has the meaning of “peevisish” or “stubborn.”

According to Wikipedia, “**Epicenity** is the lack of gender distinction, often reducing the emphasis on the masculine to allow the feminine. It includes androgyny — having both masculine and feminine characteristics.”

A daw is a jackdaw. Jackdaws are a bird that was thought to be loquacious and thievish. The word “daw” also meant “dolt.”

Sir John “Jack” Daw is the “servant” of Epicene. In this context, “servant” means someone who loves her and is devoted to her service. A servant is a male admirer.

An otter is an amphibious animal and is associated with both land and sea: river otters and sea otters.

Centaurs are half-man and half-horse. No female Centaurs exist, even in mythology.

“Collegiates” means “people associated with a College or a Society.”

“Dol” is a nickname for Dorothy.

A pretender is an aspirer. Both MISTRESS TRUSTY and MRS. OTTER aspire to be full-fledged members of the *Lady Collegiates*.

Ben Jonson wrote *Epicene* in the year 1609, a year when the plague was virulent in London.

A mistress can be a loved woman, not necessarily a woman one sleeps with.

A servant can be a man who is devoted to and loves and serves a woman.

“Mute” means untalkative.

“Dumb” means untalkative.

“Madam” is a title of higher rank than “Mistress.” “Mistress” means “Mrs.” “Madam” is used for a woman of rank; for example, one who has the title “Lady,” as in Lady Haughty, aka Madam Haughty.

CHAPTER 1

— 1.1 —

Clerimont was in a room in a house with his boy-servant, who was helping Clerimont dress.

Clerimont asked, “Have you got the song yet perfectly memorized I gave you, boy?”

The boy replied, “Yes, sir.”

“Let me hear it,” Clerimont ordered.

“You shall, sir,” the boy said, “but, truly, let nobody else hear it.”

“Why, I ask?” Clerimont said.

The boy replied, “It will get you the dangerous name of a poet in town, sir.”

Poets and playwrights often engaged in satire, drawing the scorn of those whom they satirized.

The boy continued, “Besides, it will get me a perfect deal of ill will at the mansion you know of, whose lady is the theme of the song, whereas now I am the welcomest thing under a man who comes there.”

The mansion was the headquarters of the Lady Collegiates, and the lady was Madam Haughty.

“Under a man” meant “less than a man,” but the phrase also has a sexual meaning.

“I think so,” Clerimont said, “and above a man, too, if the truth were racked out of you.”

“Above a man” meant taller than a man: The boy would certainly be taller if he were stretched on the torture device known as the rack. Such torture was used to secure

confessions from the tortured. Again, the phrase has a sexual meaning.

The boy said, “No, indeed, I’ll confess before being tortured, sir. The gentlewomen play with me and throw me on the bed, and carry me in to my lady, and she kisses me with her makeup-greasy face and puts a peruke — a wig — on my head and asks me if I will wear her gown, and I say, ‘No.’ And then she hits me a blow on the ear and calls me innocent, and lets go of me.”

Clerimont said, “It’s no marvel if the door is kept shut against your master, when the entrance is so easy to you.”

He was punning. A door is an entrance, and he was using the word to refer to a physical door and to the entrance of Madam Haughty’s vagina.

Clerimont continued, “Well, sir, you shall go there no more, lest I be obliged to seek your voice in my lady’s rushes a fortnight hence.”

Green rushes were used as floor coverings. If the boy were to spend time on the floor with Lady Haughty, he would be engaging in an activity whose ability to perform meant that he would lose the ability to sing high notes.

Clerimont ordered, “Sing, sir.”

The boy began to sing, but Truewit, a friend of Clerimont’s, almost immediately entered the room.

Truewit said, “Why, here’s the man who can melt away his time, and never feel it! What, between his mistress away from home and his ingle at home, high fare, soft lodging, fine clothes, and his fiddle, he thinks the hours have no wings and the day has no post-horse.”

The mistress was the woman Clerimont was devoted to, but “mistress” did not necessarily mean that she was devoted to

him. The word “ingle” can mean “friend” or “boy kept for homosexual purposes.”

A post-horse is a swift horse used to ride between posts, or stages of a journey. Post-horses were used to carry messages.

Truewit continued, “Well, sir gallant, if you were struck with the plague this minute, or condemned to any capital punishment tomorrow, you would begin then to think and value every moment of your time, esteem it at the true rate, and give all for it.”

“Why, what should a man do?” Clerimont asked.

“Why, nothing,” Truewit said, “or that which, when it is done, is as idle, vain, and useless — such as hearken after the next horse race, or hunting match; lay wagers, praise Puppy, or Peppercorn, Whitefoot, Franklin; swear upon Whitemane’s side in a race; spend aloud, so that my lords may hear you; visit my ladies at night, and be able to give them the character of — that is, gossip about — every bowler or bettor on the green.”

Puppy, Peppercorn, Whitefoot, Franklin, and Whitemane were the names of famous horses.

“Spend aloud” means to talk loudly and/or spend ostentatiously.

The game of bowls was played on a green, and fashionable men sometimes bet on the outcome.

A bettor is a person who makes bets.

To fashionable men, time is something to be wasted in trivial pursuits.

Truewit continued, “These are the things wherein your fashionable men exercise themselves, and I engage in them for company.”

Clerimont replied, “Nay, if I have your authority, I’ll not leave off these activities yet. Come, the others are considerations when we come to have grey heads and weak hams, moist eyes, and shrunk members. We’ll think on them then; then we’ll pray, and fast.”

“Shrunk members” can mean shrunken arms and legs, or shrunken penises.

Truewit said, “Aye, and destine only that time of age to goodness that our lack of ability will not let us employ in evil?”

Some people think the best time to repent sins is after one’s old age has made one incapable of sinning. Saint Augustine once prayed to God, “Give me chastity and continence [self-control], but not yet.”

Clerimont replied, “Why, then it is time enough.”

Truewit said, “Yes, as if a man should sleep all the term for trying legal cases and think to complete his business on the last day. Oh, Clerimont, this time, because it is an incorporeal thing and not subject to sense, we mock ourselves the fineliest — most perfect — out of it, with vanity and misery indeed, not seeking an end of wretchedness but only changing the matter constantly.”

Truewit was a thinker who recognized the value of time.

Clerimont said, “Nay, you shall not leave now —”

“See but our common disease!” Truewit said.

The common-to-all disease is discontent, aka unhappiness. For many noblemen, it is caused by lack of patronage at court.

He continued, “With what justice can we complain that great men will not look upon us, nor be at leisure to give our affairs

such dispatch as we expect, when we will never do it to ourselves, nor hear nor regard ourselves!”

If noblemen misuse time, can they blame greater men for doing the same thing?

Clerimont replied, “Bah, you have read Plutarch’s *Morals* now, or some such tedious fellow, and it shows so vilely with you; before God, I say that it will spoil your wit utterly. Talk to me of pins and feathers and ladies and rushes and such things, and leave this stoicity — stoical attitude and puritanical severity — alone until you write sermons.”

The “dull fellow” Truewit had been reading was not Plutarch, but instead was the stoic philosopher Seneca. In particular, he was paraphrasing *De Brevitate Vita* [*Concerning the Shortness of Life*], 3.5.

Clerimont preferred talk about trivial things rather than serious things. According to Clerimont, trivial things included “pins and feathers and ladies and rushes and such things.”

A saying of the time was “Not worth a rush.”

Truewit replied, “Well, sir, if my advice will not take effect and succeed, I have learned to lose as little of my kindness as I can. I’ll do good to no man against his will, certainly.”

He then asked, “When were you at the College?”

“What College?” Clerimont asked.

“As if you didn’t already know!” Truewit said.

“No, indeed,” Clerimont said. “I came from court just yesterday.”

“Why, hasn’t the news arrived there yet?” Truewit said. “There is a new foundation, sir, here in the town, of ladies who call themselves the Collegiates. It is an order between

courtiers and country madams who live apart from their husbands and give entertainment to all the wits and braveries of the time, as they call them, cry down or up — decry or praise — what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical (mannishly feminine), authority, and every day gain to their College some new probationer.”

“Wits and braveries” are gallants: witty gallants and bravely (splendidly) dressed gallants.

“Who is the president?” Clerimont asked.

Truewit answered, “The grave, serious, and youthful matron, the Lady Haughty.”

Clerimont said, “A pox on her autumnal face, her pieced-together beauty! There’s no man who can be admitted to her presence until she is ready nowadays — until she has painted and perfumed and washed and scoured — except this boy here, and him she wipes her makeup-greasy lips upon like a sponge. I have made a song — I ask you to hear it — on the subject.”

The boy sang:

Still [Always] to be neat [finely dressed], still [always] to be dressed,

As [if] you were going to a feast;

Still [Always] to be powdered, still [always] perfumed:

Lady, it is to be presumed,

Though art’s hid [hidden] causes are not found,

All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face

That makes simplicity [absence of ornamentation] a grace;

Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:

Such sweet neglect more taketh [captivates] me

Than all th' adulteries [adulterations] of art.

They strike mine [my] eyes, but not my heart.

Clerimont's song was against fancy dress, perfume, and makeup.

Truewit said, "And I am clearly on the other side: I love a good adornment before any beauty of the world. Oh, a woman is then like a delicate garden; nor is there one kind of it. She may vary every hour, take often counsel of her mirror, and choose the best. If she has good ears, show them; good hair, lay it out; good legs, wear short clothes; a good hand, reveal it often; practice any art to mend breath, cleanse teeth, repair eyebrows, use makeup, and acknowledge it."

Clerimont said, "What! Publicly?"

"That she does it, yes, but not how she does it," Truewit said. "The how of it must be private. Many things that seem foul in the doing are pleasing once they are done. A lady should indeed study her face when we think she sleeps; nor, when the doors are shut, should men be enquiring: All is sacred within then. Is it for us to see their wigs put on, their false teeth, their complexion, their eyebrows, their fingernails? You see that gilders will not work except when enclosed in a room. They must not reveal how little serves, with the help of art, to adorn a great deal. How long did the canvas hang before Aldgate? Were the people allowed to see the city's gilded statues *Love* and *Charity* while they were rude stone, before they were painted and polished? No. No more should lovers approach their mistresses except when they are complete and finished."

Aldgate was the most important eastern gate in London's old city wall. Rebuilt in 1609, it was adorned with two statues: *Love* and *Charity*. They were kept under wraps until finished and were then revealed to the public.

"Well said, my Truewit," Clerimont said.

Truewit continued, "And a wise lady will keep a guard always upon the place, so that she may do things securely. I once followed a rude fellow into a chamber, where the poor madam, for haste, and troubled, snatched at her wig to cover her baldness and put it on the wrong way."

She put on the wig backwards.

Clerimont said, "Oh, monstrous!"

Truewit continued, "And the unconscionable knave held her in fashionable small talk for an hour, with that reversed face, when I still looked for the time when she should talk from the other side."

"Why, you should have relieved her," Clerimont said.

"No, indeed, I let her alone, as we'll let alone this topic of discussion, if you please, and pass to another," Truewit said.

He then asked, "When did you most recently see Dauphine Eugenie?"

Sir Dauphine Eugenie was a knight and a friend of theirs.

"Not for these last three days," Clerimont answered. "Shall we go to him this morning? He is very melancholic and depressed, I hear."

"Sick of the uncle, is he?" Truewit asked.

He was playing with language. "Sick of the mother" meant hysteria.

Truewit continued, “I met that stiff piece of formality, his uncle, yesterday. He was wearing a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears.”

Sir Dauphine Eugenie’s uncle was named Morose.

Old people and sick people wore nightcaps during the day.

“Oh, that’s his custom when he walks outside of his house,” Clerimont said. “He can endure no noise, man.”

“So I have heard,” Truewit said. “But is the disease so ridiculous in him as it is made out to be? They say he has been busy entering into many treaties with the fishwives [women who sold fish] and orange-selling women, and he has propounded terms and conditions between them so that they will be silent. But by the Virgin Mary, the chimney-sweepers will not be drawn into making a contract with him to be silent.”

Truewit was punning on the word “drawn.” Sweeping the chimney cleans out the soot and improves the draw (upward draft) of smoke.

Clerimont said, “No, nor the broom-men [broom sellers]. They stand resolutely against such contracts. He cannot endure a fruit seller; he swoons if he hears one.”

The word “stand” can mean erection. The masculine broom-men won’t allow themselves to be grouped in a contract together with women.

Sellers at markets advertised their wares by loudly shouting.

Truewit said, “I think a blacksmith would be ominous to him.”

Clerimont said, “Or any hammer-man [metal-worker]. A brazier [brass-worker] is not allowed to dwell in his parish, nor anyone who makes armor. He would have hanged a

pewterer's apprentice once upon a Shrove Tuesday's riot for being of that trade, when the rest were acquitted."

Blacksmiths make much noise as they hammer hot metal into a desired shape. Other metal-workers such as pewterers also make noise as they work with metal.

Apprentices customarily rioted on Shrove Tuesday (the day before Lent, and a holiday for apprentices) and did such things as wreck brothels.

Truewit said, "A trumpet would frighten him terribly, as would the oboes."

"Out of his senses," Clerimont agreed. "The city-paid street musicians receive a pension from him not to come near the ward he resides in."

He motioned toward the boy and said, "This youth played a trick on him one night. He pretended to be the night watchman and rang the bell to announce each hour, and never left until he had brought him down to the door with a long sword, and there left him waving his sword in the air."

The boy said, "Why, sir, he has chosen a street to live in so narrow at both ends that it will receive no coaches nor carts nor any of these common noises, and therefore we who love him devise, now and then, ways to make him exercise and breathe hard. He would grow sluggish else in his ease. His virtue would rust without action.

"I entreated the keeper of a bear one day to come down with the dogs of some four parishes that way, and, I thank him, he did, and loudly proclaimed and advertised his next bear-baiting under Master Morose's window until he was sent crying away with his head made a most bleeding spectacle to the multitude.

“And another time a fencer, marching to his fencing-match, had his drum most tragically run through for taking that street in his way, at my request.”

Fencers would often march with drummers to a fencing-match as a form of advertisement.

Truewit said to the boy, “You are a good wag: a good mischievous boy.”

He then asked, “What does he do about the church bells?”

Clerimont replied, “Oh, in the queen’s time he was wont to go out of town every Saturday at ten o’clock, or on holiday eves.”

Bells rang on the eves of holy days, including Sundays.

He continued, “But now, because of the plague, the perpetuity of ringing has made him devise a room with double walls and treble ceilings, the windows closed and caulked, and there he lives by candlelight.”

The year was 1609, and the plague caused many, many deaths in London — so many that church bells constantly rang. A passing-bell rings to announce a person’s death, and a knell is a bell ringing during a funeral.

Clerimont continued, “He fired a serving-man last week for having a pair of new shoes that creaked. And his current employee waits on him now in tennis-court woolen socks, or slippers soled with wool, and they talk to each other in a trunk: an ear trumpet.”

He heard a noise, looked at its source, and said, “See who is coming here.”

— 1.2 —

Sir Dauphine Eugenie entered the room. Clerimont and Truewit had been talking about his uncle, Morose, who hated noise.

Dauphine asked, “How are you now? What ail you, sirs? Dumb? Unable to speak?”

Truewit said, “We are struck into stone, almost, as surely as I am here, with tales of your uncle. There was never such a monster heard of before.”

Dauphine said, “I wish you would once and for all lose this subject, my masters, for my sake. They are such as you are who have brought me into that predicament I am with him.”

“What predicament is that?” Truewit asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, that he will disinherit me, no more than that,” Dauphine said. “He thinks that I and my company of friends are the authors of all the ridiculous acts and monuments — stories — that are told about him.”

Truewit said, “By God’s eyelid, I would be the author of more in order to vex him. His intention to disinherit you makes him deserve it: It gives you law — that is, it authorizes you — to plague him. I’ll tell you what I would do. I would make a false almanac, get it printed, and then have him drawn out on a Coronation Day to the Tower Wharf and kill him with the noise of the cannon celebrating the anniversary of the coronation of King James I.”

The anniversary day was July 25, but a false almanac could list a different date. Morose would be tricked into going to the Tower Wharf so that the noise would kill him before he could disinherit his nephew: Dauphine.

Truewit continued, “Disinherit you? He cannot, man. Aren’t you his next of blood, and his sister’s son?”

“Aye,” Dauphine said, “but he will thrust me out of the inheritance, he vows, and marry.”

If Morose were to marry and have a son, that son would be the next of kin and get the inheritance.

“What!” Truewit said. “That’s a greater and more ominous portent for you. Can he endure no noise, and yet he will venture to take a wife?”

“Yes,” Clerimont said. “Why, you are a stranger, it seems, to his best trick yet. He has employed a fellow this half year, to enquire around all over England and find him a dumb — silent — woman. It doesn’t matter what she is of any form or any quality or any rank, as long as she is able to bear children. Her silence is dowry enough, he says.”

“But I trust to God that he has found no woman like that,” Truewit said.

“No,” Clerimont replied, “but he has heard of one who’s lodged in the next street to him, who is exceedingly soft-spoken, thrifty of her speech, who expends only six words a day. And he’s pursuing her now, and he shall have her.”

“Is it possible!” Truewit said. “Who is his agent in the business?”

“By the Virgin Mary,” Clerimont said, “a barber named Cutbeard, who is an honest fellow and one who tells Dauphine here everything.”

“Why, you oppress and overwhelm me with wonder!” Truewit said. “A woman and a barber, and yet Morose loves no noise!”

In comedy, women and barbers have a reputation for being talkative.

“Yes, indeed,” Clerimont said. “The fellow trims him silently and has not the knack with his shears or his fingers, and that continence and self-restraint in a barber Morose thinks so eminent a virtue that it has made the barber the chief of Morose’s counsellors — his main confidant.”

A knack is 1) a skill, and 2) a knock, or other loud noise such as snapping one’s fingers.

“Is the barber to be seen, or the wench?” Truewit said.

In this society, “wench” meant “young woman.” It need not be a negative, insulting word.

“Yes, that they are,” Clerimont answered.

“Please, Dauphine, let’s go there,” Truewit said.

“I have some business now,” Dauphine said. “I cannot, truly.”

“You shall have no business that shall make you neglect this, sir,” Truewit said. “We’ll make her talk, believe it; or, if she will not, we can say at least as much as shall interrupt the treaty and hinder the negotiation — we will break it. You are bound in conscience, when he suspects you without cause, to torment him.”

“Not I, by any means,” Dauphine said. “I’ll give no consent to do it. He shall never have that plea against me that I opposed the least fancy or fantasy of his. Let it lie upon my stars — let it be fated — for me to be guilty, yet I’ll be innocent.”

By “innocent,” he meant not guilty.

“Yes, and be poor and beg,” Truewit said. “Do, innocent, when some servant of his has begotten him an heir, or this barber, if Morose himself cannot. Innocent!”

By “innocent,” he meant fool.

Truewit then said, "Please, Ned, where does she live? Let him be innocent still."

Clerimont's nickname was Ned.

He answered, "Why, right opposite the barber's, in the house where Sir John Daw lives."

"You do not mean to confound and utterly confuse me!" Truewit said. "Do you?"

"Why?" Clerimont asked.

"Does he who would marry her — Morose — know so much?" Truewit asked.

"I cannot tell," Clerimont said. "I don't know."

"It would be enough of a slur on her reputation, with Jack Daw so near her," Truewit said.

"Why?" Clerimont asked.

"He is the pre-eminent talking sir in the town!" Truewit said. "Jack Daw! And he is to teach her not to speak — God be with you. I have some business, too."

"Will you not go there, then?" Clerimont asked.

"Not with the risk of meeting Daw, out of concern for my ears," Truewit said.

"Why, I thought you two had been upon very good terms," Clerimont said.

"Yes, of keeping distance between us," Truewit said.

"They say he is a very good scholar," Clerimont said.

"Aye, and he says it first," Truewit said. "A pox on him! A fellow who merely makes a claim to learning, buys titles, and has nothing else of books in him."

In other words, Jack Daw was the kind of person who buys a book and reads nothing except the title. Also, “buys titles” implies that he bought his knighthood.

“The world reports him to be very learned,” Clerimont said.

“I am sorry the world should so conspire to tell lies about him,” Truewit said.

“In good faith, I have heard very good things come from his mouth,” Clerimont said.

“You may have, indeed,” Truewit said. “There’s none so desperately ignorant as to deny that. I wish that those good things were his own!”

In other words, Jack Daw’s wit was borrowed.

Truewit said, “God be with you, gentlemen.”

“God be with you” is a way of saying “goodbye.”

He exited.

Referring to Truewit’s exit, Clerimont said, “This is very abrupt!”

— 1.3 —

Dauphine said, “Come, you are a strange, open, and unreserved man to tell everything thus.”

He was worried about what Truewit might do or say about what he had heard.

“Why, believe it, Dauphine, Truewit’s a very honest fellow,” Clerimont said.

“I don’t think otherwise,” Dauphine said, “but this frank nature of his is not for secrets.”

“Nay, then, you are mistaken, Dauphine,” Clerimont said. “I know where he has been well trusted and discharged the trust very truly and heartily.”

Dauphine replied, “I don’t dispute it, Ned, but with the fewer a business is handled, it is always the safer. Now we are alone, if you’ll go thither to visit the silent woman, I am for you.”

He meant that he would go with him.

“When were you there?” Clerimont asked.

“Last night,” Dauphine said, “and such a *Decameron* of entertainment occurred! Boccaccio never thought of the like.”

Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron*, which consisted of 100 stories, many of them about humorous romantic exploits.

Dauphine continued, “Daw does nothing but court her, and the wrong way. He would lie with her and have sex with her, and yet he praises her modesty. He desires that she would talk and be free in talk (and in bed), and he commends her silence in verses — which he reads and swears are the best that ever man made. Then he rails against his fortunes, stamps his feet, and rebels because he has not been made a counsellor and called to affairs of state.”

No doubt, he has not been called to affairs of sex.

“Please, let’s go,” Clerimont said. “I would like to witness this.”

He then said to his boy-servant, “Some water, boy.”

The water may have been for washing up before leaving his house, or it may have been for drinking.

The boy exited.

Dauphine said, “We are invited to dinner together, Jack Daw and I, by one who came thither to him: Sir La Foole.”

Clerimont said, “Oh, that’s a precious manikin! A little man! A puppet!”

“Do you know him?” Dauphine asked.

“Aye,” Clerimont said, “and he will know you, too, if he saw you even once, even if you should meet him at church in the midst of prayers. He is one of the braveries, although he isn’t one of the wits.”

He dressed well, but he was not witty.

Clerimont continued, “He will salute a judge upon the bench and a bishop in the pulpit, a lawyer when he is pleading at the bar, and a lady when she is dancing in a masque, and he will make her forget her steps.

“He does pay for private performances of plays and for suppers for his guests, and he invites his guests to them aloud, out of his window, as they ride by in coaches. He has a lodging in a fashionable neighborhood — the Strand — for that purpose, and to watch when ladies have gone to the china-shops that sell luxurious oriental goods, or the Exchange, so that he may meet them by chance and give them presents, some two or three hundred pounds’ worth of trinkets, to be laughed at.”

Either the trinkets, or La Foole himself, or both, would be laughed at.

Two or three hundred pounds is a lot of money to spend on trinkets.

Clerimont continued, “He is never without a spare banquet of wine and fruit or sweetmeats in his chamber, for their serving-women to alight at and come up to, for a bait.”

La Foole apparently used the serving-women to help him meet the women they served. In this society, a bait is refreshment, and it is a lure.

“Excellent!” Dauphine said. “He was a fine youth last night, but now he is much finer.”

That is, he is much “finer” as a source of entertainment.

Dauphine asked, “What is his Christian name? I have forgotten it.”

The boy entered the room.

Clerimont answered, “Sir Amorous La Foole.”

The boy said, “The gentleman who owns that name is here below.”

“By God’s heart, he’s come to invite me to dinner, I bet my life,” Clerimont said.

“Likely enough,” Dauphine said. “Please, let’s have him up.”

Clerimont said, “Boy, marshal him in.”

“With a truncheon, sir?” the boy said.

He was punning. Marshalls carried a ceremonial baton. A truncheon can be either a baton or a cudgel.

“Go now, please,” Clerimont said.

The boy exited.

Clerimont said, “I’ll make him tell us his pedigree, now, and what food he has to dinner, and who are his guests, and the whole course of his fortunes — all in a breath.”

— 1.4 —

La Foole entered the room and said, “God save you, dear Sir Dauphine! Honored Master Clerimont!

“Sir Amorous!” Clerimont said. “You have very much honored — honored — my lodging with your presence.”

“In good faith, it is a fine lodging!” La Foole said. “Almost as delicate and delightful a lodging as mine.”

“That’s not so, sir,” Clerimont said.

“Excuse me, sir, if it were in the Strand, it would be, I assure you,” La Foole said.

He added, “I have come, Master Clerimont, to entreat you to wait upon two or three ladies to dinner today.”

By “wait upon” the ladies, he meant to call upon the ladies, but Clerimont deliberately misunderstood him.

“What, sir!” he said. “Wait upon them? Have you ever seen me carry dishes?”

“No, sir, dispense with me,” La Foole said. “I meant, to bear them company.”

“Dispense with me” was an affected way of saying, “Excuse me,” but Clerimont deliberately misunderstood it to mean “Do without me.”

“Oh, that I will, sir,” Clerimont said.

He added, “The doubtfulness of your phrase — believe it, sir — would breed you a quarrel once an hour with the terrible boys, if you would but keep them fellowship for a day.”

La Foole’s phrasing was ambiguous and doubtful — capable of being misunderstood.

The terrible boys were better known as the roaring boys. They were bullies who sought excuses for quarreling. Such excuses could be found in ambiguous language.

“It would be extremely against my will, sir, if I contested and fought with any man,” La Foole said.

Such a declaration can be indicative of cowardice.

“I believe it, sir,” Clerimont said.

He then asked, “Where will you hold your feast?”

“At Tom Otter’s, sir,” La Foole said.

“Tom Otter?” Dauphine asked. “Who’s he?”

“Captain Otter, sir,” La Foole said. “He is a kind of gamester, a gambler, but he has had command, both by sea and by land.”

Dauphine said, “Oh, then, he is *animal amphibium*?”

“Amphibious” refers to living both on land and in the sea.

“Aye, sir,” La Foole said. “His wife was the rich china-woman whom the courtiers visited so often, who gave the rare entertainment.”

A china-woman is a woman who owns a china-shop — a shop that sells oriental goods. However, words such as “visited” and “entertainment” were used to refer to a brothel and the activity found in it.

“Rare” can mean “splendid” or “infrequent” or both.

La Foole continued, “She commands all at home.”

“Then she is Captain Otter?” Clerimont asked.

“You say very well, sir,” La Foole said. “She is my kinswoman, a La Foole by the mother’s side, and she will invite any great ladies for my sake.”

“Not of the La Fooles of Essex?” Dauphine asked.

La Foole replied, “No, sir, the La Fooles of London.”

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Now he’s started.”

La Foole enjoyed talking about his ancestors and himself.

He said, “They all come out of our house, the La Fooles of the north, the La Fooles of the west, the La Fooles of the east and of the south — we are as ancient a family as any is in Europe — but I myself am descended lineally of the French La Fooles — and we do bear for our coat yellow, or *or* [gold], chequered *azure* [blue] and *gules* [red], and some three or four colors more, which is a very noted and celebrated coat and has sometimes and in former times been solemnly worn by the various members of nobility of our house — but let that go.”

La Foole was describing his coat of arms, but readers may be forgiven if they thought he was describing the motley — many-colored — coat worn by a jester, aka fool.

He continued, “Antiquity is not respected now.”

Some aristocratic families had been recently elevated, and many knights had been created in Ireland ten years ago (in 1599) by the second Earl of Essex.

La Foole continued, “I had a brace — a pair — of fat does sent to me, gentlemen, and half a dozen pheasants, a dozen or two godwits [marsh birds, a delicacy], and some other fowl, which I want to be eaten while they are good, and in good company. There will be present at dinner a great lady or two — my Lady Haughty, my Lady Centaur, Mistress Doll Mavis — and they come with the purpose of seeing the

silent gentlewoman, Mistress Epicene, whom honest Sir John Daw has promised to bring thither — and then Mistress Trusty, my lady’s serving-woman, will be there, too, and this honorable knight, Sir Dauphine, with yourself, Master Clerimont — and we’ll be very merry, and have fiddlers, and dance — I have been a mad wag in my time, and have spent some crowns since I was a page in court to my Lord Lofty, and after that, I was my lady’s gentleman-usher [a gentleman who serves someone who ranks higher], who got me knighted in Ireland, since it pleased my elder brother to die — I had as fair a gold-embroidered jacket on that day as any that was worn during the Island Voyage or at Caliz.”

The eye of the land is London.

La Foole was knighted in Ireland by the Earl of Essex. Many people of the time thought that the Earl of Essex had lowered the title of knight because he had made so many people knights. Such an honor should be rare.

The Island Voyage — the Earl of Essex’ 1597 expedition to the Azores — was a disaster. Many of the gallants who joined the expedition were criticized for dressing more like people at a masked dance than as soldiers.

Caliz is Cadiz. La Foole was combining the French Cadiz and the English Cales, which is an exonym: a name used by foreigners for a place that the natives themselves do not use it for. For example, USAmericans say Germany, not Deutschland.

La Foole continued, “No one dispraised my jacket, and I came over in it hither, showed myself to my friends in court, and afterward went down to my tenants in the country and surveyed my lands, let new leases, took their money, and spent it in the eye of the land here upon ladies — and now I can take up at my pleasure.”

By “take up,” La Foole meant “take out a loan, borrow money,” but Dauphine and Clerimont deliberately misunderstood him to mean “take (lift) up skirts.”

“Can you take up ladies, sir?” Dauphine asked.

“Oh, let him breathe and catch his breath,” Clerimont said. “He has not yet recovered.”

That is, not yet recovered from his efforts in ladies’ boudoirs.

Dauphine said, “I wish I were your partner in that commodity.”

Many loans involved commodities. To get around usury laws, lenders would require borrowers to take commodities (goods) as part of the loan. The commodities were very overpriced. The lender would buy back the commodities at a low price.

Women can be another kind of commodity.

“No, sir, excuse me,” La Foole said. “I meant money, which can take up anything.”

Money can take up, or buy, anything, including the lifting of skirts.

He continued, “I have another guest or two to invite and say as much to, gentlemen. I’ll take my leave abruptly, in hope you will not fail. I am your servant.”

He meant that he hoped they would not fail to show up for his feast.

La Foole exited.

Dauphine said, “We will not fail you, Sir precious La Foole; but the she whom your ladies come to see will fail, if I take precedence over Sir Daw.”

He did not want Epicene to attend La Foole's dinner.

"Did you ever hear such a wind-fucker as this?" Clerimont said.

A wind-fucker is a kestrel, a small bird whose wings rapidly flap while hovering. The term "wind-fucker" as applied to La Foole implies busy activity that accomplishes nothing.

Dauphine said, "Or such a rook — simpleton — as the other, who will betray his mistress to be seen!"

The other is Jack Daw.

Dauphine continued, "Come, it is time we prevented this planned marriage."

"Let's go," Clerimont said.

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

Morose, who was carrying an ear-trumpet, and a man-servant were in a room in his house.

Morose said to himself, “Cannot I yet find out a more compendious and expeditious method than by this trunk to save my servants the labor of speech and my ears the discord of sounds?”

Ear trumpets are used by the hard-of-hearing to enable them to hear. Morose was so insistent that his servants be quiet that he used a device that amplified their whispers so that he could hear them.

He continued, “Let me see: All discourses but my own afflict me; they seem harsh, impertinent and irrelevant, and irksome.”

He then said to his man-servant, “Isn’t it possible that you should answer me by signs and I understand you, fellow? Do not speak, even when I question you.”

The man-servant could, for example, make a bow to mean “yes” instead of speaking.

Morose asked, “You have taken the ring — the door-knocker — off the street door as I bade you? Answer me not by speech but by silence, unless it be otherwise.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “And you have fastened on a thick quilt, or flock-bed [a mattress or quilt stuffed with wool and/or cotton scraps] on the outside of the door, so that, if they knock with their daggers or with brickbats — pieces of bricks — they can make no noise? Answer only with a bow, unless the answer is other than yes.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “This is not only fit modesty in a servant, but good stately, dignified behavior and discretion in a master.”

He then asked, “And you have been with Cutbeard the barber to have him come to me?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And he will come immediately? Answer only with a bow, unless the answer is other than yes. If the answer is other than yes, shake your head, or shrug.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “Italians and Spaniards are prudent in using gestures instead of words. And it is a frugal and attractive gravity.

“How long will it be before Cutbeard the barber comes?”

The man-servant started to speak, but Morose said, “Stop! If he will come in an hour, hold up your whole hand; if half an hour, two fingers; if a quarter, one finger.”

The man-servant held up one finger, bent.

“Good,” Morose said. “Half a quarter? It is well. And have you given him a key to come in without knocking?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And have the lock and the hinges been oiled today to keep them from creaking?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And the quilting on the stairs is nowhere worn out and bare?”

He had ordered padding to be put on the stairs to stop them from creaking.

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “I see that by much teaching and coercion, noise may be eliminated.”

“Stand nearby,” Morose ordered. “The Turk in this divine discipline is admirable, exceeding all the potentates of the earth; always waited on by mutes, and all his commands so executed, yea, even in the war, as I have heard, and in his military marches, most of his charges and directions given by signs and with silence.”

The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire had many mute servants. Some of his bodyguards and troops were also mute.

“An exquisite art!” Morose continued. “And I am heartily ashamed and angry often that the princes of Christendom should suffer a barbarian to transcend them in so high a point of felicity. I will practice it hereafter.”

He was interrupted by the blowing of a horn.

“What is this now?” he said. “Oh! Oh! What villain, what prodigy of mankind is that? Go and find out.”

His man-servant exited.

The horn sounded again.

“Oh!” Morose said. “Cut his throat! Cut his throat! What murderer, hellhound, devil can this be?”

His man-servant returned and said, “It is an express-messenger from the court —”

“Damn, rogue, and must you blow your horn, too?” an angry Morose said.

“Alas,” his man-servant said. “It is a messenger from the court, sir, who says he must speak with you on pain of death —”

In other words, if the messenger failed to deliver the message, he would be killed.

Morose replied, “On pain of your life, be silent!”

— 2.2 —

Truewit, booted and spurred, entered the room. He was carrying a noose and a post-horn in his hands.

He said to Morose, “By your leave, sir — I am a stranger here — is your name Master Morose?”

Receiving no answer, he said to the man-servant, “Is your name Master Morose?”

Again, he received no answer, so he said, “Mute as fishes! Pythagoreans all! This is strange!”

Pythagoreans made vows of silence so they could apply themselves to self-examination.

Truewit said to Morose, “What do you say, sir? Nothing? Has Harpocrates been here, with his club, among you?”

Harpocrates, the god of silence, carried a club.

Truewit continued, “Well, sir, I will believe you to be the man at this time. I will venture to approach you, sir. Your friends at court commend them to you, sir —”

Morose said to himself, “Oh, men! Oh, manners! Was there ever such an impudence?”

He was adapting Cicero’s words from a speech against Cataline: *O tempora! O mores!* — “Oh, the times! Oh, the

manners!” Cataline was a man who was a threat against the Roman Republic.

Truewit continued, “— and they are extremely solicitous for you, sir.”

“Whose knave are you?” Morose said.

This was an insult.

Truewit replied, “I am my own knave, and I am your compeer — your equal — sir.”

This was an insult.

Morose said to his man-servant, “Fetch me my sword —”

Truewit said to the man-servant, “You shall taste the one half of my dagger, if you do, servant —”

He then said to Morose, “— and you shall taste the other half if you stir, sir. Be patient, I order you in the king’s name, and hear me without insurrection.

“They say you are to marry? To marry! Do you hear me, sir?”

“So what, rude fellow!” Morose said.

“By the Virgin Mary, your friends do wonder that you would marry, sir,” Truewit said, “when there are so many ways and so many places to commit suicide.

“The Thames is so near wherein you may drown so handsomely.

“Or you may jump from London Bridge at a low ebb-tide, when with a fine leap, the current will hurry you down the stream.

“Or you can jump from such a delicate steeple in the town as St. Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside.

“Or you can jump from a more splendid height, such as St. Paul’s.

“Or, if you want to do it nearer home and a shorter way, you can jump from an excellent garret window into the street.

“Or you can hang yourself from a beam in the said garret, with this noose” — he showed Morose the noose he was carrying — “which they have sent. Your friends desire that you would sooner commit your grave head to this knot than to the wedlock noose.

“Or you can take a little sublimate [mercuric chloride, a rat poison] and go out of the world like a rat.

“Or you can go out of the world like a fly — as one of your friends said — with a straw in your arse like the fly has to keep it from flying away as it fights a spider.

“Your friends want you to go out of the world by any way rather than to follow this goblin matrimony.”

Truewit wanted to convince Morose that suicide was much preferable to marriage.

Truewit continued, “Alas, sir, do you ever think to find a chaste wife in these times? Now? When there are so many masques, plays, Puritan preachings, mad folks, and other strange sights to be seen daily, private and public?”

Entertainments of the time included visiting mental hospitals such as Bedlam to see insane people.

Truewit continued, “If you had lived long ago in King Ethelred’s time, sir, or Edward the Confessor’s, you might perhaps have found in some cold country hamlet, then, a dull, sexually frosty wench who would have been contented with one man; nowadays they will as soon be pleased with one leg or one eye. I’ll tell you, sir, the monstrous hazards you shall run with a wife.”

Morose said, “Good sir, have I ever cheated any friends of yours of their land? Immorally bought their possessions? Foreclosed on their mortgage? Begged a right of succession to an estate or an official position from them? Rendered illegitimate their children so they could not receive an inheritance? What have I done that may deserve this?”

“Nothing, sir, that I know of, except your itch to be married,” Truewit said.

Morose said, “Why, if I had murdered your father, vitiated and corrupted your mother, ravished and raped your sisters —”

Truewit interrupted, “I would kill you, sir. I would kill you if you had.”

“Why, you do more in this, sir,” Morose said. “It would be a vengeance centuple — a hundredfold — for all wicked acts that could be named to do that which you do —”

Truewit interrupted, “Alas, sir, I am only a messenger. I simply tell you what you must hear.

“It seems your friends are worried about your soul’s health, sir, and they would have you know the danger. But you may do what pleases you despite what all your friends say. I am not trying to persuade you not to marry, sir.”

This last sentence was false.

Truewit continued, “If, after you are married, your wife should run away with a vaulter —”

A vaulter can be a gymnast, but brothels were known as vaulting-houses.

Truewit continued, “— or with the Frenchman who walks upon ropes, or with him who dances the jig, or with a fencer for his skill at his weapon, why, it is not your friends’ fault;

they have satisfied what their consciences demand by letting you know what may happen.”

A fencer can be skilled with both a weapon and a “weapon.”

“Nay, suffer valiantly, sir, for I must tell you all the perils that you are liable to and that are obnoxious to you.

“If she is pretty, young, and lively, no sweetmeats ever drew more flies; all the yellow jackets and great roses in the town will be there.”

Roses are rosettes worn as decorations on shoes. Yellow jackets and roses were fashionable and were worn by dandies.

Truewit continued, “If she is ugly and crooked-backed, she’ll be with them and buy those jackets and roses, sir.”

In other words, she will pay for sex with well-dressed gallants.

Truewit continued, “If she is rich, and you marry her for her dowry and not for herself, she’ll reign in your house as imperious as a widow.

“If she is noble, all her kindred will be your tyrants.

“If she is fruitful and pregnant, and as proud as May and as changeable as weather in April, she must have her doctors, her midwives, her nurses, her longings every hour, although her longing may be for the dearest morsel of man.

“If she is well educated and learned, there was never such a parrot as she will be; all your patrimony will be too little for the guests who must be invited to hear her speak Latin and Greek, and you must lie with her — woo her — in those languages, too, if you will please her.

“If she is a Puritan, you must feast all the silenced brethren — those who have lost their licenses to preach out of

opposition to the official church — once in every three days, salute the Puritan sisters, entertain the whole family or wood [crowd] of them, and hear longwinded religious devotions, singings, and catechisings, which you are not given to and yet must give in order to please the zealous matron your wife, who, for the holy cause, will cheat and trick you over and above.”

The Latin word *silva* means “woods.” It is a collection of trees. Truewit used “wood” to mean a collection of people. In this society, a piece of wood is a blockhead. (Blockheads were wooden heads for hats or wigs to rest on.) In this society, the word “wood” also meant insane.

Truewit continued, “You begin to sweat, sir?”

“But this is not half, indeed. You may do your pleasure notwithstanding; as I said before, I did not come here to persuade you not to marry.”

Morose’s man-servant started to steal away.

Truewit said to him, “Upon my faith, master serving-man, if you do stir, I will beat you.”

Morose said, “Oh, what is my sin? What is my sin?”

Truewit continued his diatribe against women, “Then, if you love your wife, or rather dote on her, sir, oh, how she’ll torture you! And take pleasure in your torments!”

The word “dote” is related to the word “dotage.”

He continued, “You shall lie with her only when she wishes. She will not hurt her beauty, her face make-up; or it must be for that jewel or that pearl when she does lie with you. Every half-hour’s pleasure must be bought anew, and with the same trouble and expense you wooed her at first.

“Then, you must keep what servants she wants, what company she will; that friend must not visit you without her license; and him she loves most she will seem to hate eagerliest — most fiercely — to avert your jealousy, or feign to be jealous of you first, and for that reason go live with her she-friend (a possible bawd) or cousin (a possible lover) at the College who can instruct her in all the mysteries of writing letters, corrupting servants, and taming household spies.”

The College is that of the Lady Collegiates.

Truewit continued, “She must have that rich gown for such a great day, a new one for the next, a richer for the third.

“She must be served with silver plates and utensils.

“She must have the chamber filled with a succession of servants, footmen, ushers, and other messengers, besides embroiderers, jewelers, tire-women [dress-makers], sempsters [tailors], feathermen [sellers of feathers], perfumers.”

The messengers would be used to carry letters to lovers.

Truewit continued, “All this while she will not feel how the land drops away as it is sold to pay for her extravagance, nor will she feel how the acres melt, nor will she foresee the change when the mercer [seller of expensive fabrics such as silk and velvet] has your woods for her velvets.

“She will never weigh what her pride costs, sir, so long as she may kiss a page or a smooth chin that has the despair of a beard.

“She will be a stateswoman [female politician].

“She will know all the gossip: what was done at the horse races at Salisbury, what happened at the springs in Bath,

what happened at court, what happened during the journey of the king.

“Or she will censure and judge poets and authors and styles, and compare them, Samuel Daniel with Edmund Spenser, Jonson with the other youth, and so forth.”

Truewit (that is, Truewit’s creator: Ben Jonson) was joking as well as criticizing women. Many of the points Truewit made against women came from Juvenal’s *Satire VI*. Juvenal compared Homer and Virgil. Here the comparison is between Ben Jonson and his friend William Shakespeare. That Truewit does not mention Shakespeare’s name is an affectionate joke as shown by neither Jonson nor Shakespeare being youths in 1609.

Truewit continued, “Or she will be thought cunning in controversies or the very knotty problems of divinity; and she will have, often in her mouth, the main issue of the question; and then she will skip to the mathematics and demonstration; and answer in religion to one, in politics to another, in bawdry to a third.”

Morose cried, “Oh! Oh!”

“All this is very true, sir,” Truewit said. “And then her going in disguise to that astrologer and this fortune-teller or wise woman, where the first question is: How soon shall you — Morose — die?”

“The next question is: Whether her present servant loves her?”

“The next question is: Whether she shall have a new servant? And how many?”

The word “servant” can mean lover.

He continued, “She will also ask these questions:

“Which of her family would make the best bawd, male or female?”

“What precedence she shall have by her next match?”

Precedence refers to who precedes others at formal social occasions: the higher the rank, the higher the precedence.

He continued, “And she will set down the answers, and she will believe them more than she believes the holy scriptures. Nay, perhaps she’ll study the art of fortune-telling.”

Morose said, “Gentle sir, have you finished? Have you had your pleasure of me? Have you gotten what you wanted from me? I’ll think about these things you have said.”

“Yes, sir,” Truewit said. “And then she comes steaming home, reeking of vapor and sweat from going afoot.”

To go afoot is to go on foot or to be active. Here the activity could happen in a bed.

Truewit continued, “And she will lie in bed for a month to give birth to a new face, which is all makeup with oil and birdlime used as ingredients, and she rinses in asses’ milk, and she is cleansed with a new cosmetic face-wash.”

Limestone is a sticky substance used to catch birds.

Truewit himself may not have believed all the criticisms he was making of women. Earlier, he had praised women’s use of cosmetics. Here he criticized it before Morose in an attempt to persuade Morose not to marry.

Truewit said, “God be with you, sir.”

This means: Goodbye.

But then he added, “One thing more, which I had almost forgotten. This, too — whom you are to marry may have made a conveyance of her virginity aforehand, as your wise

widows do of their estates before they marry, in trust to some friend, sir.”

Wealthy widows had control of their money and possessions, but the money and possessions became her husband’s when the wealthy widow married — unless she had conveyed the money and possessions to a trusted friend — or lover — to keep for her.

According to Truewit, any woman Morose would marry was likely to have given her virginity away.

Truewit continued, “Who can tell? Or if she has not conveyed her virginity to another man yet, she may do so on the wedding day or the night before, and make you a cuckold even before the wedding night.”

A cuckold is a man with an unfaithful wife.

He continued, “The like has been heard of in nature. It is no contrived impossible thing, sir.

“God be with you. I’ll be bold enough to leave this rope with you, sir, for a remembrance.”

He handed Morose the noose.

He said to Morose’s man-servant, “Farewell, Mute.”

He then exited.

Morose said to his man-servant, “Come, help me to my chamber, but first shut the door.”

A horn sounded.

“Oh, shut the door, shut the door!” Morose said. “Has he come again?”

Cutbeard the barber entered the room and said, “It is I, sir, your barber.”

“Oh, Cutbeard! Cutbeard! Cutbeard!” Morose said. “Here has been a cut-throat with me. Help me into my bed, and give me medicine with your counsel.”

They exited.

— 2.3 —

Sir John “Jack” Daw, Clerimont, Dauphine, and Epicene were together in a room in Sir John’s house across from Cutbeard’s barbershop.

Jack Daw said to Clerimont and Dauphine, “Nay, if she will, let her refuse to come to the feast at her own cost. It is nothing to me, gentlemen. But she will not be invited to the like feasts or guests every day.”

Clerimont said, “Oh, by no means, she may not refuse —”

Clerimont and Dauphine then spoke quietly to Epicene to persuade her not to come to the feast.

Picking up where he left off speaking to Jack Daw, Clerimont said quietly to Epicene, “— to stay at home, if you love your reputation. By God’s light, you are invited thither for the purpose of being seen and laughed at by the lady of the College and her parasitical companions. This trumpeting loudmouth” — he pointed to Jack Daw — “has been talking about you.”

Speaking softly like Clerimont so that Jack Daw could not hear him, Dauphine said to Epicene, “You shall not go. Let him be laughed at in your stead for not bringing you, and put him to his extemporal faculty of acting the fool and talking out loud to explain to the company why you are absent.”

Clerimont said softly to Dauphine, “Jack Daw will suspect us; talk out loud.”

He then said out loud, “Please, Mistress Epicene, let’s see your verses — the ones Jack Daw wrote about you; we have Sir John Daw’s permission to see them. Do not conceal your servant’s merit and your own glories.”

By “glories,” he meant splendors and triumphs.

Epicene, who knew that Jack Daw was a fool and would want to read his own verses out loud, replied, “They’ll prove my servant’s glories, if you have his permission so soon. “

By “glories,” she meant pretentious boasts.

Agreeing with her, Dauphine said, “His vainglories, lady!”

Vainglories are empty glories — pretentious boasts about things of little worth.

Eager to show off, Jack Daw said, “Show them, show them, mistress; I dare to acknowledge them to be my own.”

Holding out the verses to Clerimont and Dauphine, Epicene said, “Judge for yourselves what glories!”

Jack Daw grabbed the verses and said, “Nay, I’ll read them myself, too; an author must recite his own works.”

He then said, “It is a madrigal of modesty.”

A madrigal is a love lyric.

He read out loud:

“Modest and fair, for fair and good are near

“Neighbors, howe’er’ —”

“Very good,” Dauphine said.

“Aye, is it not?” Clerimont said.

He meant, Yes, the madrigal is not good.

Jack Daw continued reciting:

“No noble virtue ever was alone,

“But two in one.”

“Excellent!” Dauphine said.

“Recite that again, please, Sir John,” Clerimont requested.

“It has something in it like rare wit and sense,” Dauphine said.

“Rare” can mean splendid, but Dauphine used the word to mean that the wit and sense in the verses were infrequent. A better word would be “nonexistent.”

“Quiet!” Clerimont said.

Jack Daw continued reciting:

“No noble virtue ever was alone,

“But two in one.

“Then, when I praise sweet modesty, I praise

“Bright beauty’s rays;

“And, having praised both beauty and modesty,

“I have praised thee.”

“Admirable!” Dauphine said.

“How it chimes, and tinkles in the close, divinely!” Clerimont said.

Jack Daw is a petit poet. His verses chime like the tinkle of a tiny bell and they tick tick tick like seeds in a dry pod, while Homer’s verses roar in the pines.

“Aye, it is Seneca,” Dauphine said.

Seneca was a Roman tragedian.

“No, I think it is Plutarch,” Clerimont said.

Plutarch wrote a series of biographies comparing famous Greeks to famous Romans.

Both Seneca and Plutarch wrote books that still live long after their authors died.

Jack Daw did not want to be grouped with such great authors: “I scoff at Plutarch and Seneca! I hate it. My verses are my own imaginative inventions, by that light. I wonder those fellows have such credit with gentlemen!”

“They are very grave authors,” Clerimont said.

Seneca and Plutarch wrote about important themes and yes, they are both in the grave.

“Grave asses!” Jack Daw said. “Mere essayists! A few loose maxims and that’s all.”

Jack Daw’s own verses were basically a few common maxims or proverbs. He was saying that one virtue is accompanied by another; for example, beauty and modesty.

He continued, “A man would talk so his whole age; I do utter as good things every hour, if they were collected and observed, as either of them.”

“Indeed, Sir John?” Dauphine said.

“He must necessarily, since he is living among the wits and braveries, too,” Clerimont said.

“Aye, and being president of them as he is,” Dauphine said.

Jack Daw continued his criticism of famous thinkers, “There’s Aristotle, a mere commonplace fellow.”

By “commonplace,” Jack Daw meant “trivial,” but the Latin *locus communis* [common place] means “universal truth.” Aristotle wrote many books about many topics, and especially he wrote philosophy.

Jack Daw continued, “Plato was a discourser.”

By “discourser,” Jake Daw meant “a mere talker,” but Plato truly was a writer of discourses in his *Dialogues*. In them, Socrates discoursed with other people; his discourses illustrated rational, logical thought.

Jack Daw continued, “Thucydides and Livy were tedious and dry.”

“Thucydides” and “tedious” share some letters. Either through ignorance or through a feeble attempt at humor, Jack Daw pronounced Thucydides as Thucydious.

“Livy” suggests the word “livid,” whose meanings include being furiously angry and being discolored — black and blue — through bruising. Black is the color of melancholy, which people in this society considered to be a dry humor. This society considered humors to be four bodily fluids whose various combinations made up the human personality. Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

Jack Daw continued, “Tacitus was an entire knot, sometimes worth the untying, but very seldom.”

A knotty problem in intellectual thought is one that is hard to untangle.

Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus are famous ancient historians.

The Latin word *tacitus* means secret, and hidden. It also means speechless.

“What do you think of the poets, Sir John?” Clerimont asked.

Jack Daw replied, “They are not worthy to be named as authors. Homer, an old tedious prolix ass, talks of curriers of horses, and talks of chines of beef. Virgil talks of dunging of land, and talks of bees. Horace talks of I don’t know what.”

Homer, creator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, did write about horses and chines — backbones — of beef. But he also wrote about the meaning of life, about the heroic ethic, about war and death, and about homecoming.

Virgil in his *Georgics* did write about beekeeping and other pastoral topics, but his masterpiece is the epic poem *Aeneid*, which is about Trojans who survived the Trojan War traveling to Italy and becoming important ancestors of the Roman people.

Ben Jonson revered the Roman poet Horace. Fittingly, the foolish Jack Daw knew nothing about Horace.

“I think so,” Clerimont said.

He was not agreeing with Jack Daw’s opinions, but he was agreeing that Jack Daw knew nothing about Horace.

Jack Daw said, “And so Pindarus, Lycophron, Anacreon, Catullus, Seneca the tragedian, Lucan, Propertius, Tibullus, Martial, Juvenal, Ausonius, Statius, Politian, Valerius Flaccus, and the rest —”

These were all Roman and Greek poets, except for the Italian humanist Politian. Possibly, Jack Daw thought that Politian was Roman or Greek.

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “What a sackful of their names he has got!”

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “And how he pours them out! Politian with Valerius Flaccus!”

Valerius Flaccus wrote the incomplete *Argonautica* about Jason and the Argonauts.

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Wasn’t the character sketch right about him? Isn’t what we heard about Jack Daw true?”

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “As right and correct as could be made, indeed.”

Jack Daw continued, “And Persius, a crabbed coxcomb, not to be endured.”

Persius was a satirist whose style was difficult and appeared to Jack Daw to be crabbed.

“Why, whom do you regard to be authors, Sir John Daw?” Dauphine asked.

Jack Daw replied, “*Syntagma juris civilis*, *Corpus juris civilis*, *Corpus juris canonici*, the King of Spain’s Bible.”

He mentioned books rather than authors.

Syntagma juris civilis and *Corpus juris civilis* are actually the same book. *Corpus* is Latin for Body. *Σύνταγμα* or *Syntagma* is Greek for Constitution. This book is a collection of Roman law.

Corpus juris canonici is a collection of canon law.

The King of Spain’s Bible is a polygot Bible; King Phillip I of Spain sponsored it.

Many people worked on these books; each book does not have a single author.

Because Jack Daw had named the titles of books and not the names of authors, Dauphine and Clerimont pretended that he thought the titles were authors’ names.

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “Is the King of Spain’s Bible an author?”

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Yes, and *Syntagma*.”

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “What was that *Syntagma*, sir?”

Jack Daw answered, “A civil lawyer, a Spaniard.”

Jack Daw really did think the book titles were authors’ names!

Dauphine said, “Surely, *Corpus* was a Dutchman.”

Clerimont said, “Aye, both the *Corpuses*, I knew them; they were very corpulent authors.”

The Dutch had a reputation for liking butter. Butter is a food that can make one’s *corpus* very corpulent, indeed.

Jack Daw continued, “And then there’s Vatablus, Pomponatius, Symancha; the others are not to be received within the thought of a scholar.”

Vatablus, Pomponatius, and Symancha are famous scholars.

Vatablus was a scholar of Hebrew, the Bible, and Aristotle. Pomponatius was a scholar of Aristotle, and Symancha was a scholar of canon and civil law.

Dauphine said to Epicene, “Before God, you have a simple learned servant, lady, in titles.”

The word “simple” can mean “absolute,” which is what Jack Daw thought it meant, or it can mean what you think it means.

In a way, though, Jack Daw was absolutely learned in titles — he knew the titles of books, but not what is inside them.

Clerimont said, “I wonder that he is not called to the helm and made a councilor!”

By councilor, he meant a member of the Privy Council, which advised the King of England.

“He is one extraordinary,” Dauphine said.

“Extraordinary” means outside the regular staff.

Clerimont said, “Nay, but in ordinary!”

“In ordinary” means “full-time.”

As a suffix, “in” can be an intensifier, so if Jack Daw is “inordinary,” he is very ordinary indeed.

Many people with high opinions of their own sagacity are ordinary ignoramuses.

Clerimont added, “To say the truth, the state wants such.”

The word “wants” can mean either “needs” or “lacks.” We can hope that the Privy Council lacks such councilors as Jack Daw.

Dauphine said, “Why, that will follow.”

Clerimont said to Epicene, “I wonder that a mistress can be so silent to the dotes of such a servant.”

“Dotes” are natural endowments, but the word is related to “dotage.”

John Daw said, “It is her virtue, sir. I have written somewhat about her silence, too.”

“In verse, Sir John?” Dauphine asked.

“What else?” Clerimont said.

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “Why, how can you justify your being yourself a poet, you who so slight all the old poets?”

Jack Daw replied, “Why, every man who writes in verse is not a poet.”

He meant: Not every man who writes in verse is a poet.

He was correct. Good verse is good poetry and is written by good poets. Bad verse is doggerel and is written by mere rhymers and versifiers and dilettantes. Mere dilettantes lack knowledge and commitment.

Jack Daw continued, “You have of the wits those who write verses and yet are no poets. Poets are those who live by it, the poor fellows who live by it.”

To Jack Daw, the distinction between poets and versifiers was whether they made money from writing. This society respected those who did not have to work for a living.

Dauphine asked, “Why, wouldn’t you live by your verses, Sir John?”

One meaning of “live by” is “be remembered and so be immortal in that sense.” Homer and Virgil are immortal in that sense.

Clerimont said, “No, it would be a pity if he were to. A knight live by his verses? He did not make them to that end, I hope.”

Let us not make immortal bad verses.

Dauphine said, “And yet the noble Sidney lives by his, and the noble family is not ashamed.”

Sir Philip Sidney is one of the immortal poets. Contrary to Jack Daw’s definition, Sidney did not make money from his poetry. His sister published his works after his death (during his lifetime, they circulated in manuscript form), and as a result his name and poetry live on. Among other works, he wrote *Astrophil and Stella* and *An Apology for Poetry*. The word “Apology” means “Defense.”

Clerimont said, “Aye, he proclaimed himself publicly; but Sir John Daw has more caution. He’ll not hinder his own rising in the state so much! Do you think he will?”

In this society, snobbery existed against poets.

Clerimont continued, “Read your verses, good Sir John, and no poems.”

Jack Daw’s verses were, in fact, not poetry.

Jack Daw recited:

“Silence in women is like speech in man,

“Deny it who can.”

Jack Daw believed that men should speak and that women should not speak.

“Not I ... believe it,” Dauphine said.

He was not one to believe the content of Jack Daw’s verses.

Dauphine then asked, “Your reason, sir?”

John Daw did not give a reason, but he continued reciting:

“Nor is’t a tale

“That female vice should be a virtue male,

“Or masculine vice a female virtue be;

“You shall it see

“Proved with increase.

“I know to speak and she to hold her peace.”

He then asked, “Do you *conceive* me, gentlemen?”

Some of his words had a sexual meaning.

“Tale” equals “tail.”

“Increase” can mean “production of children.”

“Peace” equals “piece.”

“Conceive” can mean “become pregnant.” (It also can mean “understand.”)

“No, truly,” Dauphine said. “What do you mean by ‘with increase,’ Sir John?”

Jack Daw replied, “Why, ‘with increase’ is when I court her for the common cause of mankind, and she says nothing but *consentire videtur*, and in time is *gravida*.”

The common cause of mankind is procreation.

Consentire videtur is Latin for “seems to consent.”

Gravita means “pregnant.”

“Then this is a ballad of procreation?” Dauphine asked.

“A madrigal of procreation,” Clerimont said. “You make a mistake by calling it a ballad.”

Originally, Jack Daw had called it a “madrigal of modesty.”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “Please give me my verses again, servant.”

Jack Daw, “If you’ll request them aloud, you shall.”

Jack Daw and Epicene walked aside with the poems.

Clerimont heard a noise and looked in its direction and said, “Look, here’s Truewit again.”

— 2.4 —

Truewit entered the room. He was carrying his post-horn.

“Where have you been, in the name of madness, thus equipped with your horn?” Clerimont asked.

“Where the sound of it might have pierced your senses with gladness, had you been in ear-reach of it,” Truewit said. “Dauphine, fall down and worship me. I have forbid the banns, lad. I have formally objected to the marriage. I have been with your virtuous uncle and have broken the match.”

“You have not, I hope!” Dauphine said.

“Yes, indeed,” Truewit said. “If you should hope otherwise, I would repent. This horn got me entrance; kiss it. I had no other way to get in but by feigning to be a post, but when I once got in, I proved not to be a post.”

Truewit was punning on the word “post.” He had pretended to be a post-messenger, but once he gained admittance into Morose’s house, he showed that he (Truewit) was not a fence post: a block of wood, aka blockhead.

He continued, “But on the contrary, I turned him into a post, or a stone, or what is stiffer, by thundering into him the incommodities and disadvantages of a wife and the miseries of marriage. If a Gorgon were ever seen in the shape of a woman, he has seen her in my description.”

A Gorgon is a female monster whose look can turn a man into stone.

Truewit continued, “I have put him off that scent forever. Why don’t you applaud and adore me, sirs? Why do you stand mute? Are you stupid and/or stupefied? You are not worthy of the benefit I have given to you.”

Dauphine said to Clerimont, “Didn’t I tell you? Mischief!”

Clerimont said to Truewit, “I wish that you had placed this benefit somewhere else.”

“Why so?” Truewit asked.

“By God’s light, you have done the most inconsiderate, rash, weak thing that a man ever did to his friend,” Clerimont answered.

“Friend!” Dauphine said. “If the most malicious enemy I have had studied how to inflict an injury upon me, he could not have come up with a greater injury.”

“An injury!” Truewit said. “How? In what, for God’s sake? Gentlemen, come to yourselves again.”

Dauphine said to Clerimont, “But I predicted thus much before to you. I warned you of this.”

Dauphine had worried about Clerimont’s talking so openly about Dauphine’s inheritance troubles to Truewit, who was outspoken and not one for secrets.

“I wished that my lips had been soldered together when I spoke about it!” Clerimont said.

He then said to Truewit, “By God’s light, what moved you to be thus impertinent and meddling?”

“My masters,” Truewit said, “do not put on this strange face of hostility to pay my courtesy. Take off your hostile ‘mask.’ Do you have good deeds done to you, and thank the doers in this way?”

“Before heaven, you have ruined me,” Dauphine said. “That which I have plotted for and have been putting into effect now for these past four months, you have blasted in a minute.

“Now that I am lost and ruined, I may speak.

“This gentlewoman” — he pointed to Epicene — “was lodged here by me on purpose, and to impose upon and trick my uncle, she has professed this obstinate silence for my sake, being entirely my friend, and one who, in return for the

fortune she will get if she marries him, would have made me a very ample settlement. But now all my hopes are utterly miscarried by this unlucky occurrence done by you.”

Clerimont said, “Thus it is when a man will be ignorantly officious, do services, and not ask why — or whether — he should do services. I wonder what courteous itch possessed you! You never played a more absurd part in your life, nor ever made a greater trespass to friendship, to humanity.”

“Indeed, you may forgive it best,” Dauphine said. “It was your fault principally.”

“I know it,” Clerimont said. “I wish it were not my fault!”

Clerimont had told Truewit the facts that had made Truewit take the action that neither Dauphine nor Clerimont wanted.

Cutbeard the barber entered the room.

“How are you now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “What is the news?”

“The best, the happiest that ever was, sir,” Cutbeard said. “There has been a mad gentleman visiting your uncle this morning —”

He pointed to Truewit and said, “I think this is the gentleman,” and then continued, “— who has almost talked him out of his wits with threatening him with the woes of marriage.”

“Go on, please,” Dauphine said.

“And your uncle, sir,” Cutbeard said, “thinks it was done by your arrangement; therefore, he will see the party you know of immediately” — he meant Epicene — “and if he likes her, he says, and if she is so inclining to dumbness as I have told him she is, he swears he will marry her today, instantly, and not defer it a minute longer.”

“Excellent!” Dauphine said. “Beyond our expectation!”

“Beyond your expectation?” Truewit said. “By this light, I knew it would be thus.”

Not likely.

“Nay, sweet Truewit, forgive me,” Dauphine said. “I don’t believe you.”

Truewit said, “No, I was ‘ignorantly officious’ and ‘impertinent.’ This was the ‘absurd,’ ‘weak’ part. So you believe.”

“Will you ascribe to merit, now, what was sheer fortune, mere luck?” Clerimont asked.

Truewit said, “Sheer fortune? Sheer luck? No, it was completely providence and foresight. Fortune and luck had not a finger in it. I saw it must necessarily in nature fall out so; my attendant spirit is never false to me in these things. Show me how it could be otherwise.”

Truewit’s actions had had a good outcome: Morose was going to marry Epicene immediately, it seemed. Now Truewit was taking credit for it.

“Nay, gentlemen, don’t argue,” Dauphine said. “All is well now.”

“Alas, I let him go on with ‘inconsiderate’ and ‘rash’ and what else he pleased to criticize me with,” Truewit said.

Clerimont said, “Bah, you strange justifier of yourself, who claim to be wiser than you were because of a lucky outcome!”

“Lucky outcome!” Truewit said. “By this light, you shall never persuade me to believe anything other than I foresaw it as well as the stars themselves.”

“Nay, gentlemen, all is well now,” Dauphine said. “You two entertain Sir John Daw with conversation while I send Epicene away with my instructions.”

Truewit replied, “I’ll be acquainted with her, first, with your permission.”

The gentlemen approached Jack Daw and Epicene, who had been talking together off to the side.

Presenting Truewit to Epicene, Clerimont said, “This is Master Truewit, lady. He is a friend of ours.”

“I am sorry I have not known you sooner, lady, to celebrate this rare virtue of your silence,” Truewit said.

Epicene curtsied.

Clerimont said to Truewit, “Indeed, if you had come sooner, you would have seen and heard her well celebrated in Sir John Daw’s madrigals.”

Epicene, Dauphine, and Cutbeard exited as Truewit turned to Jack Daw.

“Jack Daw, may God save you!” Truewit said. “When did you last see La Foole?”

“Not since last night, Master Truewit,” Jack Daw said.

“That’s a miracle!” Truewit said. “I thought you two were inseparable.”

“He’s gone to invite his guests,” Jack Daw said.

“Ha, that’s true,” Truewit said. “What a false memory I do have towards that man!”

“I am one of his guests. I met him just now sitting upon what he calls his exquisite, delicate fine black horse, which was

ridden into a foam with posting from place to place and person to person to give them the cue —”

“A reminder lest they should forget?” Clerimont asked.

“Yes,” Truewit said. “There never was any poor captain who took more pains at a muster to show men than he, at this meal, to show friends.”

Unscrupulous military officers recruited as many men, including men unsuitable to be soldiers, as they could in order to inflate their own profits. La Foole recruited as many friends and “friends” to attend his feast as he could to maintain his social status.

“It is his quarter-feast, sir,” Jack Daw said.

Once a quarter, La Foole collected the rents due to him because of his land holdings. He celebrated with a feast for himself and his many guests.

“What, do you say so, Sir John?” Clerimont said.

“Nay, Jack Daw will not be silenced and out of words, among the best friends he has, to the talent of his wit,” Truewit said.

In other words, Jack Daw will not restrain himself from making a joke, even if it is at the expense of his friends. Also, Jack Daw will not be absent from a feast during which he can display his wit and intelligence.

Sadly, Jack Daw had not much wit and intelligence and not many friends who really liked him.

Truewit then asked, “Where’s his mistress, who should hear and applaud him? Has she gone?”

Jack Daw asked, “Has Mistress Epicene gone?”

He meant, Has she gone to the feast already?

Clerimont said, “She has gone before us with Sir Dauphine, I promise you, to the place.”

“Gone before!” Truewit said. “That is a manifest injury, a disgrace and a half, to refuse him at such a festival time as this, with him being a bravery and a wit, too.”

He meant that Epicene had insulted Jack Daw by going to the feast with Dauphine, not him.

“Tut, he’ll swallow it like cream,” Clerimont said. “He’s better read in *jure civili* [civil law] than to esteem anything a disgrace that is offered him from a mistress.”

He meant that Jack Daw was so well mannered (or perhaps mild mannered) that he would not take offence at any insult a woman offered him.

“Nay, let her even go,” Jack Daw said. “She shall sit alone and be dumb in her chamber a week together, as far as John Daw is concerned, I promise her. Does she refuse me?”

“No, sir, do not take it so to heart,” Clerimont said. “She does not refuse you, but she does a little neglect you.”

He then said, “In good faith, Truewit, you were too blameworthy to put it into his head that she does refuse him.”

“She does refuse him, sir, palpably, however you mince — minimize — it,” Truewit said. “If I were him, I would swear to never speak a word to her today for it.”

“By this light, I will no more speak to her,” Jack Daw said.

“Nor to anybody else, sir,” Truewit said.

“Nay, I will not say that, gentlemen,” Jack Daw said.

He would continue to speak to them.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, “It would have been an excellent happy condition for the company if you could have drawn him to promise not to speak to us again.”

“I’ll be very melancholic, indeed,” Jack Daw said.

“As a dog, if I were as you, Sir John,” Clerimont said.

Dogs were proverbially considered to be melancholic.

“Or a snail, or a hog-louse [wood-louse],” Truewit said. “I would roll myself up like a beetle for self-protection for this day, indeed; they should not unwind me.”

“By this toothpick, so I will,” Jack Daw said.

In this society, toothpicks were considered fashionable.

“Well done,” Clerimont whispered to Truewit. “He begins already to be angry with his teeth.”

Jack Daw was jabbing at his teeth with his toothpick.

“Will you go, gentlemen?” Jack Daw asked.

“Nay, you must walk alone, if you are truly melancholic, Sir John,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, sir, we’ll dog you,” Truewit said. “We’ll follow you afar off.”

Jack Daw exited.

“Was there ever such a two yards of knighthood, measured out by time, to be sold to laughter?” Clerimont said, comparing Jack Daw to a bolt of cloth from which six feet of cloth were measured, cut, and sold.

“A mere talking mole!” Truewit said.

Moles were thought to be blind.

He continued, “Hang him. No mushroom was ever so fresh.”

Mushrooms grow overnight, and so upstarts in society were called mushrooms. Jack Daw was an upstart because he had bought his knighthood.

Truewit continued, “Jack Daw is a fellow who is so utterly nothing that he doesn’t know what he would be.”

“Let’s follow him,” Clerimont said. “But first let’s go to Dauphine — he’s hovering about the house — to hear what is the news.”

“I agree,” Truewit said.

They exited.

— 2.5 —

Morose, Epicene, Cutbeard the barber, and the mute servant met together. Epicene was wearing a mask.

“Welcome, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “Draw near with your fair charge, and in her ear softly entreat her to unmask.”

Epicene took off her mask.

“Good,” Morose said.

He asked his mute servant, “Is the door shut?”

The mute servant bowed, meaning yes.

“Enough,” Morose said to the mute servant.

He then said, “Now, Cutbeard, with the same discipline I use with my household servants, I will question you. As I understand, Cutbeard, this gentlewoman is she whom you have provided and brought in hope she will fit me in the place and person of a wife. Answer me not with words, but by making a bow, unless the answer is otherwise than yes.”

Cutbeard bowed.

“Very well done, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “I also understand, Cutbeard, that you have been pre-acquainted with her birth, education, and qualities, or else you would not recommend her to my acceptance in the weighty consequence of marriage.”

Cutbeard began to answer with words, but Morose said, “This I understand, Cutbeard. Answer me not with words, but by making a bow, unless your answer is otherwise than yes.”

Cutbeard bowed.

“Very well done, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “Stand aside now a little, and let me examine her shape and capacity to arouse my affection.”

He walked around Epicene and said, “She is exceedingly fair and of a specially good beauty. She has a sweet, well-tuned composition or harmony of limbs. Her temper of beauty has the true height of my blood — her beauty suits my passions.”

Blood makes a penis attain height.

Morose said to himself about Cutbeard, “The knave has exceedingly well suited me with her external appearance; I will now try her within.”

He meant that he would test her character, but readers may be forgiven for thinking that Morose was going to test Epicene’s lady parts.

Morose said to Epicene, “Come near, fair gentlewoman. Let my behavior not seem rude, although to you, who are uncommonly fine, it may perhaps appear strange.”

It appears strange to most readers, no doubt.

Epicene curtsied.

Morose said, “Nay, lady, you may speak, although Cutbeard and my mute serving-man might not, for of all sounds only the sweet voice of a fair lady has the just attunement to my ears.

“I ask you to speak out loud, lady: Out of the first fire of meeting eyes, they say, love is stricken. Do you feel any such ’motion suddenly shot into you from any part you see in me? Ha, lady?”

He was asking if Epicene felt love-emotion at first sight, but readers may be forgiven if they thought of the motion of the sexual act.

Epicene curtsied.

Morose said to her, “Alas, lady, these answers by silent curtsies from you are too uncourtly, unsophisticated, and simple. I have always displayed my breeding in court, and she who shall be my wife must be accomplished with courtly and audacious — spirited — ornaments.”

He then asked, “Can you speak, lady?”

Speaking softly, Epicene said, “You are the judge of that, truly.”

“What did you say, lady?” Morose said. “Speak up, please.”

A little louder, Epicene said, “You are the judge of that, truly.”

“On my judgment, you have a divine softness in your voice!” Morose said. “But can you naturally, lady, as I enjoin these men — my mute servant and Cutbeard the barber — by instruction and employment, refer yourself to the search of my judgment, and (not taking pleasure in your tongue, which is a woman’s chiefest pleasure) think it agreeable to answer me by silent gestures, so long as my speeches agree with what you understand?”

This was a long-winded way of asking if Epicene would answer him with gestures such as curtsies instead of answering him with words, as long as the answer was yes.

Epicene curtsied.

“Excellent! Divine!” Morose said. “I hope it is possible that she should hold out and continue in this way!

“Peace, Cutbeard, you are made forever, as you have made me, if this felicity persists. But I will test her further.”

Morose then said to Epicene, “Dear lady, I am courtly, I tell you, and I must have my ears banqueted with pleasant and witty conversations, clever gibes, scoffs, and dalliance in her whom I mean to choose for my bedfellow.

“The ladies in court think it a most desperate injury to their quickness of wit and good deportment if they cannot give occasion for a man to court them, and, when an amorous discourse is set in motion, supply as good matter to continue the amorous conversation as himself.

“And do you alone so much differ from all of them that what they with so much pomp and ceremony aim at and toil for to seem learned, to seem judicious, to seem sharp and witty, you can bury in yourself with silence, and rather trust your graces to the fair consciousness and inner conviction of virtue than to the world’s or your own proclamation?”

Morose wanted his bedfellow — wife — to be witty, but to be witty only in his presence and not engage in the flirting that women at court took pleasure in engaging with men they were not married to.

Very softly, Epicene replied, “I should be sorry else.”

This could mean: I would be sorry if I could not do as you wish me to do.

Or it could mean: I would be sorry if I had to refrain from flirting.

“What did you say, lady?” Epicene asked. “Good lady, speak up.”

“I should be sorry else,” Epicene said.

“That sorrow fills me with gladness!” Morose said to himself. “Oh, Morose, you are happy and fortunate above mankind! Pray that you may contain yourself. I will put her to it only once more, and it shall be with the utmost trial and test of their sex.”

“Put her to it” sounds sexual.

He said to Epicene, “But hear me, fair lady: I also love to see her whom I shall choose for my heifer [cow that has not yet calved] to be the first and principal in all fashions, precede all the dames at court by a fortnight, have her council of tailors, lineners [drapers], lace-women, and embroiderers, and sit with them sometimes twice a day to learn news of French fashions, and then come forth varied like Nature, or oftener than she, and better by the help of Art [makeup], her emulous servant. This I do like.

“And how will you be able, lady, with this frugality of speech, to give the manifold but necessary instructions for that bodice, these sleeves, those skirts, this cut [in a sleeve to display the colors in the clothing underneath], that stitch, this embroidery, that lace, this wire [to support a headdress], those knots [bows], that ruff, those shoe-roses, this belt, that fan, the other scarf, these gloves? Ha! What do you say, lady?”

Faintly, Epicene said, “I’ll leave it to you, sir.”

“What, lady?” Morose said. “Please, rise a note in your reply.”

“I leave it to wisdom and you, sir,” Epicene said.

Morose was not to be identified with wisdom.

“Admirable creature!” Morose said. “I will trouble you no more; I will not sin against so sweet a simplicity. Let me now be bold to print, on those divine lips, the seal of being mine.”

He kissed her.

He then said, “Cutbeard, I give you the lease of your house free.”

This was Cutbeard’s reward for finding a silent woman for Morose to marry. Cutbeard would not have to pay rent.

Morose continued, “Thank me not with words but with a bow.”

Cutbeard bowed.

Morose then said, “I know what you would say. Epicene is poor, and her friends are deceased. But she has brought a wealthy dowry in her silence, Cutbeard; and in respect of her poverty, Cutbeard, I shall have her more loving and obedient, Cutbeard.

“Go and get me a minister immediately, with a soft, low voice to marry us, and tell him not to be long-winded with irrelevant words, but to be as brief as he can.

“Leave! Quietly, Cutbeard.”

Cutbeard the barber exited.

Morose said to his mute servant, “Sirrah, conduct your mistress into the dining room, your now-mistress.”

One meaning of “mistress” is a female head of household.

The mute servant and Epicene exited.

Morose now began to talk about his nephew: the knight Sir Dauphine Eugenie. Morose wanted to have a son with Epicene so that Sir Dauphine would not inherit his wealth.

“Oh, my felicity!” Morose said. “Oh, my happiness! How I shall be revenged on my insolent kinsman and his plots to frighten me away from marrying! This night I will beget an heir, and thrust him out of my blood like a stranger.

“He would be knighted, indeed, and thought by that means to reign over me: His title must intimidate it.

“No, kinsman, I will now make you bring me the tenth lord’s and the sixteenth lady’s letter of commendation, kinsman, and it shall do you no good, kinsman.”

Morose began to refer to Sir Dauphine as “it” and “kighthood itself” and “it kighthood” and “your kighthood”:

“Your kighthood itself shall come on its knees to me, and it shall be rejected.

“It shall be sued and its goods seized for nonpayment of debts and it shall not be given financial redemption.

“It shall cheat at gambling in the twelvepenny-for-a-meal inn. Yes, it kighthood shall cheat to get money for its diet all the term-time when law courts are in session, and tell entertaining tales to the hostess for its diet in the vacation season.

“Or it kighthood shall do worse and take sanctuary in the seedy area known as Coleharbor [Cold Harbor] and fast due to lack of food.”

Coleharbor was a place where vagabonds took shelter. A cold harbor has shelter but no fire and no food.

Morose continued:

“It shall frighten all its friends with begging letters, and, when one of the four score has brought it knighthood ten shillings, it knighthood shall go to the Three Cranes Tavern or the Bear Tavern at the Bridge-foot and be drunk in fear.

“It shall not have money to discharge one tavern reckoning. It shall not be able to invite the old creditors to postpone asking for repayment and to instead tolerate it knighthood, and it shall not be able to persuade the new creditors-who-should-be to trust it knighthood and give it credit.

“It shall be the tenth name in a list of potential borrowers, and to borrow money it will be forced to take up the commodity of pipkins [earthenware jugs] and stone jugs.”

These commodities would be given to Sir Dauphine instead of money. He would sell them at a low price, and would owe much money to the lender.

Morose continued:

“And the money gotten thereby shall not equip it knighthood even for the attempted seduction of a baker’s widow, a brown baker’s widow.

“It shall give it knighthood’s name for a stallion — a stud — to all frisky citizens’ wives and be refused, when the master of a dancing school or (what do you call him?) the worst reveler in the town is accepted as a lover.”

The worst reveler in town could be the playwright Ben Jonson, who had a reputation.

Morose continued:

“It shall need clothes, and, by reason of that, need wit to play the fool to lawyers.

“It shall not have hope to repair its fortunes by going to Constantinople, Ireland, or Virginia.”

These were places debtors went to in order to escape arrest or to repair their fortunes.

Morose continued:

“The best and last fortune to it knighthood shall be to make Doll Tearsheet or Kate Common — prostitutes — a lady, and so it knighthood may eat.”

The final way for Sir Dauphine Eugenie to eat would be for him to marry a prostitute (who would thereby become Lady Eugenie) and act as her pimp in order to get money to buy food.

Morose exited.

— 2.6 —

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont talked together in the street by Cutbeard’s barbershop. They were looking for Cutbeard.

“Are you sure he has not already gone by?” Truewit asked.

“No, he has not. I stayed in the shop ever since and would have seen him,” Dauphine said.

“But he may take the other end of the lane,” Clerimont said.

“No,” Dauphine said. “I told him I would be here at this end; I arranged to meet him here.”

“What a barbarian he is to stay away and be late, then!” Truewit complained.

“Yonder he comes,” Dauphine said.

As Cutbeard walked over to them, Clerimont said, “And his charge — Epicene — has been left behind him, which is a very good sign, Dauphine.”

“How are things now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “Are things succeeding, or not?”

Cutbeard answered, “They are successful past imagination, sir, *omnia secunda* — you could not have prayed to have had it so well — *paltat senex*, as the proverb says.”

The Latin proverb means, “All is well. The old boy is cutting capers.” It came into existence when a religious rite was interrupted and most religious people there abandoned it, but an old man continued dancing and properly carried out the rite.

Cutbeard continued, “Morose triumphs in his felicity and happiness. He admires Epicene! He has given me the lease of my house, too! And I am now going for a silent minister to marry them, and away I go.”

Not yet. The others wanted to talk.

“By God’s light,” Truewit said, “get one of the silenced ministers. A zealous brother would torment him entirely.”

Truewit was very much in favor of tormenting Morose.

A silent minister would suit Morose just fine, but not a silenced minister. Silenced ministers were Puritan ministers who had lost their license to preach. If one were to officiate at the marriage ceremony, he would be long-winded. Puritan ministers preached long sermons, and one who had not had an opportunity to preach for a long time would be especially full of words.

“*Cum privilegio*, sir,” Cutbeard said.

The Latin means, “With authority.” The minister would have the right to say the words of the marriage ceremony without Morose interrupting him and encouraging him to finish quickly.

“Oh, by no means, let’s do nothing to hinder the marriage ceremony now,” Dauphine said. “When it is done and finished, I will join with you in finding any device of vexation to torment Morose.”

“And that marriage ceremony shall occur within this half hour, upon my dexterity, gentlemen,” Cutbeard said. “Contrive whatever torment you can, in the meantime, *bonis avibus*.”

The Latin means, “The omens being favorable.”

Cutbeard the barber exited.

“How the slave does Latin it!” Clerimont said.

Cutbeard had been showing off by putting bits of Latin in his conversation.

Truewit said, “It would be made a jest to posterity, sirs, this day’s mirth, if you will.”

He was thinking of a way to torment Morose.

“Curse his heart who will not join in, I say,” Clerimont said.

“I’m in,” Dauphine said. “I’ll play my part. What do you have in mind?”

“To transfer all La Foole’s company and his feast hither to Morose’s house, today, to celebrate this bride-ale — that is, the wedding-feast,” Truewit said.

A celebration like that would be noisy and thus would torment Morose.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, but how will it be done?” Dauphine asked.

“I’ll undertake the directing of all the lady guests thither, and then the food must follow,” Truewit said.

“For God’s sake, let’s make it happen,” Clerimont said. “It will be an excellent comedy of affliction — there will be so many different noises.”

Dauphine asked, “But aren’t they at the Otters’ place already, don’t you think?”

“I’ll guarantee you this for the College-honors — the Lady Collegiates: One of their faces has not the priming color — the undercoat — laid on yet, and the other has not yet smoothed her smock.”

The smock was an undergarment.

In other words, the ladies were not yet dressed and made up.

“Oh, but they’ll rise earlier than usual to prepare to go to a feast,” Clerimont said.

“We best go see and assure ourselves who is right,” Truewit said.

“Who knows the location of the Otters’ house?” Clerimont asked.

“I’ll lead you there,” Truewit said. “Haven’t you been there yet?”

“Not I,” Dauphine said.

“Nor I,” Clerimont said.

“Where have you lived, then?” Truewit asked. “I can’t believe you don’t know Tom Otter!”

“I don’t know him,” Clerimont said. “For God’s sake, what kind of person is he?”

Truewit answered, “He is an excellent animal, equal to your Daw or La Foole, if not transcending them, and he does Latin it as much as your barber. He is his wife’s subject; he calls

her princess, and, at such times such as these, he follows her up and down the house like a page, with his hat off, partly to fan himself because of heat, partly to show reverence to her. At this instant, he is marshalling his bull, bear, and horse.”

Dauphine asked, “What are those, in the name of Sphinx?”

The Sphinx is a monster — a lion with the head of a woman and the wings of an eagle — who asked this riddle in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*: What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? If Oedipus cannot answer this riddle correctly, the Sphinx will kill him. Oedipus answered the riddle correctly: Man, who goes on hands and knees as a crawling baby, two legs as a healthy adult, and two legs and a cane as an old person.

Truewit answered, “Why, sir, he has been a great man at the bear-baitings and bull-baitings at the Bear Garden in his time, and from that subtle sport has taken the witty denomination of his chief carousing cups.”

Mr. Otter enjoyed watching dogs bait — torment — animals. Because of that, he valued his drinking cups’ lids, which were shaped like animals’ heads.

Truewit continued, “He calls one carousing cup his bull, another his bear, another his horse. And then he has his lesser glasses that he calls his deer and his ape, and several sizes of them, too, and he is never content, nor thinks any entertainment perfect, until these carousing cups are brought out and set on the cupboard.”

Mr. Otter used the carousing cups in drinking competitions.

“For God’s love!” Clerimont said. “We would miss this if we did not go.”

He wanted to see such a man.

“Oh, he has a thousand things as good that will describe his character all day. He will rail about his wife, with certain commonplaces, behind her back; and to her face —”

“Say no more about him,” Dauphine interrupted. “Let’s go see him, I petition you.”

CHAPTER 3

— 3.1 —

Mr. Otter and Mrs. Otter were talking together in their home. Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine entered the room, unobserved by Mr. Otter and Mrs. Otter. They stood silently and listened to the Otters.

Mr. Otter wanted to speak: “Nay, good princess, hear me *pauca verba*.”

The Latin means “few words,” and it is a drinking cry that means, “More drink and less talk.”

“By that light,” Mrs. Otter said, “I’ll have you chained up with your bull-dogs and bear-dogs if you are not soon civil. I’ll send you to the kennel, indeed. You had best bait me along with your bull, bear, and horse! Just go ahead and try!”

To bait an animal means to torment an animal. In bear-baitings, dogs tormented and sometimes killed a bear. And sometimes the bear killed one or more dogs.

“Never is there a time when the courtiers or Lady Collegiates come to the house but you make it a Shrove Tuesday — a day of rioting! I would have you get your Whitsuntide velvet cap and your staff in your hand to entertain them; yes, indeed, do that.”

Velvet caps were worn during holidays.

Mrs. Otter wanted her husband to be dressed up and be on his best behavior for the Lady Collegiates.

Mr. Otter said, “Not so, princess, neither, but subject to your correction, sweet princess, give me permission — these are things by which I am known to the courtiers. My eccentricity is reported to them, and they receive it so and expect it.

“Tom Otter’s bull, bear, and horse are known all over England, *in rerum natura*.”

The Latin means, “in the natural order of things.”

Mr. Otter wanted to show off his drinking cups, and Mrs. Otter did not want him to. She wanted him to be a respectable host in front of the Lady Collegiates.

Mr. Otter enjoyed bear-baitings at other places. Here, though, it was if he were a bear and his wife were a dog viciously attacking him.

“Before me, I will *na-ture* them over to Paris Garden and *na-ture* you thither, too, if you mention them again. Is a bear a fit beast, or a bull, to mix in society with great ladies? Do you think, in your judgment, that they are fit to mix in any well-ordered society?”

She meant that she would say ‘*nay*’ to him and *turn* his drinking cups — and him — over to the Paris Gardens. Then she would not be bothered by them or by him.

“The horse, then, good princess,” Mr. Otter said.

“Well, I am contented for the horse,” Mrs. Otter said. “They love to be well horsed, I know. I love it myself.”

“To be well horsed” contains connotations of being well ridden and well mounted.

Mr. Otter said, “And it is a delicate fine horse, this. *Poetarum Pegasus*.”

The Latin means, “The poets’ Pegasus.”

Pegasus was a flying horse. Its hoof once struck the earth and opened a spring whose water inspired poets.

Mr. Otter continued, “Correct me if I’m wrong, princess, but Jupiter turned himself into a *taurus* or bull. Correct me if I’m wrong, good princess.”

Jupiter, king of the gods, turned himself into a white bull. In Crete, the mortal woman Europa climbed on its back, and Jupiter took her from Crete to Europe, which is named after her.

Mrs. Otter said, “By my integrity, I’ll send you over to the Bankside and I’ll commit you to the Master of the Garden, if I hear just a syllable more. Must my house or my roof be polluted with the scent of bears and bulls when it is perfumed for great ladies? Is this according to the agreement we made when I married you? Our agreement is that I would be princess and reign in my own house, and you would be my subject and obey me. What did you financially bring me that should make you thus peremptory and self-willed?”

In this case, “the scent of bears and bulls” was the scent of alcoholic beverages because Mr. Otter used his animal-headed drinking cups for drinking contests.

Mrs. Otter continued, “Do I allow you your half-crown a day to spend where you will among your gamesters so that you can vex and torment me at such times as these? Who gives you your maintenance — your domestic upkeep — I ask you? Who allows you your horse fodder and man’s food? Your three suits of apparel a year? Your four pairs of stockings: one silk, three worsted?”

Servants were given three suits of clothing a year and wore worsted stockings.

She continued, “Who gives you your clean linen, your collars, and your cuffs when I can get you to wear them? It is a marvel you have them on now. Who confers honor upon you with courtiers or great personages to speak to you out of their coaches and come home to your house? Were you ever

so much as looked upon by a lord or a lady before I married you, except on the Easter or Whitsun holidays and out at the Banqueting House window, when Ned Whiting or George Stone were at the stake?”

Ned Whiting and George Stone were the names of famous bears used in bear-baiting.

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “For God’s sake, let’s go stave her off him.”

Literally, “to stave off” means to beat something — such as dogs in a bear-baiting — away with a stave.

Mrs. Otter continued, “Give me an answer to that. And didn’t I take you up from thence, in an old greasy buff doublet — leather jacket — with tagged laces, and green velvet sleeves worn out at the elbows? You forget this.”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “She’ll worry him if we don’t help him in time.”

To “worry” a bear or bull in baiting is to injure it by biting it.

Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine came forward.

Seeing the gentlemen, Mrs. Otter said, “Oh, here are some gallants!”

She said to her husband, “Come on, behave yourself with distinction and with good morality, or, I say, I’ll take away your allowance.”

— 3.2 —

Truewit came forward and said, “With your permission, fair Mistress Otter, I’ll be bold to enter these gentlemen in your acquaintance.”

Mrs. Otter, whose diction was often affected, said, "It shall not be obnoxious or difficil, sir."

In simpler language, she meant it would not be offensive or troublesome.

Truewit said to Mr. Otter about his drinking cups, "How is my noble captain? Is the bull, bear, and horse *in rerum natura* still?"

He was asking if they were still in existence.

Mr. Otter had a habit of talking about his drinking cups as if they were real animals, and real animals sometimes died during baitings. And cups were sometimes dropped and broken.

Mr. Otter replied, "Sir, *sic visum superis*.

Sic visum superis is Latin for "As those above decree."

Mrs. Otter said to her husband, "I wish you would but intimate them."

She meant that she wished he would keep the drinking cups out of sight. The Latin *intimus* means "inmost," and she wanted them inmost a closed cupboard.

Apparently, she also wanted her husband to imitate them in being out of sight because she ordered, "Go your ways inside, and get toasts and butter made for the woodcocks. That's a fit province for you."

A woodcock is a bird, or a fool. Buttered toast was served with woodcock, and it was a milksop. Mr. Otter was a henpecked husband and a milque-toast.

Her husband exited.

The gentlemen talked privately among themselves. They were a distance away from Mrs. Otter, and she could not hear them.

“Alas, what a tyranny is this poor fellow married to!” Clerimont said.

“Oh, but the entertainment will be soon, when we get him drunk and he loosens his tongue,” Truewit said.

“Does he ever dare to speak?” Dauphine asked.

“No Anabaptist — Puritan — ever railed with the like license,” Truewit said.

“License” meant “license to preach” and “lack of restraint.”

He continued, “But pay close attention to her language in the meantime, I ask you.”

Paying close attention to Mrs. Otter’s affected language could be quite entertaining.

Mrs. Otter said to them, “Gentlemen, you are very aptly come. My cousin, Sir Amorous La Foole, will be here shortly.”

“In good time, lady,” Truewit said. “Wasn’t Sir John Daw here, to ask for him and the company?”

“I cannot assure you, Master Truewit,” Mrs. Otter said. “There was a very melancholy knight wearing a ruff, who asked my subject — Mr. Otter — about somebody — a gentleman, I think.”

A ruff is a projecting frilled collar worn around the neck.

“Aye, that was he, lady,” Clerimont said.

“But he departed immediately, I can resolve you,” Mrs. Otter said.

“Resolve” is an affected way of saying “assure.”

“What an excellent choice phrase this lady uses to express herself!” Dauphine said.

Truewit said, “Oh, sir, she is the only authentical — genuine — courtier, who is not naturally bred one, in the city.”

By saying “authentical,” he was mocking her affected way of speaking.

Mrs. Otter said, “You have taken that report upon trust, gentlemen.”

She meant that they believed the report without evidence to back it up. Chances are, she was hoping to hear a compliment reassuring her that the report was true.

Truewit replied, “No, I assure you, the court determines it to be so, lady, in your behalf. The court says it is true.”

“I am the servant of the court and courtiers, sir,” Mrs. Otter said.

“They are rather your idolaters,” Truewit said.

“That is not so, sir,” Mrs. Otter said, modestly.

Cutbeard the barber entered the room, and the gentlemen talked to him quietly so that Mrs. Otter could not overhear them.

“How are you now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “Any hindrances? Have you run into any problems?”

“Oh, no, sir,” Cutbeard said. “*Omnia bene*. All is well. It was never better hung on the hinges and running smoothly — all’s sure and going well. I have so pleased him with a curate that he’s gone to it almost with the delight he hopes for soon.”

The delight he hoped for soon was supposed to occur on his wedding night.

“What is he like as a vicar?” Dauphine asked.

Cutbeard replied, “He is like one who has caught a cold, sir, and can scarcely be heard six inches off, as if he spoke out of a bulrush that was not picked, or his throat were full of pith — he is a fine, quick fellow and an excellent barber of prayers.”

Picked bullrushes can be dried and hollowed out. They then make a noise when blown into. This minister’s throat was so constricted that he could hardly make a sound.

A barber of prayers is one who cuts prayers short.

Cutbeard continued, “I came to tell you, sir, that you might *omnem movere lapidem* (as they say). Be ready with your vexation.”

Omnem movere lapidem is Latin for “Turn over every stone” or “Leave no stone unturned.”

“Many thanks, honest Cutbeard,” Dauphine said. “Be thereabouts with your key to let us in.”

Cutbeard had a key to Morose’s house.

“I will not fail you, sir,” Cutbeard said. “*Ad manum*. In other words, I will be at hand.”

Cutbeard exited.

Truewit said, “Well, I’ll go watch for the ladies’ coaches and direct them to go to Morose’s house for the feast.”

“Do, and we’ll send Jack Daw to you, if you don’t meet him,” Clerimont said.

Truewit exited.

Mrs. Otter joined the gentlemen's company and asked, "Has Master Truewit gone?"

"Yes, lady," Dauphine said. "There is some unfortunate business fallen out."

Mrs. Otter said, "So I judged by the physiognomy of the fellow who came in; and I had a dream last night, too, of the new pageant and my Lady Mayoress, which is always very ominous to me."

The pageant is the installation festivities of installing a new Mayor of London. The Lady Mayoress is the Mayor's wife.

Mrs. Otter continued, "I told it to my Lady Haughty, a member of the Lady Collegiates, the other day, when Her Honor came hither to see some Chinese fabrics; and she expounded it out of Artemidorus, and I have found it since very true. It has done me many affronts."

Artemidorus was a Greek who wrote about the meaning of dreams.

"What was your dream, lady?" Clerimont asked.

Mrs. Otter said, "Yes, sir, anything I do is but dream city. All my dreams are about the city."

"The city" is London.

She continued, "In a dream, I stained a damask tablecloth that cost me eighteen pounds at one time.

"And in a second dream, I burnt a black satin gown as I stood by the fire at my Lady Centaur's chamber in the College another time.

"In a third dream, at the Lord's masque, a wax candle dripped all over my wired headdress and my ruff, so that I could not go up to the banquet.

“In a fourth dream, I was taking a coach to go to Ware to meet a friend.”

The town of Ware was notorious as a meeting place for assignations. In this society, the word “friend” could mean “lover.”

She continued, “A brewer’s horse kicked up dirt all over my new suit (a crimson satin doublet and black velvet skirts), so that I was obliged to go in and change my clothes, and kept my chamber a leash of days because of the anguish of it.”

A lease is a hunting term meaning “three,” as in a leash of (three) dogs.

In each dream, a social event was ruined for her because of something happening to the clothing she was wearing.

“These were dire mischances, lady,” Dauphine said.

“I would not dwell in the city if it were so ominous to me,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, sir, but I do take the advice of my doctor, which is to dream of it as little as I can,” Mrs. Otter said.

“You do well to do so, Mistress Otter,” Dauphine said.

Jack Daw entered the room, and Clerimont took him aside to speak quietly to him.

“Will it please you to enter into the house farther, gentlemen?” Mrs. Otter asked.

“And into your favor, lady,” Dauphine said.

He was willing to go farther into the house — and farther into her favor.

He continued, “But we stay to speak with a knight, Sir John Daw, who has just come here. We shall follow you, lady.”

“At your own time, sir. When you are ready,” Mrs. Otter said. “It is my cousin Sir Amorous’ feast —”

Sir Amorous is Sir Amorous La Foole.

“I know it, lady,” Dauphine interrupted.

“— and mine together,” Mrs. Otter continued. “But it is for his honor, and therefore I take no credit for it other than of supplying the place for the feast.”

“You are a bounteous kinswoman,” Dauphine said.

“I am your servant, sir,” Mrs. Otter said.

She went further inside her house.

— 3.3 —

Clerimont and Jack Daw came forward and joined Dauphine.

Clerimont and Dauphine wanted to fool Jack Daw into thinking that Epicene loved him. Clerimont, Dauphine, and Truewit wanted to arrange events so that Jack Daw and La Foole would clash with each other.

“Why, don’t you know about it, Sir John Daw?” Clerimont asked.

“No, I am a rook — a fool — if I do,” Jack Daw said.

“I’ll tell you, then,” Clerimont said. “Epicene is married by this time! And whereas it was put in your head — that is, you were made to think — that she had gone with Sir Dauphine, I assure you that Sir Dauphine has been the noblest, honestest friend to you that ever a gentleman of your quality could boast of.”

The last few words can mean that a gentleman of your (low) quality is lucky to have a friend like Dauphine. Unfortunately for Jack Daw, Dauphine is a “friend.”

Clerimont continued, “He has revealed the whole plot and made your mistress so acknowledging and indeed so ashamed of her injury to you that she desires you to forgive her and to grace her wedding with your presence today. She is to be married to a man with a very good fortune, she says — his uncle, old Morose — and she willed me in private to tell you that she shall be able to do you more favors, and with more security now, than before.”

The favors could be sexual favors, and the security could be that if Epicene got pregnant, Morose would be acknowledged as the child’s father.

“Did she say so, indeed?” Jack Daw asked.

“Why, what do you think of me, Sir John!” Clerimont asked. “Ask Sir Dauphine.”

“No, I believe you,” Jack Daw replied.

He then asked Dauphine, “Good Sir Dauphine, did she desire me to forgive her?”

“I assure you, Sir John, she did,” Dauphine answered.

“Nay, then, I do with all my heart,” Jack Daw said, “and I’ll be jovial and cheerful.”

“Yes, because look, sir, this was the injury to you,” Clerimont said. “La Foole intended this feast to honor her bridal day, and made you the property — the tool, the means — to invite the Lady Collegiates and promise to bring her; and then at the time she should have appeared (as his friend) she would have given you the dor — she would have insulted you.

“Whereas now Sir Dauphine has brought her to a feeling of and sensitivity to it, with this kind of satisfaction, that you shall bring all the ladies to the place where she is and be very jovial; and there she will have a dinner, which shall be in your name, and so disappoint La Foole, to make you good again and (as it were) a saver in the main point and of your manhood.”

A saver is a gambler who does not make a profit but also does not suffer a loss.

The main point was for Jack Daw to get revenge on La Foole.

Of course, La Foole had done nothing wrong; all he had done was invite his friends and “friends” to a banquet that he was paying for. Clerimont and Dauphine — and Truewit — were arranging things to make Jack Daw and La Foole angry at each other.

The banquet’s purpose was to honor La Foole and his guests (his guests would honor him as host, and La Foole would honor his guests by inviting them and feeding them), not to honor Epicene’s bridal day. At this time, La Foole did not even know that Epicene was married. Clerimont, Dauphine, and Truewit were arranging things so that the banquet would take place at Morose’s house (and annoy him) and so that Jack Daw and La Foole would be angry at each other.

“As I am a knight, I honor her and forgive her heartily,” Jack Daw said.

“Set about it, then, immediately,” Clerimont said. “Truewit has gone before to meet the coaches and redirect them to Morose’s house and to acquaint you with so much if he should meet you. Join with him, and all is well.”

La Foole entered the room.

Clerimont said quietly to Jack Daw, “See, here comes your antagonist. Take no notice of him, but be very jovial.”

“Have the ladies come, Sir John Daw, and your mistress?” La Foole asked.

Jack Daw’s mistress was Epicene.

Jack Daw exited.

La Foole then said, “Sir Dauphine! You are exceedingly welcome, and honest Master Clerimont.”

He then asked, “Where’s my cousin?”

His cousin was Mrs. Otter.

La Foole then asked, “Did you see any Lady Collegiates, gentlemen?”

Dauphine replied, “Lady Collegiates! Haven’t you heard, Sir Amorous, how you are abused and deceived?”

“How, sir!” La Foole asked.

“Will you speak so kindly to Sir John Daw, who has done you such an affront?” Clerimont asked.

“An affront in what, gentlemen?” La Foole asked. “Let me be a petitioner to you to know, I beg you.”

“Why, sir, Jack Daw’s mistress — Epicene — was married today to Sir Dauphine’s uncle, your cousin’s neighbor, and he has diverted all the ladies and all your company thither to frustrate your preparations and stick a disgrace upon you. He was here, just now, attempting to entice us away from you, too, but we told him his own character. We have told him the plain truth about himself, I think.”

“Has Sir John Daw wronged me so inhumanely?” Sir Amorous La Foole asked.

“He has done it, Sir Amorous, most maliciously and treacherously,” Dauphine answered, “but if you’ll be ruled by us and take our advice, you shall repay him, truly.”

“Good gentlemen!” La Foole said. “I’ll join in, believe it. How shall I repay him, I ask?”

Dauphine said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, get your pheasants and your godwits and your best food, and serve it in silver dishes of your cousin’s immediately, and say nothing, but clap a clean towel about you, like a sewer” — the chief attendant of a feast, who supervised the seating of guests and the serving of the dishes — “and, bare-headed” — like a servant — “march before it with a good confidence (it is but over the way, nearby) and we’ll follow you, where you shall set the food on the table, and bid them welcome to it, which shall show it is yours and disgrace Jack Daw’s preparation utterly; and as for your cousin, whereas she should be troubled here at home with the care of making and giving welcome, she shall transfer all that labor thither and be a principal guest herself, sit ranked with the Lady College-honors, and be honored, and have her health drunk as often, with the male guests bare-headed with the doffing of hats to show respect to a lady being toasted, and as loud as the best of them.”

Both La Foole and Jack Daw would attempt to act as the host of the same feast. La Foole, of course, had the best claim to be host, as he was the one who was paying for the feast and had invited the guests. Clerimont, however, had told Jack Daw that the dinner Epicene would provide at Morose’s house would be in Jack Daw’s name.

“I’ll go tell her immediately,” La Foole said. “It shall be done, that’s resolved.”

He would tell his cousin, Mrs. Otter, that the place for the feast had been changed.

La Foole exited.

Clerimont said, "I thought he would not hear our plot out to the end before it would take his fancy."

Dauphine said, "Well, there are guests and food now; what shall we do for music?"

"The smell of the venison going through the street will invite one band of fiddlers or other," Clerimont said.

"I wish it would call the trumpeters thither," Dauphine said.

Trumpets would be louder than fiddles and would annoy Morose more.

"Indeed, there is hope of that; they have information about all feasts," Clerimont said. "There's good social harmony and conversation between them and the London cooks. It is twenty to one, but we have them."

Dauphine said, "It will be a most solemn day for my uncle, and an excellent fit of mirth for us."

"Solemn" means both "ceremonious" and "gloomy." Morose would have gone through the marriage ceremony, and he would be upset by the noise of the wedding banquet.

"Aye," Clerimont said, "if we can hold up the rivalry between La Foole and Jack Daw, and never bring them to declare their grievances and demand explanations."

A few minutes' conversation between La Foole and Jack Daw would clear up their disagreement and reveal the machinations of Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine.

"Tut," Dauphine said. "Flatter them both (as Truewit says) and you may take their understandings in a purse-net."

Purse-nets were net-bags used to catch rabbits.

Dauphine continued, "They'll believe themselves to be just such men as we make them, neither more nor less. They have nothing, not even the use of their senses, but by tradition."

In other words, they cannot think for themselves, but know only what has been handed down to them and what they have been told.

La Foole returned, outfitted like a sewer with a towel over his arm.

"Look!" Clerimont said quietly to Dauphine. "Sir Amorous has his towel on already."

He then asked La Foole, "Have you persuaded your cousin?"

"Yes," La Foole answered. "It is very feasible; she'll do anything, she says, rather than allow the La Fooles to be disgraced."

Dauphine said, "She — Mrs. Otter — is a noble kinswoman. It will be such a crushing device — like a pestle — Sir Amorous! It will pound all your enemy's plots to powder and blow him up with his own explosives and his own line of gunpowder."

"We'll give fire, I promise you," La Foole said.

Clerimont advised, "But you must manage it privately, without any noise, and take no notice by any means —"

Mr. Otter entered the room and said, "Gentlemen, my princess says you shall have all her silver dishes, *festinate*" — quickly — "and she's gone to alter her attire a little and go with you —"

"And you yourself, too, Captain Otter," Clerimont said.

"By all means, sir," Dauphine said.

“Yes, sir, I do intend it,” Mr. Otter said. “But I would entreat my cousin Sir Amorous, and you, gentlemen, to be petitioners to my princess to allow me to carry my bull and my bear, as well as my horse, to the feast.”

“That you shall do, Captain Otter,” Clerimont said.

“My cousin will never consent, gentlemen,” La Foole said.

“She must consent, Sir Amorous, to reason,” Dauphine said.

“Why, she says they are not *decorum* — they are unseemly — among ladies,” La Foole said.

Mr. Otter said, “But they are *decora* — beautiful — and that’s better, sir.”

“Aye, she must hear our argument,” Clerimont said. “Didn’t Pasiphaë, who was a queen, love a bull? And wasn’t Callisto, the mother of Arcas, turned into a bear and made a star, Mistress Ursula, in the heavens?”

Pasiphaë’s husband, King Minos of Crete, refused to sacrifice a bull to the gods, so they made Pasiphaë fall in love with a bull. Their offspring was the Minotaur, which had the head of a bull and the body of a man.

Jupiter had a son named Arcas with the mortal woman Callisto. Juno, Jupiter’s jealous wife, changed Callisto into a bear. After Callisto died, Jupiter made her a constellation: the Big Bear, or Ursa Major. Ursula is a diminutive of “Ursa.”

Mr. Otter said, “Oh, God, that I could have said as much! I will have these stories painted in the Bear Garden, *ex Ovidii Metamorphosi*.”

Ex Ovidii Metamorphosi means “out of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.”

The Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains many stories of mythic transformations, including that of Callisto (II.401-507).

The story of Pasiphaë, who was not transformed, appears in Ovid's *Ars Amatoris* (I.295-326).

"Where is your princess, Captain?" Dauphine asked. "Please be our leader."

"That I shall, sir," Mr. Otter said.

"Make haste, good Sir Amorous," Clerimont said to La Foole.

They exited.

— 3.4 —

In Morose's house, the wedding had just been performed. Present were Morose, Epicene, the parson, and Cutbeard the barber.

Morose gave the parson a gratuity and said, "Sir, there's an angel for yourself, and a pair of angels for your cold."

An angel is a gold coin.

Morose added, "Don't wonder at my management of my bounty. It is fit we should thank Fortune, and thank double — twice as much — to Nature, for any benefit she confers upon us. Besides, your cold is your imperfection, but my solace."

The parson's cold made him unable to speak loudly.

The parson hoarsely and quietly said, "I thank Your Worship. Because of your gratuity, my cold is now my solace, too."

"What did he say, Cutbeard?" Morose asked.

Cutbeard answered, “He says, *praesto*, sir — at your service, sir. Whensoever Your Worship needs him, he can be ready with the like. He got this cold from sitting up late and singing rounds — songs — with cloth-workers who customarily sing part-songs as they work.”

“Say no more,” Morose said. “I thank him.”

“May God keep Your Worship, and give you much joy with your fair spouse,” the parson said.

He coughed.

“Oh, oh!” Morose said. “Wait, Cutbeard! Let him give me five shillings of my money back. As it is bounty to reward benefits, so is it equity to give fines for injuries. I will have it.”

Because of the parson’s coughing, Morose wanted part of the gratuity back.

Cutbeard and the Parson talked quietly.

Morose asked, “What does he say?”

“He cannot get change for an angel, sir,” Cutbeard said.

“It must be changed,” Morose said.

Cutbeard whispered to the parson, “Cough again.”

Morose asked, “What does he say?”

“He will cough out the rest, sir,” Cutbeard said.

The parson coughed.

“Away, away with him,” Morose said, upset by the noise. “Stop his mouth! Away; I forgive it. Let him keep the five shillings.”

Cutbeard and the parson exited.

Epicene said, not in a whisper, “Bah, Master Morose, that you will treat a man of the church with this violence!”

“What?” Morose said, astonished that Epicene was not whispering.

Epicene said, “It does not become your gravity or dignity or breeding (as you claim to have in court) to have offered this outrage on a waterman, or any more boisterous creature, much less on a man of his civil coat and sober profession.”

Watermen were notorious for loudly shouting their availability for work.

The parson’s civil coat was the black coat worn by ministers.

“You can speak, then!” Morose said.

“Yes, sir,” Epicene said.

“Speak out, I mean,” Morose said.

Speaking out meant speaking in a regular or loud voice and expressing her opinions.

“Aye, sir,” Epicene said. “Why, did you think you had married a statue, or a puppet only? One of the French puppets — marionettes — with the eyes turned with a wire? Or some innocent half-wit out of the Bedlam hospital or some innocent child from Christ’s Hospital, who would stand with her hands thus” — she demurely crossed her hands in front of her and let them hang down — “and a plaice-mouth, and look upon you?”

A plaice is a fish with a small, puckered mouth.

“Oh, immodesty!” Morose said. “A manifest woman!”

“A manifest woman” means “You are manifestly a woman!” Morose, however, was using the word structure of “A manifest villain!”

Morose called, “What, Cutbeard!”

“Nay, never quarrel with Cutbeard, sir,” Epicene said. “It is too late now. I confess that my speaking somewhat lessens the modesty I had when I styled myself as simply a maiden; but I hope I shall make my speaking a stock — an asset — always suitable to the status and dignity of your wife.”

“She can talk!” Morose said.

“Yes, indeed, sir,” Epicene said.

Morose called for help: “What, sirrah!”

He then called, more softly, “None of my knaves — servants — are there?”

His mute servant entered the room.

Morose asked him, “Where is this impostor Cutbeard?”

The mute servant shrugged or made motions that Cutbeard had gone out.

Epicene said to him, “Speak to him, fellow, speak to him. I’ll have none of this compulsory, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a household where I govern.”

The mute servant exited.

“She is my regent — my ruler — already!” Morose complained. “I have married a Penthesilea, a Semiramis. I have sold my liberty to a distaff!”

Penthesilea was a Queen of the Amazons; she died fighting for Troy in the Trojan War. Achilles killed her.

Semiramis was an Assyrian warrior-queen. After her husband died, she governed while dressed in men’s clothing and pretending to be her son.

A distaff is used in making thread. This was regarded as women's work, and so Morose's "distaff" is a woman. A distaff also makes noise during use.

In this society, a sword is the insignia for a man, and a distaff is the insignia for a woman.

— 3.5 —

Truewit entered the room and asked, "Where's Master Morose?"

Recognizing Truewit as the obnoxious man who had advised him against marriage, Morose said, "Has he come again? May the Lord have mercy upon me!"

"I wish you all joy, Mistress Epicene, with your grave and honorable marriage match," Truewit said.

Epicene said, "I return you the thanks, Master Truewit, so friendly a wish deserves."

"She has acquaintances, too!" Morose said.

Acquaintances and friends meant possible visitors, and visitors meant noise.

"May God save you, sir, and give you all contentment in your fair choice here," Truewit said. "Before, I was the bird of night to you, the owl, but now I am the messenger of peace, a dove, and I bring you the glad wishes of many friends, to the celebration of this good hour."

An owl is a bearer of bad omens. Previously, Truewit had warned Morose of the dangers of marriage.

"What hour, sir?" Morose asked.

"Your marriage hour, sir," Truewit answered. "I commend your resolution that — notwithstanding all the dangers I laid before you and warned you about, in the voice of a night-

crow — would yet go on and be yourself. It shows you are a man constant to your own ends, and upright to your purposes — you who would not be put off with left-handed cries.”

The Latin word for “left” is “sinister.” A left-handed man could hold up his right hand in a show of peace and stab you with his left hand. In the ancient world, Greek and Roman soothsayers regarded a bird cry on the left as an ominous sign.

Morose had ignored Truewit’s warnings and had gotten married anyway, showing that he was his own man.

“How did you arrive at the knowledge of so much?” Morose asked. “How do you know my business?”

Truewit answered, “Why, did you ever hope, sir, committing the secrecy of your marriage to a barber, that less than the whole town should know it?”

Barbers are notorious talkers. When King Midas of Phrygia judged a music contest between the gods Pan and Apollo, he gave first place to Pan. Angry, Apollo turned Midas’s ears into the ears of an ass. Midas kept his ears covered, and no one knew his secret except his barber. Unable to tell any human about Midas’ secret, the barber whispered the secret into a hole in the ground. Rushes grew there, and when the wind blew through the rushes, the rushes made sounds that revealed Midas’ secret. Soon, everyone knew the secret.

Truewit continued, “You might as well have told it to the conduit or the bake-house, or the infantry who follow the court, and with more security.”

People got water from a public conduit, aka water-pipe. It was a meeting place for people to talk together. So was a bakehouse. The “infantry” consisted of the blackguards or most menial servants who followed all the other people as

the king traveled. They were bearers of gossip about those whom they served.

Truewit continued, “Could your gravity forget so old and noted a scrap of quotation as *lippis et tonsoribus notum*?”

The scrap of quotation came from Horace’s *Satires* I.vii.3 and meant “known to the bleary-eyed and the barbers.” Barbers are talkers and full of gossip, but bleary-eyed people are not, so if the bleary-eyed people know a piece of gossip, everyone knows it. Bleary-eyed people tend to stay quietly at home. (In Horace, the bleary-eyed people frequent apothecary shops and hear gossip there.)

Truewit continued, “Well, sir, forgive the fault yourself now, and be communicable and affable with your friends.”

The fault was Morose’s confiding his business to a barber.

Truewit continued, “Here will be three or four fashionable Lady Collegiates to visit you presently, and their train of minions and followers.”

Wishing to keep such unwelcome guests out of his house, Morose shouted, “Bar my doors! Bar my doors! Where are all my eaters, my mouths now?”

Servants had a reputation for always being hungry.

Some servants entered the room.

Morose shouted, “Bar up my doors, you varlets!”

Epicene said, “Anyone who bars the doors is a varlet. Let them stand open. I dare any of you to move his eyes toward the doors. Shall I have a *barricado* — a barricade — made against my friends, to be barred of any pleasure they can bring in to me with honorable visitation?”

The servants exited. They did not bar the doors.

“Oh, Amazonian impudence and shamelessness!” Morose said.

“Nay, indeed, in this, sir, she speaks only reason, and I think she is more continent and self-restrained than you,” Truewit said.

He knew that Morose did not want to hear the noise of his soon-to-arrive visitors, but he pretended that Morose wanted to go to bed with Epicene immediately and so was ordering his doors to be barred.

Truewit continued, “Would you go to bed so quickly, sir, before noon? A man of your head and hair — your judgment and character — should owe more to that reverend ceremony, and not mount the marriage bed like a lecherous town bull or a lecherous mountain goat, but wait for the due season and ascend it then with religion and piety and with awe of and reverence for marriage.”

Villagers collectively owned a bull that bred all their cows.

Truewit continued, “Those delights are to be steeped in the humor and silence of the night, and give the day to other open pleasures and jollities of feast, of music, of revels, and of discourse. We’ll have all, sir, that may make your wedding day dignified and happy.”

“Oh, my torment! My torment!” Morose said.

Truewit responded, “Nay, if you endure the first half hour of marriage, sir, so irritatively, and with this irksomeness, what comfort or hope can this fair gentlewoman — Epicene — imagine to be hers hereafter, in the consideration of so many years as are to come —”

Morose interrupted, “— of my affliction. Good sir, depart, and let her do it — afflict me — alone.”

“I have finished speaking, sir,” Truewit said.

“That cursed barber!” Morose said.

“Yes, in faith, he is a cursed wretch, indeed, sir,” Truewit said.

“I have married his cittern that’s common to all men,” Morose said.

A cittern is a musical instrument often found in barbershops of the time. Customers could play the cittern to amuse themselves.

Morose was calling his new wife a common-to-all slut.

He continued, “Some plague above the plague —”

Truewit interrupted, “— all Egypt’s ten plagues —”

In Exodus 7-12 God sent ten plagues against Pharaoh for not allowing the Jews to leave Egypt: (water turning to) blood, frogs, lice, flies, pestilence of livestock, boils, hail and fire, locusts, darkness for three days, and the death of firstborn children.

Morose interrupted, “— revenge me on him!”

“It is very well, sir,” Truewit said. “If you laid on a curse or two more, I’ll assure you he’ll bear them. For example, that he may get the pox while seeking to cure it, sir?”

Barbers treated the pox: syphilis.

Truewit continued, “Or, that while he is curling another man’s hair, his own hair may drop off?”

Hair loss was a symptom of syphilis.

Truewit continued, “Or, for burning some male bawd’s love-lock, he may have his brain beat out with the curling iron?”

“No, let the wretch live wretched,” Morose said. “May he get the itch — scabies — and let his barbershop become so

filled with lice that no man will dare to come to him, nor he dare to come to no man!”

“Aye,” Truewit said, “and if he would swallow all his balls of soap for pills, let not them purge him.”

“Let his warming pan be forever cold!” Morose said.

“May a perpetual frost be underneath it, sir,” Truewit said.

In the Great Frost of 1608, the Thames River was frozen for six weeks.

“Let him never hope to see fire again!” Morose said.

“Except in hell, sir,” Truewit said.

“Let his barber chairs be always empty, his scissors rust, and his combs mold in their cases!” Morose said.

“Very dreadful, that!” Truewit said. “And may he lose the skill, sir, of carving lanterns in paper.”

Barbers made lanterns out of oiled paper to sell.

“Let there be no bawd carted that year to employ a basin of his, but let him be glad to eat his barber’s sponge for bread!” Morose said.

When bawds or prostitutes were publicly carted through the streets, barbers hired out basins for onlookers to beat as they followed the cart and jeered at the bawd or prostitute.

“And let him drink lotium — stale urine — to go with it, and much good may it do him,” Truewit said.

Lotium was used by barbers as a hair dressing.

“Or, for lack of bread —” Morose began.

Truewit interrupted, “— let him eat ear-wax, sir. I’ll help you to curse. Or, let him pull his own teeth and add them to the lute-string.”

Barbers cleaned out ear-wax, and they pulled teeth. Pulled teeth were hung on a string and displayed in the shop.

Morose said, “No, let him beat the old ones to powder and make bread of them.”

Truewit said, “Yes, let him make meal out of millstones.”

Millstones are grinders. So are molars.

“May all the boils and burns that he has cured on others break out upon him!” Morose said.

“And may he now forget the cure of them in himself, sir, or, if he does remember the cure, let him have scraped all his linen into lint for the cure, and not have a rag left to him to use to set up business with,” Truewit said.

Lint was used to dress wounds.

“Let him never set up hair again, but have the gout in his hands forever!” Morose said.

He had finished cursing Cutbeard the barber, so he said, “Now, no more, sir.”

Truewit was not ready to finish cursing Cutbeard.

He said, “Oh, that last insult was too highly set! You went too far. You might go less with him, indeed, and be revenged enough; as, for example, that he be never able to new-paint his pole —”

The pole could be his red and white barber pole, but a second meaning is that the barber never again get his pole — his penis — wet.

“Good sir, no more,” Morose said. “I forgot myself.”

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he lack the credit to get goods from a comb-maker —”

“No more, sir,” Morose said.

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that, having broken his mirror in a former despair, he fall now into a much greater despair of ever getting another —”

“I beseech you, no more,” Morose said.

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he never be trusted with the trimming of any but chimney sweepers —”

Chimney-sweepers (and colliers, aka coal sellers) were the least desirable customers because they were the dirtiest.

Morose began, “Sir —”

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he may cut a collier’s throat with his razor, without evil intent, and yet hang for it!”

Morose said, “I will forgive him rather than hear any more. I ask you to stop, sir.”

In this matter, Morose was kinder than Truewit.

— 3.6 —

Jack Daw entered the room, leading Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, and Mistress Dol Mavis, all of whom were Lady Collegiates). He also led Mistress Trusty, the Lady Haughty’s serving-woman. “Madam” is a title of higher rank than “Mistress.”

“This way, madam,” Jack Daw said to Madam Haughty.

Following the order of precedence, the madams would enter the room before the mistresses.

“Oh, the sea breaks in upon me!” Morose said. “Another flood!”

The first flood occurred in Genesis and featured Noah and the ark.

Morose continued, “An inundation! I shall be overwhelmed with noise. It beats already at my shores. I feel an earthquake in myself for it.”

Jack Daw kissed Epicene and said, “May God give you joy, mistress.”

“Has she servants, too?” Morose asked.

Yes, Epicene had male devotees.

Jack Daw said to Epicene, “I have brought some ladies here to see and know you.”

Epicene kissed the ladies one by one as he presented them to her in order of precedence:

“This is Lady Haughty.

“This is my Lady Centaur.

“This is Mistress Doll Mavis.

“This is Mistress Trusty, my Lady Haughty’s serving-woman.”

Jack Daw next asked, “Where’s your husband? Let’s see him. Can he endure no noise? Let me come to him.”

“What *nomenclator* is this?” Morose said.

Nomenclator means the announcing of names; Morose pronounced the last two syllables as “clatter.”

Truewit said, “This is Sir John Daw, sir, your wife’s servant.”

This kind of servant is a male admirer.

“A Daw, and her servant!” Morose said. “Oh, it is decreed, it is decreed of me — judgment has been passed on me — if she has such servants.”

A jackdaw is a foolish bird, and so the word “daw” was used for “fool.”

Morose attempted to leave, but Truewit stopped him and said, “Nay, sir, you must kiss the ladies; you must not go away now. They come toward you to seek you out.”

Madam Haughty said, “Indeed, Master Morose, would you steal a marriage and be married secretly thus, in the midst of so many friends, and not tell us? Well, I’ll kiss you, notwithstanding the justice of my quarrel.”

She then said to Epicene, “You shall give me leave, mistress, to use a becoming familiarity with your husband.”

She kissed Morose.

Normally, a male guest would ask the husband for permission to kiss the bride. Here, Madam Haughty was inverting the traditional roles of male and female in this society.

Epicene said, “Your Ladyship does me an honor in it, to let me know he is so worthy of your favor, as you have done both him and me grace to visit a pair of people so unprepared to entertain you.”

“Compliment! Compliment!” Morose said.

Epicene was using courtly language and compliments.

She continued, “But I must lay the burden of that upon my servant here.”

Jack Daw would help entertain the guests.

“Burden” has a sexual meaning in Epicene’s sentence. “Burden” can mean the weight of the top partner in sex. The sentence’s sexual meaning can be interpreted as Epicene was going to sexually get on top of her servant: Jack Daw.

“It shall not be necessary, Mistress Morose,” Madam Haughty said. “We will all bear, rather than one shall be oppressed.”

“I know it,” Morose said, “and you will teach her the faculty if she needs to learn it.”

Morose was taking her words in a sexual sense. One meaning of “to bear” is to bear a man’s weight in the missionary position. One meaning of “oppressed” is to be ravished. He was saying that Madam Haughty would teach Epicene how to bear a man’s weight in bed, unless Epicene had already learned it.

“We will all bear” can also mean “We will all bare our bodies.”

Morose stood to the side, and the ladies talked together out of his hearing.

“Is this the silent woman?” Madam Haughty asked.

Madam Centaur replied, “Nay, she has found her tongue since she was married, Master Truewit says.”

Truewit joined the ladies.

“Oh, Master Truewit!” Lady Haughty said. “May God save you. What kind of creature is your bride here? She speaks, I think.”

Truewit replied, “Yes, madam, believe it. She is a gentlewoman of very perfect behavior and of a good family.”

“And Jack Daw told us she could not speak,” Madam Haughty said.

“So it was pretended in a plot, Madam, in order to put her upon this old fellow, by Sir Dauphine, his nephew, and one or two more of us,” Truewit said, “but she is a woman of an excellent self-confidence and an extraordinarily felicitous wit and tongue. You shall see her make rare sport at the expense of Jack Daw before night.”

“And he brought us here to laugh at her!” Madam Haughty said.

“It often falls out, madam, that he who thinks himself the master wit is the master fool,” Truewit said.

Certainly Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine behaved sometimes unethically, if not foolishly. Is it foolish to behave unethically?

He continued, “I assure Your Ladyship, you cannot laugh at her.”

But they could laugh with her.

Lady Haughty said, “No, we won’t laugh at her. We’ll have her to the College. If she has wit, she shall be one of us.”

She then said to Madam Centaur, “Won’t she, Centaur? We’ll make her a Collegiate.”

“Yes, indeed, madam, and Mavis and she will set up a partnership,” Madam Centaur said.

“Believe it, madam,” Truewit said.

He added, “And Mistress Mavis, Epicene will sustain her part. She will be a good partner.”

Madam Mavis replied, “I’ll tell you that after I have talked with her and tested her.”

“Treat her very civilly, Mavis,” Madam Haughty said.

“So I will, madam,” Madam Mavis said.

She then walked aside with Epicene.

Morose said to himself, still not hearing their conversation, “This is a blessed minute. I wish that they would whisper like this forever!”

Truewit said to Madam Haughty, “In the meantime, madam, I wish that Your Ladyship would help to vex Morose a little. You know his disease.”

Morose’s disease was an excessive sensitivity to noise.

Truewit continued, “Talk to him about the wedding ceremonies, or call for your gloves, or —”

“Leave it to me,” Madam Haughty said. “Centaur, help me.”

Madam Haughty called to Morose, “Master bridegroom, where are you?”

“Oh, their silence was too miraculously good to last!” Morose said to himself.

Madam Haughty said, “We see no signs of a wedding here, no mark of a bride-ale. Where are our scarves and our gloves?”

Scarves and gloves were traditional gifts given to wedding guests.

She continued, “Please, give them to us. Let’s know your bride’s color and your color, at least.”

The bride and groom chose separate colors, which their respective friends wore at the wedding and bride-ale.

“Alas, madam, he has provided none,” Madam Centaur said.

“Had I known Your Ladyship’s cosmetician, I would have,” Morose said.

That kind of color was makeup.

Madam Haughty said, “He has scored a point against you, Centaur, indeed. But do you hear, Master Morose, a jest will not absolve you in this manner. You have sucked the milk of the court and from thence have been brought up to the true solid foods and wine of it — you have been a courtier from the baby’s bonnet to the nightcap, as we may say. It’s shocking for you to offend in such a high point of ceremony as this, and let your nuptials lack all the marks of ceremoniousness! How much plate have you lost today (if you had but regarded your profit), what gifts, what friends, through your complete rusticity and boorishness!”

Plate is gold and silver utensils for the table: They are traditional wedding gifts.

Morose began, “Madam —”

Madam Haughty interrupted, “Pardon me, sir. I must insinuate your errors to you.”

“To insinuate” is “to suggest or hint,” but Madam Haughty did not suggest or hint but instead spoke straightforwardly.

“No gloves? No garters? No scarves? No epithalamium? No masque?” she said.

The bride’s garters were given away to the guests. Gloves and scarves were also given to the wedding guests.

A masque was an entertaining performance with dancing and acting by masked participants.

An epithalamium is a wedding song.

Jack Daw said, “Yes, madam, I’ll make — write — an epithalamium. I promised my mistress; I have begun it already. Will Your Ladyship hear it?”

“Aye, good Jack Daw,” Madam Haughty answered.

Unwilling to hear the epithalamium, Morose said to Madam Haughty, “Will it please Your Ladyship to command a chamber and be private with your friend? You shall have your choice of rooms to retire to with the hope of obtaining what you want: My whole house is yours. I know it” — that is, having an assignation — “has been Your Ladyship’s purpose in going into the city at other times; however, now you have been unhappily diverted upon me, but I shall be loath to break any honorable custom of Your Ladyship’s. And therefore, good madam —”

Epicene said, “Come, you are a rude bridegroom to entertain ladies of honor in this fashion.”

Madam Centaur agreed: “He is a rude groom, indeed.”

A groom can be a bridegroom or a servant.

Truewit also agreed: “By that light, you deserve to have a cuckold’s horns grafted onto your forehead and have your horns reach from one side of the island to the other.”

He then pretended to be joking: “Do not mistake me, sir. I speak this only to give the ladies some heart again, not for any malice to you.”

Morose gestured toward Truewit and said, “Ladies, is this your bravo — your hired bully?”

Truewit said, “So God help me, if you utter such another word, I’ll take your Mistress Bride further inside the house and drink your health in a way unpleasant to you. Do you see? Bah. Know your friends and such as love you.”

Truewit may have been threatening to cuckold Morose.

— 3.7 —

Clerimont entered the room, leading in a number of musicians.

“Excuse me, ladies,” Clerimont said. “Do you want any music? I have brought you a variety of noises.”

A noise is a band of musicians.

He then said to the musicians, “Play, sirs, all of you.”

Because the musicians were from different bands that played different kinds of music, the result was indeed a noise.

“Oh, a plot, a plot, a plot, a plot upon me!” Morose said. “This day I shall be their anvil to work on; they will grate — grind — me asunder. It is worse than the noise of a saw!”

Clerimont, pretending that Morose did not know that the noise was produced by the bows, aka bow-saws, used to play fiddles, said, “No, they are hair, resin, and guts. I can give you the formula for making them.”

Gut was used for strings, and horsehair was used for the bow-saw. Resin was rubbed on the bow-saw.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Peace, boys.”

The musicians stopped playing.

Clerimont said the musicians, “Play, I say.”

The musicians began playing.

“Peace, rascals!” Truewit said.

The musicians stopped playing.

Truewit said to Morose, “You see who’s your friend now, sir? Take courage; put on a martyr’s resolution. Mock down all their attacks by means of patience. It is only for a day, and I would suffer heroically if I were in your place. Should an ass exceed me in fortitude? No. You betray your infirmity — your inordinate sensitivity to sound — with your hanging

dull ears, and make them exult disdainfully. Bear up bravely and constantly and steadfastly.”

Morose may have been wearing a couple of nightcaps, as old men sometimes did in this society. The ends of the nightcaps could be hanging down like droopy ears.

La Foole walked into the room, followed by servants carrying food to the banqueting room. Dauphine and Mrs. Otter also arrived.

Truewit said to Morose, “Look here, sir, at what honor is unexpectedly done to you by your nephew, Dauphine. A wedding dinner has come, and a knight sewer — La Foole — before it, for the greater honor, and fine Mistress Otter, your neighbor, in the rump or tail of it.”

“Has that Gorgon, that Medusa, come?” Morose said. “Hide me! Hide me!”

Medusa is the most famous of the mythological Gorgons, the sight of whom could turn men into stone.

“I promise you, sir, that she will not transform you into stone,” Truewit said. “Look upon her with a good courage. Please receive her and conduct your guests in. No? You won’t?”

He then said to Epicene, “Mistress Bride, will you invite in the ladies? Your bridegroom is so bashful and shamefaced here —”

Epicene said to Madam Haughty, “Will it please Your Ladyship, madam?”

“With the benefit of your company, Mistress,” Madam Haughty replied.

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “Servant, please perform your duties.”

“I am glad to be commanded, Mistress,” Jack Daw replied.

Madam Centaur asked, “How do you like Epicene’s wit, Mavis?”

Mistress Mavis replied, “Very prettily, absolutely well.”

They were going to the banqueting hall, and Mistress Mavis was ahead of Mrs. Otter.

Mrs. Otter objected, “It is my place.”

The higher-ranking person would go first, and Mrs. Otter believed that she should precede Mistress Mavis.

Disagreeing about the order of precedence, Mistress Mavis said, “You shall pardon me, Mistress Otter.”

“Why, I am a Collegiate,” Mrs. Otter said.

“But not in ordinary,” Madam Mavis replied.

“In ordinary” means “full-time.”

“But I am,” Mrs. Otter said.

“We’ll dispute that within the banqueting hall,” Mistress Mavis said.

Jack Daw escorted the ladies into the banqueting hall.

“I wish that this had lasted a little longer!” Clerimont said.

“And that they had sent for the heralds!” Truewit said.

Heralds of the College of Heralds decided who had precedence over another person. Heralds-at-arms blew trumpets.

Mr. Otter entered the room, carrying his drinking cups.

Truewit asked, “Captain Otter, what is the news?”

“I have brought my bull, bear, and horse in private, and yonder are the trumpeters outside, and the drummer, gentlemen,” Mr. Otter said.

The drum and trumpets sounded.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” Morose cried.

Mr. Otter continued, “And we will have a rouse — a deep drink — in each of them soon, for bold Britons, indeed.”

The drum and trumpets sounded again.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! “ Morose cried.

He exited.

The others cried, “Follow! Follow! Follow!”

This was a hunting cry.

CHAPTER 4

— 4.1 —

Truewit and Clerimont talked together, privately.

“Was there ever any poor bridegroom so tormented as Morose?” Truewit said. “Or any man so tormented, indeed?”

“I have not read of the like in the chronicles of the land,” Clerimont replied.

“Surely, he cannot but go to a place of rest after all this purgatory,” Truewit said.

In Purgatory, repentant sinners suffer to purge their sins, after which they go to Paradise. Truewit was joking that Morose was suffering so much on this day that after death he could skip Purgatory and go straight to Paradise.

“He may presume it, I think,” Clerimont said.

“The spitting, the coughing, the laughter, the sneezing, the farting, the dancing, the noise of the music, and Epicene’s masculine and loud commanding and directing the whole family of household servants make him think that by marrying Epicene he has married an avenging deity — a Fury,” Truewit said.

“And she carries it off splendidly,” Clerimont said.

“Aye, she takes any occasion to speak,” Truewit said. “That’s the best part of it.”

“And how soberly Dauphine labors to satisfy Morose that it was none of his plot, that he had nothing to do with it!” Clerimont said.

“And Dauphine has almost brought Morose to the faith in the article,” Clerimont said. “He has almost convinced him that it is true.”

Church of England ministers subscribed to 39 Articles of Faith.

“Here he comes,” Clerimont said.

Dauphine entered the room.

Clerimont then asked, “Where is Morose now? What’s become of him, Dauphine?”

Dauphine answered, “Oh, hold me up a little, or I shall die laughing. He has got on his whole nest of nightcaps and locked himself up in the top of the house, as high as ever he can climb to escape from the noise.”

The nightcaps fitted inside each other from smallest to largest, forming a “nest.”

Proverbs 21:9 states, “*It is better to dwell in a corner of the house top, than with a contentious woman in a wide house*” (1599 Geneva Bible).

Dauphine continued, “I peeped in at a cranny and saw him sitting over a crossbeam roof, like him of the saddler’s horse in Fleet Street, upright; and he will sleep there.”

Outside the saddler’s shop in Fleet Street was a sign or a model displaying a horse and rider.

“But where are your Collegiates?” Clerimont asked.

“Withdrawn with the bride in private,” Dauphine said.

“Oh, they are instructing her in the College grammar — its rules and practices,” Truewit said. “If Epicene has favor with them, she knows all their secrets instantly.”

Clerimont said, “I think the Lady Haughty looks well today, despite all my dispraise of her in the morning. I think I shall come around to your opinion and agree with you again,

Truewit. I think I will believe that makeup and good clothing improve a woman's appearance."

"Believe it," Truewit said. "I told you right. Women ought to repair the losses that time and years have made in their features with personal decorations. And an intelligent woman, if she knows in herself the least defect, will be most careful to hide it, and it becomes her.

"If she is short, let her sit much, lest when she stands she should be thought to sit.

"If she has an ill foot, let her wear her gown the longer and her shoe the thinner.

"If she has a fat hand and scaly fingernails, let her less often carve the meat at the table and gesture only while wearing gloves.

"If she has a sour breath, let her never discourse fasting, and always talk while at a distance."

Truewit believed that talking on an empty stomach made bad breath more noticeable. Possibly, the smell of food on one's breath was more pleasing. Or possibly, the act of eating and chewing brushed one's teeth.

Truewit continued, "If she has black and rugged and uneven teeth, let her laugh less, especially if she laughs with her mouth wide and open."

Clerimont said, "Oh, some women, when they laugh, you would think they brayed like a donkey, it is so rude, and —"

Truewit interrupted, "— aye, and there are others who will stalk in their gait like an ostrich, and take huge strides. I cannot endure such a sight. I love the gracefulness of dance measures in the feet and I love musical rhythm in the voice;

they are gentlenesses and elegances that often attract no less than the face.”

“How did you come to study these creatures so exactly?” Dauphine asked. “I wish you would make me proficient in that knowledge.”

Truewit replied, “Yes, but then you must cease to live in your chamber for an entire month reading the chivalric romances *Amadis de Gaul* or *Don Quixote*, as you are accustomed to do, and come abroad where the material for study is plentiful. You must go to court, to tiltings and jousts, to public shows and feasts, to plays, and to church sometimes; thither they come to show off their new attire, too, and thither they come to see and to be seen. In these places a man shall find whom to love, whom to play with, whom to touch once, whom to hold forever. The variety arrests his judgment.

“A wench to please a man does not come dropping down from the ceiling, as he lies on his back making a droning sound as he sucks a tobacco pipe. He must go to the places where she is.”

Musicians suck in air to play droning bagpipes.

Dauphine said, “Yes, and be never the nearer — no further ahead.”

“Bah, heretic!” Truewit said. “That lack of confidence makes you deserving of failure.”

“He says the truth to you, Dauphine,” Clerimont said.

“Why?” Dauphine asked.

“A man should not doubt that he will overcome any woman,” Truewit said. “If he thinks he can vanquish them, then he shall; for, although they refuse him, their desire is to be tempted. Penelope herself cannot hold out long.”

Despite what Truewit said, Penelope was a chaste woman who did hold out long. Her husband, Odysseus, went to fight in the Trojan War and did not return home until after twenty years had passed. Penelope remained faithful to Odysseus despite pressure to marry one of the young men who had taken over Odysseus' palace. In her famous weaving trick, she said that she would marry one of the suitors after she had finishing weaving a shroud for Odysseus' father. Each day, she wove the shroud, and each night she unwove the work she had done.

Truewit continued, "Ostend, as you know, was taken at last."

In 1604 the Spanish captured the city of Ostend in Belgium after a three-year siege.

Truewit continued, "You must persevere and hold to your purpose. They would solicit us, but that they are afraid. Howsoever, they wish in their hearts that we would solicit them."

In other words, women wait for men to make the first move.

Truewit continued, "Praise them, flatter them; you shall never lack eloquence or trust. Even the chastest women delight to feel themselves that way rubbed."

Flattery's "rubbing" can result in sexual titillation.

Truewit continued, "With praises you must mix kisses, too. If they take kisses, they'll take more. If they kiss, they'll do more than kiss. Though they resist, they want to be overcome."

"Oh, but a man must beware of force," Clerimont said.

He was against rape.

Truewit said, "It is to them an acceptable violence, and often has the place of the greatest courtesy. She who might have

been forced, if you let her go free without touching her, although she then seems to thank you, will forever after hate you, and although she is glad in the face, she is assuredly sad at the heart.”

Truewit was in favor of date rape.

“But all women are not to be taken all ways,” Clerimont said.

He knew that women are different; they are not all the same.

“That is true, no more than all birds or all fishes,” Truewit said. “If you appear learned to an ignorant wench, or jocund to a sad wench, or witty to a foolish wench, why, she immediately begins to mistrust herself. You must approach them in their own height, their own line — you have to meet them at their own level and have the right bait to snare them — for the contrary makes many who fear to commit themselves to noble and worthy fellows run into the embraces of a rascal.

“If she loves wit, give her verses, though you borrow them from a friend or buy them to have good verses.”

Some of Truewit’s wit was borrowed. Much of what he had to say about women here comes from Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*. *Ars Amatoria* is *The Art of Love*. Some readers consider it a seduction manual.

Truewit continued:

“If she loves valor, talk about your sword and be frequent in the mention of quarrels, though you are cautious in fighting.

“If she loves activity and exercise, be seen on your Barbary horse often, or leaping over stools to demonstrate the physical fitness of your back.”

A strong back was a mark of a strong lover.

Truewit continued:

“If she loves good clothes or hairdressing, have your learned council about you every morning: your French tailor, barber, linener, etc. Let your powder, your mirror, and your comb be your dearest acquaintance. Take more care for the ornament of your head than the safety of your head, and wish that the commonwealth be troubled rather than that a hair about you be troubled. That will take — capture — her.

“Then, if she is covetous and craving, promise her anything and perform it sparingly; so shall you always keep her in appetite. Seem as if you would give, but be like a barren field that yields little, or be like unlucky dice are to foolish and hoping gamesters. Let your gifts be slight and dainty rather than precious. Let your cunning and ingenuity be greater than your expense. Give cherries when they are in season, or apricots, and say they were sent to you from the country, though you bought them in a market in nearby Cheapside.

“Admire her clothing and hats; like her in all fashions; compare her in every outfit to some deity; invent excellent dreams to flatter her, and riddles.

“Or, if she is of high rank, perform always the supporting parts to her: like what she likes, praise whom she praises, and do not fail to make the household servants your supporters, yea, all the dependents in the household, and salute them by their names — it is only a light cost if you can purchase them so easily. Make her physician your pensioner — bribe him to get him on your side — and bribe her chief serving-woman, too.

“Nor will it be outside of your interests to make love to the serving-woman, too, so long as she follows, not ushers in, her lady’s pleasure. Always make love to the lady first. All blabbing is taken away when the serving-woman comes to be a part of the crime.”

Dauphine asked, “On what courtly lap have you recently slept, to come forth as so sudden and absolute a courtling?”

A courtling is a little courtier.

Dauphine may not have liked what he was hearing.

Truewit replied, “In good faith, I should rather question you who are so hearkening after these mysteries. I begin to suspect your diligence, Dauphine.

“Speak, are you in love in earnest?”

“Yes, by my faith I am,” Dauphine said. “It would be wrong to lie to you.”

“With which of them, I ask you?” Truewit said.

“With all the Collegiates,” Dauphine answered.

“Come on!” Clerimont said. “We’ll keep you at home, believe it, in the stable, if you should be such a stallion — such a stud.”

“No,” Truewit said. “I like him well. Men should love wisely, and men should love all women.

“Men should love a certain one for her face, and let her please the eye; love another for her skin, and let her please the touch; love a third for her voice, and let her please the ear; and where the objects mix, let the senses also mix, too.”

He then said, “You would think it strange if I would make them all in love with you before night!”

Dauphine said, “I would say that you had the best philter — love potion — in the world, and could do more than Madam Medea or Doctor Forman.”

Medea was a witch who helped Jason (of Argonauts fame) win the Golden Fleece. She then married Jason. He later fell out of love with her, and she killed their children.

Doctor Simon Forman was a quack who dealt in love potions.

Truewit said, “If I don’t make all the Collegiates love you, let me play the mountebank — itinerant quack and charlatan — for my meat while I live, and let me play the bawd for my drink.”

“So be it, I say,” Dauphine said.

— 4.2 —

Mr. Otter, who was still holding his drinking cups, Jack Daw, and La Foole entered the room. So did some musicians.

“Oh, Lord, gentlemen, how my knights and I have missed you here!” Mr. Otter said.

The knights were Sir Jack Daw and Sir La Foole.

“Why, Captain, what service?” Clerimont asked. “What service?”

This meant: How can I serve you?

“By seeing me bring up my bull, bear, and horse to fight,” Mr. Otter said.

Clerimont could serve him by being the audience for a drinking competition.

Jack Daw said, “Yes, indeed, the captain says we shall be his dogs to bait them.”

The three men — Mr. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole — would attack the bear-cup, bull-cup, and horse-cup by drinking from them.

“That is a good employment of them,” Dauphine said.

“Come on, let’s see a course, then,” Truewit said.

“A course” is 1) a drinking round, and 2) a bout between the dogs and a tormented animal.

“I am afraid my cousin will be offended by the drinking if she comes here,” La Foole said.

His cousin was Mrs. Otter.

“Be afraid of nothing,” Mr. Otter said to him.

He then said, “Gentlemen, I have placed the drum and the trumpets, and one to give them the sign when you are ready.”

The musicians prepared to play. Mr. Otter produced his cups and distributed them.

“Here’s my bull for myself, and my bear for Sir John Daw, and my horse for Sir Amorous La Foole,” he said. “Now, set your foot to mine and yours to his, and —”

Mr. Otter was telling the others — Jack Daw and La Foole — to set their feet in the proper position along with him — toe to toe to toe — for a drinking competition.

“I pray to God that my cousin doesn’t come here!” La Foole said.

“Saint George and Saint Andrew!” Mr. Otter said. “Fear no cousins.”

He was playing with words: “Fear no colors” means “Fear no foe.”

Saint George and Saint Andrew are the patron saints of England and of Scotland, respectively. Reigning over the countries was one man: King James I of England, who was also King James VI of Scotland.

Mr. Otter then said to the musicians, “Come, sound, sound. *Et rauco strepuerunt cornua cantu.*”

The Latin is a quotation from Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.2) and means “And the trumpets sounded with harsh note.”

The drum and trumpets sounded, and the three competitors drank. Mr. Otter drank from the bull drinking cup, Jack Daw from the bear drinking cup, and La Foole from the horse drinking cup.

“Well done, Captain Otter, indeed!” Truewit said. “Well fought at the bull!”

Clerimont said to Jack Daw, “Well held at the bear!”

“’loo, ’loo, Captain,” Truewit said.

“Halloo” was a cry urging the dogs to attack.

“Oh, the horse has kicked off his dog already,” Dauphine said.

The “fight” consisted of drinking. La Foole had stopped “fighting” quicker than the others. The horse-cup had kicked him off.

“I cannot drink it, as I am a knight,” La Foole said.

“Godso, off with his spurs, somebody,” Truewit said.

He was joking that La Foole ought to lose his knighthood for so poor an effort in this battle of drinkers.

“Godso” is a curse word based on the Italian *cazzo* (penis) and mimicking other oaths that used the word “God’s.”

“It goes against my conscience,” La Foole said. “My cousin Mrs. Otter will be angry with all the drinking.”

Jack Daw finished his cup and said, “I have done mine.”

“You fought high and fair, Sir John,” Truewit said.

“At the head,” Clerimont said.

“Like an excellent bear-dog,” Dauphine said.

An excellent bear-dog would attack the bear’s head.

Clerimont said quietly to Jack Daw, “You take no notice of the business, I hope.”

The business was the rivalry of Jack Daw and La Foole.

Jack Daw replied quietly, “Not a word, sir. You see we are jovial.”

“Sir Amorous, you must not equivocate,” Mr. Otter said. “You must not be ambiguous. It must be pulled down, for all ‘my cousin.’”

“It must be pulled down” meant, “All the drink must be drunk.” Also, a baited animal could be pulled down to the ground by dogs.

Clerimont said quietly to La Foole, “By God’s foot, if you don’t drink your drink, they’ll think you are discontented with something. You’ll betray all if you take the least notice.”

La Foole quietly replied, “Not I. I’ll both drink and talk, then.”

He drank.

“You must pull the horse onto his knees, Sir Amorous, by drinking deep,” Mr. Otter said. “Fear no cousins. *Jacta est alea.*”

The Latin means, “The die is cast.” Julius Caesar said this while crossing the Rubicon River against the orders of the Roman Senate. It metaphorically means, “We can’t go back now. We can only go forward.”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine about Mr. Otter, “Oh, now he’s in his vein, and bold. The least hint given him of his wife now will make him rail against her recklessly.”

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, “Speak to him of her.”

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “You speak to Mr. Otter, and I’ll fetch Mrs. Otter in to hear what he says about her.”

Truewit exited to get Mrs. Otter.

“Captain he-Otter, your she-Otter is coming, your wife,” Dauphine said, giving him fair warning.

“Wife! Bah! *Titivilitium*,” Mr. Otter said.

Titivilitium means, “A thing that is vile and of no value.” The word is used in Plautus’ comic play *Casina*, line 347.

Mr. Otter continued, “There’s no such thing in nature. I confess, gentlemen, I have a cook, a laundress, a house-drudge, all of whom serve my necessary turns and go under that title; but he’s an ass who will be so uxorious as to tie his affections to one circle.”

Mr. Otter’s image is of an ass driving a rotary mill by walking in a circle, but “circle” also means vagina.

“Uxorious” means being excessively fond of one’s wife.

Mr. Otter continued, “Come, the name — ‘wife’ — dulls the appetite. Here, replenish again. Let’s have another bout.”

The drinking cups were filled again.

Mr. Otter continued, “Wives are nasty, sluttish animals —”

“Oh, Captain! “ Dauphine said.

Mr. Otter finished, “— as ever the earth bare, *tribus verbis* — in three words.”

He then asked, “Where’s Master Truewit?”

“He’s slipped aside, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“But you must drink and be jovial,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, give the drinking cup to me,” Jack Daw said.

“And me, too,” La Foole said.

“Let’s be jovial,” Jack Daw said.

“As jovial as you will,” La Foole said.

“Agreed,” Mr. Otter said.

Mr. Otter poured more drink, and then he gave Jack Daw and La Foole different drinking cups than he had before.

He said to La Foole, “Now you shall have the bear, cousin, and Sir John Daw shall have the horse, and I’ll have the bull still.”

He then said, “Sound, Tritons of the Thames! *Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero* —”

Tritons are mythological minor sea-gods who blew a shell-trumpet.

The Latin means, “Now is the time for drinking, now with free foot” (Horace, *Odes*, I.37.1). “Free foot” refers to dancing. This particular ode was about Cleopatra, who had a reputation as a man-destroyer.

The three men drank.

As the trumpets sounded, Morose spoke from the top of a staircase, “Villains, murderers, sons of the earth, and traitors, what are you doing there?”

“Sons of the earth” are bastards.

“Oh, now that the trumpets have awakened him, we shall have his company,” Clerimont said.

As was his custom when drunk, Mr. Otter complained about his wife: “A wife is a scurvy *clogdogdo*, an unlucky thing, a very foresaid bear whelp, without any good fashion or breeding: *mala bestia* — an evil beast.”

Chances are, a “clogdogdo” is Bear Garden slang meaning a bear cub. Newborn bears were thought to be without a defined shape; the mother-bear licked her whelp into shape.

“Clog-dog-do” could perhaps mean “shoe-dog-action,” referring to a dog that ought to either heel or be kicked.

Bear cubs need to be licked into shape, and dogs need to be trained. Mr. Otter apparently believed that wives need to be treated like bear cubs and dogs.

Truewit brought Mrs. Otter into the room. Mr. Otter did not notice her presence.

“Why did you marry one, then, Captain?” Dauphine asked.

“A pox!” Mr. Otter said. “I married six thousand pounds, I did. I was in love with that. I have not kissed my Fury these forty weeks.”

He had married for money, not love. Now his marriage had suffered bed-death.

“The more to blame you, Captain,” Clerimont said.

Truewit whispered to Mrs. Otter, who was about to interrupt her husband, “Nay, Mistress Otter, listen to him a little while first.”

Mr. Otter said, “She has a breath worse than my grandmother’s, *profecto* — truly.”

Mrs. Otter whispered to Truewit, “Oh, treacherous liar! Kiss me, sweet Master Truewit, and prove him a slandering knave.”

Mr. Truewit whispered back, “I’ll rather believe you, lady.”

He did not want to kiss her.

Mr. Otter continued, “And she has a peruke — a wig — that’s like a pound of hemp made up in shoe-laces.”

“Oh, viper, mandrake!” Mrs. Otter said to herself.

People in this society believed that vipers were born by eating their way out of their mother’s body. Vipers were symbols of treachery.

The root of the poisonous mandrake plant was thought to resemble the form of a human being.

Mr. Otter continued, “She has a very vile face, and yet she spends forty pounds a year in mercury and hog’s bones.”

These were ingredients used in making cosmetics.

Mr. Otter continued, “All her teeth were made in the Blackfriars, both her eyebrows were made in the Strand, and her hair was made in Silver Street. Every part of the town owns a piece of her.”

“Blackfriars” implied that her teeth were black, “the Strand” implied that her eyebrows consisted of strands, aka bristles, and “Silver Street” implied that her hair was grey.

“I cannot hold back!” Mrs. Otter said, but not loudly enough for her husband to hear her.

Mr. Otter continued, “She takes herself asunder always, when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes, and about next day noon is put together again, like a great German clock; and so comes forth and rings a tedious alarum to the whole house, and then is quiet again for an hour, but for her quarters.”

Some women when they go to bed take off their wig, their false eyelashes, their teeth, and so on. An old joke is that at bedtime a husband looks around and can’t find his wife because there’s nothing left.

Jacobean playwrights regarded German clocks as needing a lot of upkeep to keep them in working condition. They were constantly breaking down.

The word “quarters” referred to Mrs. Otter’s quarter-hours and her living quarters and her farting hind-quarters.

Mr. Otter then asked the drinkers, “Have you done me right, gentlemen? Have you matched me drink for drink?”

Furious, Mrs. Otter beat him, saying, “No, sir, I’ll do you right with my quarters, with my quarters!”

Quarters are also blows in fencing.

“Oh, stop, good princess!” Mr. Otter said.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Sound! Sound!”

The drummer drummed and the trumpeters blew their trumpets.

“A battle! A battle!” Clerimont said.

Mrs. Otter said to her husband, “You notorious, stinkardly bear-ward! Does my breath smell?”

A bear-ward takes care of a bear.

“Under correction, dear princess,” Mr. Otter said.

He then said, “Look after my bear and my horse, gentlemen.”

“Do I lack teeth and eyebrows, you bull-dog?” Mrs. Otter asked.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Play! Play still!”

They played their instruments again.

Mr. Otter said, “No, I avow, under correction —”

Mrs. Otter interrupted, “Aye, now that you are under correction you avow no; but you did not avow no before correction, sir. You Judas, to offer to betray your princess! I’ll make you an example —”

Carrying a two-handed long sword, Morose descended the staircase and said, “I will have no such examples in my house, Lady Otter.”

“Ah —” Mrs. Otter began.

Morose interrupted, “Mistress Mary Ambree, your examples are dangerous.”

A ballad was sung about Mary Ambree’s dressing herself as a soldier so she could take part in the siege of Ghent in 1584 to avenge her lover after he died in the siege.

Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole exited rapidly. Jack Daw and La Foole dropped their drinking cups as they exited.

Morose continued, “Rogues, hellhounds, Stentors!”

Stentor was a mythological soldier whose voice was as loud as those of fifty men put together. In Book 5, lines 785-6 of Homer’s *Iliad*, Hera took his form and used his voice to

encourage the Greek warriors to fight well in a battle of the Trojan War.

Morose continued, “Out of my doors, you sons of noise and tumult, begot on an ill May Day, or when the galley-foist is afloat to Westminster!”

In 1517, an especially violent riot occurred on May Day.

A galley-foist is a ceremonial armed escort to the state barge that each year took the new Lord Mayor of London to Westminster to be sworn into office. Drummers and trumpeters were part of the escort.

Morose continued, “A trumpeter could not be conceived but then!”

A trumpeter is a son of noise and so must be begotten during noisy events such as May Days and installations of mayors.

Morose drove out the musicians.

“What ails you, sir?” Dauphine asked.

Morose said, “They have rent my roof, walls, and all my windows asunder with their brazen throats.”

Joshua 6:1-27 tells how Joshua and his warriors conquered Jericho. Among other things, Joshua ordered seven priests to blow seven trumpets. The noise brought down the walls of Jericho.

Morose exited.

“You had best follow him, Dauphine,” Truewit said.

“So I will,” Dauphine replied.

He exited.

“Where’s Jack Daw and La Foole?” Clerimont asked.

Mr. Otter said, "They have both run away, sir."

He then said, "Good gentlemen, help me to pacify my princess, and speak to the great ladies for me. Now I must go lie with the bears this fortnight, and keep out of her way until I make my peace with her, because of this offence she has taken."

He looked around and asked, "Do you see my bullhead, gentlemen?"

The bullhead was the cover of one of the drinking cups.

He searched for his bullhead.

"Isn't it on the cup, Captain?" Clerimont said.

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont, "No, but he may make a new one, by copying the one that is on his shoulders."

He was joking that a copy of Mr. Otter's head would make a good cover for the drinking cup. Presumably, Mr. Otter's head would have the horns of a cuckold just as the bullhead-cover would have the horns of a bull. Chances are, he had a couple of bumps resembling growing horns on his head from his wife's beating him.

Finding the bullhead, Mr. Otter said, "Oh, here it is."

He then said, "If you come over the Thames River, gentlemen, and ask for Tom Otter, we'll go down to Ratcliffe and have a round of drinking, indeed, despite all these disasters."

Radcliffe was outside the jurisdiction of London, and so rogues who wanted to be outside the jurisdiction of London went there.

Mr. Otter continued, "There's *bona spes* — good hope — left."

Cicero's *In Catalinum (Against Catiline)* II.25 states that "well-founded hope [fights] against universal despair."

"Away, Captain!" Truewit said. "Get away while you are well."

Mr. Otter exited.

"I am glad we are rid of him," Clerimont said.

"You would never have been, unless we had put his wife upon him," Truewit said. "His character is as tedious at last as it was ridiculous at first."

— 4.3 —

Madam Haughty, Mrs. Otter, Mistress Mavis, Jack Daw, La Foole, Madam Centaur, and Epicene entered the room.

Truewit and Clerimont stood to the side, watching and listening.

Madam Haughty said, "We wondered why you shrieked so, Mistress Otter."

"Oh, God," Mrs. Otter said. "Madam, he came down with a huge long naked weapon in both his hands, and looked so dreadfully! Surely, he's beside himself."

Morose had been holding a long two-handed sword, although readers may be forgiven if they thought after reading Mrs. Otter's description that he had been holding a "weapon" of a different sort.

"Why, what were you doing there, Mistress Otter?" Madam Mavis asked.

"Alas, Mistress Mavis, I was chastising my subject — my husband — and thought nothing of him," Mrs. Otter said.

Jack Daw said to Epicene, “Indeed, mistress, you must do so, too. Learn to chastise. Mistress Otter corrects her husband with the result that he dares not speak but under correction.”

“And with his hat off to her,” La Foole said. “It would do you good to see.”

Lady Haughty said, “Seriously, it is good and mature counsel.”

She then said to Epicene, “Practice it, Morose. I’ll call you ‘Morose’ always now, just as I call my friends ‘Centaur’ and ‘Mavis.’ We four will be all one.”

“Morose” and “Centaur” and “Mavis” were how males were called in this society. The feminine form of address was “Mistress Morose” and “Madam Centaur” and “Mistress Mavis.”

Mistress Centaur said to Epicene, “And you’ll come to the College and live with us?”

The Lady Collegiates lived apart from their husbands.

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “Make him give milk and honey.”

Milk and honey are found in the Promised Land. Metaphorically, they mean “what you want.”

Apparently, Madam Haughty was saying that Epicene must make Morose give her milk and honey if he wants to enter the “Promised Land.” Nudge, nudge. Wink, wink.

Mistress Mavis said, “Look how you manage him at first, for you shall have him like that ever after.”

“Manage” means “train.” The word “manage” was used when talking about the handling of horses. Mistress Mavis’ advice was for Epicene to begin training her husband early.

Madam Centaur advised, "Let him allow you your coach and four horses, your serving-woman, your chambermaid, your page, your gentleman-usher, your French cook, and four grooms."

Madam Haughty advised, "And go with us to Bedlam, to the china houses, and to the Exchange."

"It will open the gate to your fame," Madam Centaur said.

Her language was ambiguous. The "gate" can be the vaginal opening, and "fame" can mean "reputation."

Madam Haughty said, "Here is Centaur, who has immortalized herself with the taming of her wild male."

"Aye, she has done the miracle of the kingdom," Mistress Mavis said.

Epicene asked, "But ladies, do you count it lawful to have such plurality of servants — male admirers — and do them all graces?"

"Grace" means "favor." The "graces" in this context can be sexual favors.

"Why not?" Madam Haughty asked. "Why should women deny their favors to men? Are women the poorer, or the worse, for it?"

Jack Daw said, "Is the Thames less for the dyer's water, mistress?"

"Or a torch, for lighting many torches?" La Foole said.

"Water" can mean "semen," "torch" can mean "penis," and "burn" can mean "infected with venereal disease."

A torch that lights many torches and makes them burn is a homosexual penis that infects with venereal disease many other homosexuals' penises. To "light" can mean to infect

with burning sores and/or to give urination a burning sensation.

“Well said, La Foole,” Truewit said.

He then said to himself, “What a new one — a new expression — he has got!”

La Foole did not realize the homosexual meaning of what he had said, but Truewit did.

Both La Foole and Jack Daw were making variations on a cliché. La Foole was making a variation on this cliché: “One candle can light many more.” Jack Daw was making a variation on this cliché: “To cast water into the Thames.”

“They are empty losses women fear in this kind,” Madam Centaur said.

In other words: When giving love, women lose nothing, and so they ought not to fear giving love.

“Besides, ladies should be mindful of the approach of age, and let no time lack its due use,” Madam Haughty said. “The best of our days pass first.”

“We are rivers that cannot be called back, Madam,” Mistress Mavis said. “She who now excludes her lovers may live to lie a forsaken beldame — an old hag — in a frozen bed.”

“That is true, Mavis,” Madam Centaur said. “And who will escort us to a coach, then, or write, or tell us the gossip then? Who will make anagrams of our names, and invite us to the Cockpit and kiss our hands all during the time a play is performed, and draw their weapons for our honors?”

Some of her words such as “Cockpit” and “weapons” can have sexual meanings.

These anagrams were acrostic poems in which each line begins with a letter of the name of a loved one.

“Not one,” Madam Haughty said.

Jack Daw said, “Nay, my mistress is not altogether unintelligent of these things. Here are present those who have tasted of her favors.”

He was hinting that Epicene had slept with some of the men now present.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, “What a neighing hobby-horse — chattering buffoon — Jack Daw is!”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “But not with the intention to boast them again, servant.”

Women tend not to want clandestine affairs to be made known.

Epicene then said to Madam Haughty, “And have you those excellent receipts — prescriptions — madam, to keep yourselves away from the bearing of children?”

“Oh, yes, Morose,” Madam Haughty said. “How else should we maintain our youth and beauty? Many births make a woman old, as many crops make the earth barren.”

— 4.4 —

Truewit joined Morose and Dauphine, who were talking privately together.

“Oh, my cursed angel, who directed me to this fate!” Morose said.

“Why, sir?” Dauphine asked.

“So that I should be seduced by so foolish a devil as a barber will make!” Morose said.

“I wish that I had been worthy, sir, to have taken part in your counsel,” Dauphine said. “You should never have trusted it to such a minister.”

“I wish that I could redeem it with the loss of an eye, nephew, a hand, or any other member!” Morose said.

He was addressing his nephew, but chances are he wished he could redeem his marriage with the loss of his nephew, a member of his family.

Dauphine pretended that when Morose mentioned the loss of any other member, that included the loss of his male member.

“By the Virgin Mary,” Dauphine said, “God forbid, sir, that you should geld yourself to anger your wife.”

Actually, Dauphine did not need to pretend.

“As long as it would rid me of her!” Morose said. “And that I did supererogatory — beyond the call of duty — penance in a belfry at Westminster Hall, in the Cockpit, at the fall of a stag, at the Tower Wharf.”

He asked himself, “What other noisy place is there?”

He then continued with his list: “London Bridge, Paris Garden, Billingsgate, when the noises are at their height and loudest.”

All of the activities and places he named were noisy. Bells ring in a belfry. Cockfights were held in the Cockpit. Dogs bark while hunting a deer. Ordnance was fired at the Tower Wharf on special occasions. London Bridge was noisy and crowded, and the water rushing through the bridge’s arches created a roar. Bear-baitings were held at the Bear Garden. Fishwives raucously shouted in the fish market at Billingsgate.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the theological meaning of “supererogation” as “In the Roman Catholic Church: the performance of good works beyond what God commands or requires, held to contribute to a store of merit which the Church may dispense to others to make up for their deficiencies; an instance of this.”

Morose continued, “Nay, I would sit out a play that consisted of nothing but fights at sea, drums, trumpets, and shields!”

“I hope there shall be no such need, sir,” Dauphine said. “Have patience, good uncle. This is only a day, and it is well-worn, too, now. Much of the day is already over.”

“Oh, all my days will be like this day forever, nephew, I foresee it, forever,” Morose said. “Strife and tumult are the dowry that comes with a wife.”

“I told you so, sir, and you would not believe me,” Truewit said.

“Alas, do not rub those wounds, Master Truewit, and make them bleed again,” Morose said. “The fault was my negligence. Add not affliction to affliction. I have perceived the effect — the fulfillment — of it too late in Madam Otter.”

Mrs. Otter was much like Epicene. The Otters and the Moroses had bad marriages.

Epicene approached the group and asked her husband, Morose, “How are you, sir?”

“Did you ever hear a more unnecessary question?” Morose said. “As if she did not see!”

He then answered Epicene, “Why, I do as you see, empress, empress.”

Morose's marriage was unhappy like Mr. Otter's, and so he imitated Mr. Otter's use of an honorary title. Mr. Otter used "princess," and Morose now used "empress."

Epicene said, "You are not well, sir. You look very ill. Something has upset you."

Morose said, "Oh, horrible, monstrous impertinencies and irrelevances! Wouldn't just one of these sentences have served?"

Epicene's three previous sentences all stated the same thing. Two of them were redundant and therefore unnecessary sound.

Morose said to Truewit, "What do you think, sir? Wouldn't just one of these sentences have served?"

Truewit replied, "Yes, sir, but these are only signs of female kindness, sir — they are certain tokens that she has a voice, sir."

One meaning of the word "voice" is conscience.

"Oh, is it so?" Morose said. "Come, if it is no otherwise —"

He then asked Epicene, "What do you say?"

"How do you feel, sir?" Epicene asked.

"Again that!" Morose complained.

"Nay, look, sir," Truewit said. "You would be friends with your wife upon unconscionable, unjust, and unreasonable terms — you would be friends with her only if she is silent —"

Epicene said to Morose, "They say you are mad, sir."

"Not for the love of you, I assure you," Morose said. "Do you see?"

He made a motion as if he were going to hit her.

“Oh, lord, gentlemen!” Epicene said. “Lay hold on him, for God’s sake!”

Truewit and Clerimont restrained Morose.

“What shall I do?” Epicene said. “Who’s his physician? Can you tell me who he is? Tell me which physician knows the state of his body best, so that I might send for him!”

She said to Morose, “Good sir, speak. I’ll send for one of my doctors, otherwise.”

“Why, to poison me, so that I might die intestate — without a will — and leave you possessed of all I have?” Morose said.

Since Morose did not love Epicene, when he made his will, he would deprive her of some things that she would otherwise have gotten.

“Lord, how idly he talks, and how his eyes sparkle!” Epicene said. “He looks green about the temples! Do you see what blue spots he has?”

“Aye, it’s melancholy,” Clerimont said.

“Melancholy” tends to mean depression, but much earlier the Roman statesman Cicero wrote that some ancients used the word “melancholia” to mean frenzy (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.5.11).

“Gentlemen, for heaven’s sake, advise me,” Epicene said.

She called, “Ladies!”

She then said to Jack Daw, “Servant, you have read Pliny and Paracelsus.”

Pliny was the Roman author of *Historia Naturalis* (*The Natural History*). Part of it discusses medicine, including plants from which to derive useful drugs.

Paracelsus was a Swiss authority in chemistry and medicine.

Epicene continued, “No word now to comfort a poor gentlewoman? Woe to me! What luck had I, to marry a distracted man?”

“Distracted” can mean insane or frenzied.

Jack Daw began, “I’ll tell you, mistress —”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “How splendidly Epicene acts her role!”

Struggling to break free, Morose said, “What do you mean by this, gentlemen?”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “What will you tell me, servant?”

Jack Daw replied, “The disease in Greek is called *μανία* [mania], in Latin *insania*, *furor*, *velexstasis melancholica*, that is, *egressio*, when a man *ex melancholico evadit fanaticus*.”

Jack Daw had listed a number of synonyms for madness and ended with some words meaning “when a man goes from melancholy to madness.”

Morose said, “Shall I have a lecture read upon me alive?”

He was complaining that he was being treated as if he were a cadaver used in a medical lecture although he was still alive.

Jack Daw continued, “But he may be but *phreneticus* yet, mistress, and *phrenetis* is only *delirium* or so —”

Phreneticus means suffering from *phrenetis*.

Phrenetis means inflammation of the brain.

Delirium means temporary mental disturbance.

He was only offering names for Morose's disease; he was not advising about treatments.

Epicene said, "Aye, that is for the disease, servant. But what does this have to do with the cure? We are sure enough of the disease — we know the disease Morose has."

Struggling, Morose shouted, "Let me go!"

"Why, we'll entreat her to hold her peace, sir," Truewit said.

"Oh, no," Morose said. "Don't labor to stop her. She is like a water-pipe that will gush out with more force when she opens again."

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, addressing her the way males were addressed, "I'll tell you, Morose, you must talk divinity to him uninterruptedly, or you must talk moral philosophy to him."

La Foole said, "Aye, and there's an excellent book of moral philosophy, madam, of Reynard the Fox and all the beasts, called *Doni's Philosophy*."

The Moral Philosophy of Doni was a collection of animal fables, but none were about Reynard the Fox.

"There is, indeed, Sir Amorous La Foole," Madam Centaur said.

"Oh, misery!" Morose moaned.

"I have read it, my Lady Centaur, from cover to cover to my cousin here," La Foole said.

"Aye, and it is a very good book as any is of the moderns," Mrs. Otter said.

“Tut, he must have Seneca read to him, and Plutarch, and the ancients,” Jack Daw said. “The moderns are not for this disease.”

Seneca was a playwright and moral philosopher, and Plutarch was a biographer who compared and contrasted ancient Greeks and ancient Romans.

“Why, you discommended them, too, today, Sir John,” Clerimont said. “You spoke against them.”

“Aye, in some cases,” Jack Daw said, “but in these they are best, and Aristotle’s *Ethics*.”

“Do you say so, Sir John?” Mistress Mavis said. “I think you are deceived; you took it upon trust without reading it.”

“Where’s Trusty, my serving-woman?” Madam Haughty said. “I’ll end this dispute. Please, Otter, call her.”

By “Otter,” Madam Haughty meant Mrs. Otter. Madam Haughty used the masculine form when she addressed women.

Madam Haughty continued, “Trusty’s father and mother were both mad when they put her in my employment.”

“I think so,” Morose said.

He meant that he thought they had to be mad to put Mistress Trusty in Madam Haughty’s employment.

Mrs. Otter exited to get Mistress Trusty.

Morose said to Truewit and Clerimont, who were restraining him, “Nay, gentlemen, I am tame. This is but an exercise, I know, a marriage ceremony, which I must endure.”

Besides meaning a performance of a ceremony, the word “exercise” can mean “test” or “trial” (saints and martyrs

have been exercised in this way) or the training exercise of an animal.

Madam Haughty said, “And one of them — I know not which — was cured with *The Sick Man’s Salve*, and the other with *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*.”

The Sick Man’s Salve by Thomas Becon was a religious tract that urged ill people to be patient and humble.

Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit by Robert Greene gave admonitory advice to his readers to reject the low life in London.

Madam Haughty believed that Mistress Trusty’s parents had been cured by hearing these books read out loud: one book for each parent.

“A very cheap cure, Madam,” Truewit said.

A goat was four-pence, which was the cost of the pamphlet *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*.

“Aye, the cure’s very feasible and practical,” Madam Haughty said.

Mrs. Otter returned with Mistress Trusty.

“My lady called for you, Mistress Trusty,” Mrs. Otter said. “You must resolve a controversy.”

“Oh, Trusty, which was it you said, your father or your mother, who was cured with *The Sick Man’s Salve*?” Madam Haughty asked.

“My mother, madam, was cured with the *Salve*,” Mistress Trusty answered.

“Then it was *The Sick Woman’s Salve*,” Truewit said.

“And my father was cured with the *Groatsworth of Wit*,” Mistress Trusty added. “But there were other means of treatment used. We had a preacher who would preach folks asleep always; and so they were prescribed to go to church by an old woman who was their physician, thrice a week —”

“To sleep?” Epicene asked.

“Yes, indeed,” Mistress Trusty said, “and every night they read themselves asleep on those books.”

Sleep can be a healer.

“In good faith, these cures make sense,” Epicene said. “I wish I knew where to procure those books.”

“Oh!” Morose said.

“I can help you with one of them, Mistress Morose,” La Foole said. “I can furnish the *Groatsworth of Wit*.”

“But I shall disfurnish you, Sir Amorous,” Epicene said. “Can you spare it?”

She worried about depriving him of his groat’s worth of wit; that is, she worried about depriving him of the little wit he had.

“Oh, yes, for a week or so,” La Foole said. “I myself will read it to him.”

“No, I must do that, sir,” Epicene said. “That must be my job.”

“Oh! Oh!” Morose moaned.

“Surely, he would do well enough if he could sleep,” Epicene said.

“No, I should do well enough if you could sleep,” Morose said.

Asleep, she might be quiet.

He then asked, “Have I no friend who will make her drunk, or give her a little laudanum or opium.”

Laudanum is an alcoholic drink containing morphine.

“Why, sir, she talks ten times worse in her sleep,” Truewit said.

Hmm. How would he know that?

“What!” Morose said.

“Don’t you know, sir?” Clerimont said. “She never ceases all night.”

Hmm. How would he know that?

“And she snores like a porpoise,” Truewit said.

“Oh, redeem me, fate! Redeem me, fate!” Morose prayed.

He then asked Dauphine, “For how many reasons may a man be divorced, nephew?”

“I truly don’t know, sir,” Dauphine answered.

“Some divine must resolve you in that, sir, or some canon lawyer,” Truewit said.

A divine is a priest or a minister. A canon lawyer specializes in ecclesiastical law.

“I will not rest,” Morose said. “I will not think of any other hope or comfort, until I know.”

Morose and Dauphine exited.

“Alas, poor man!” Clerimont said.

“You’ll make him mad indeed, ladies, if you pursue this,” Truewit said.

“No, we’ll let him rest and catch his breath now a quarter of an hour or so,” Madam Haughty said.

“By my faith, a large truce,” Clerimont said.

“Is that his keeper who has gone with him?” Madam Haughty asked.

Lunatics need keepers to take care of them and make sure they don’t hurt themselves.

“It is his nephew, Madam,” Jack Daw said.

“Sir Dauphine Eugenie,” La Foole said.

Mistress Centaur said, “He looks a very pitiful knight —”

In this society, “pitiful” can mean “full of pity for others.” That is what Mistress Centaur meant, but in his next comment Jack Daw did not. He meant “deserving pity.”

“As pitiful as can be,” Jack Daw said. “This marriage has put him out of all. It has ruined his hope of inheritance.”

La Foole said, “He has not a penny in his purse, madam —”

“He is ready to cry all this day,” Jack Daw said.

Jack Daw meant that Dauphine was ready to cry because Morose had married Epicene, and so Dauphine would inherit little or nothing when Morose died, especially if Epicene gave birth to a boy.

“Dauphine is a very shark,” La Foole said. “He set me in the nick the other night at primero.”

La Foole was saying that Dauphine had bet against him — the meaning of “set me” — at the crucial moment. La

Foole did not say who won, but if it is true that Dauphine has an empty purse, then La Foole won.

La Foole is a fool, and Dauphine is not a fool (although he does have ethical lapses), but when it comes to games of chance, fortune can sometimes favor fools.

The word “shark” can mean “cheater,” but it can also mean “an impecunious fellow.”

Truewit and Clerimont were Dauphine’s friends.

Truewit whispered to Clerimont, “How these swabbers talk!”

Swabbers are low fellows.

“Aye, Otter’s wine has swelled their humors above a spring tide,” Clerimont whispered back.

Wine often makes people say things they would not ordinarily say.

Lady Haughty said to Mrs. Epicene Morose, “Good Morose, let’s go in again. I like your couches exceeding well; we’ll go recline and talk there.”

“I wait on you, madam,” Epicene said.

Jack Daw, La Foole, and the ladies exited, but Truewit detained Epicene as she was leaving.

“By God’s light,” Truewit said. “I will have them as silent as signs, and as silent as the posts on which the signs are hung, too, before I have done. Do you hear, lady bride? I ask you now, as you are a noble wench, to continue this discourse about Dauphine within, but praise him exceedingly. Magnify him with all the height of affection you can — I have some purpose for your doing it — and just beat off these two rooks, Jack Daw and his fellow fool, La

Foole, with any discontentment and annoyance away from here, and I'll honor you forever."

Rooks are fools.

"I was about to do it, here," Epicene said. "It made me angry to the soul to hear them begin to talk so malapertly and impudently about Dauphine."

"To be malapert" is "to be boldly disrespectful to or about a person of higher social standing."

"Please, perform it," Truewit said, "and you will win me and make me an idolater who worships you everlastingly."

"Will you go in and hear me do it?" Epicene asked.

"No, I'll stay here," Truewit said. "Drive them out of your company. It is all I ask, which cannot be any way better done than by extolling Dauphine, whom they have so slighted."

"I promise you that I will do it," Epicene said. "You shall expect one of them very soon."

She exited.

Clerimont said, "What a pair of kestrels are these, to hawk after ladies thus!"

To be called a kestrel was an insult. The word can mean "busy fool."

"Aye," Truewit said, "and to strike at and attack such an eagle as Dauphine."

"He will be mad when we tell him," Clerimont said. "Here he comes."

— 4.5 —

Dauphine entered the room.

“Oh, sir, you are welcome,” Clerimont said.

“Where’s your uncle?” Truewit asked.

“He’s run outdoors in his nightcaps to talk with a casuist about his divorce,” Dauphine said. “The plan is working admirably.”

A casuist is a theologian who resolves difficult questions of conduct, duty, and conscience.

“It works admirably” meant that his plan to inherit his uncle Morose’s wealth was going well.

“You would have said so if you had been here,” Truewit said. “The ladies have laughed at you most derisively and comically since you went out of the room, Dauphine.”

“And they asked if you were your uncle’s keeper,” Clerimont said.

Truewit added, “And the pair of baboons — Jack Daw and La Foole — answered, ‘Yes,’ and said you were a pitiful poor fellow and lived by running errands, and had nothing but the three suits of apparel given to servants and some few benevolences — charitable donations — that lords gave you to play the fool for them and swagger.”

“Let me not live!” Dauphine said.

He came up with a better plan: “I’ll beat ’em. I’ll bind them both to grand Madam’s — Lady Haughty’s — bedposts and have them tormented by monkeys.”

“You shall not need to do that; they shall be beaten for and to you, Dauphine,” Truewit said. “I have an execution — a metaphorical legal writ enforcing a judgment — to serve upon them, I promise you, and it shall serve. Trust my plot.”

“Aye, you have many plots,” Dauphine said. “You had one to make all the wenches fall in love with me.”

Truewit replied, “Why, if I do not do that yet before night, as near as it is, and if they do not everyone invite you and be ready to scratch and fight for you, then take the mortgage of my wit.”

“Before God, I’ll be his witness!” Clerimont said. “You shall have what you promised, Dauphine.”

He then looked back and forth at both men and said, “You shall be his fool forever if you don’t.”

In other words:

1) Dauphine shall be Truewit’s fool — the butt of his jokes — forever if he doesn’t take the wager.

2) Truewit shall be Dauphine’s fool — the butt of his jokes — forever if Truewit loses the wager and doesn’t do what he says he will do.

“Agreed,” Truewit said. “Perhaps it will be the better estate.”

Perhaps having Truewit as Dauphine’s fool would be better than having the ladies as Dauphine’s lovers.

Or perhaps having the ladies in love with Dauphine and offering him valuable gifts of jewels and other things will give Dauphine a better estate than relying on his uncle Morose’s generosity.

Truewit then said, “Do you observe this gallery? Or rather lobby, indeed? Here are a couple of studies, one at each end. Here I will act such a tragicomedy between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines: Daw and La Foole.”

The Guelphs and the Ghibellines were rival factions in medieval Italy. Dante, author of *The Divine Comedy*, was a Guelph.

“Whoever comes out first — Jack Daw or La Foole — I will seize upon. You two shall be the chorus behind the arras, and whip out between the acts and speak.”

A chorus in Greek tragedy would observe the action and then comment on it.

An arras is a wall hanging: a thick tapestry. Often an alcove was behind an arras; it made a good hiding place.

Truewit continued, “If I do not make them keep the peace for this remnant of the day, if not of the year, I will have failed once in my life.”

La Foole and Jack Daw had been at peace before Truewit and his friends had started interfering with their lives. Even now, there was no major disagreement between them.

He listened and then said, “I hear Daw coming. Hide and do not laugh, for God’s sake.”

Clerimont and Dauphine hid behind the arras.

Jack Daw entered the room and asked Truewit, “Which is the way into the garden, do you think?”

Probably he needed to urinate.

“Oh, Jack Daw!” Truewit said. “I am glad I have met with you. In good faith, I must have this matter go no further between you. I must have this dispute between you two made up.”

“What matter, sir?” Jack Daw asked. “Between whom?”

“Come, you disguise it,” Truewit said. “You pretend not to know about the dispute between Sir Amorous and you. If you love me, Jack, you shall make use of your philosophy now for this once and deliver to me your sword. This is not the wedding the Centaurs were at, though there is a she-one here.”

Centaurs are mythological beings with the body of a horse and the torso, arms, and head of a man. Many of the Centaurs were violent. In Thessaly, the Centaurs were invited to a wedding, but they grew drunk and tried to rape the women guests. The Centaur named Pholus tried to rape the bride. A battle broke out between the humans and the Centaurs. No female Centaurs exist, even in mythology.

By “she-one,” Truewit mean Madam Centaur.

Truewit continued, “The bride Epicene has entreated me to make sure I will see no blood shed at her bridal. You saw her whisper to me just now.”

Jack Daw handed his sword to Truewit and said, “As I hope to finish Tacitus, I intend no murder.”

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote much and Jack Daw would need much time to read all of Tacitus’ many works.

“Aren’t you waiting for Sir Amorous?” Truewit asked.

“Not I, by my knighthood,” Jack Daw answered.

“And by your learning and scholarship, too?” Truewit asked.

“And by my learning and scholarship, too,” Jack Daw answered.

Truewit returned Jack Daw’s sword to him and said, “Bah. In that case, I return to you your sword and beg your pardon; but do not sheathe your sword, for you will be assaulted. Stay on your guard. I understood that you had apprehended La Foole’s challenge and walked here to defy him, and that you had regarded your life as being of contemptible value in comparison to the value of your honor.”

“No, no, no such thing, I assure you,” Jack Daw said.

He had just said that he did not regard his life as being of contemptible value in comparison to the value of his honor.

Jack Daw continued, “La Foole and I parted now as good friends as we could be.”

“Don’t trust that visor,” Truewit said. “I saw La Foole after dinner with another face.”

A visor is the part of a helmet that protects the eyes. It hides part of the face and so can be compared to a mask.

Truewit continued, “I have known many men in my time vexed with losses, with deaths, and with abuses, but so offended a wight as Sir Amorous I have never seen or read of.”

“Wight” is a medieval word meaning “man.” Truewit was like a playwright directing Jack Daw and La Foole in a parody of a medieval romance about chivalry and honor.

Truewit continued, “For taking away his guests and bringing them here, sir, today, that’s the cause of his argument with you, and he declares it behind your back, with such threats and insults! He said to Dauphine that you were the arrantest ass —”

“Aye, he may say whatever he pleases,” Jack Daw said.

Truewit continued, “And he swears that you are so proclaimed a coward that he knows you will never do him any manly or single right — that is, you will not meet him in man-to-man combat — and therefore he will take his course.”

“I’ll give him any satisfaction, sir — except fighting,” Jack Daw said.

“Aye, sir,” Truewit said, “but who knows what satisfaction he’ll take? Blood he thirsts for, and blood he will have; and whereabouts on you he will have it, who knows but himself?”

“Please, Master Truewit, be a mediator in the dispute,” Jack Daw pleaded.

Truewit opened a door to one of the studies and said, “Well, sir, conceal yourself then in this study until I return. Nay, you must be content to be locked in this study because for my own reputation I would not have you seen to receive a public disgrace, while I have the matter in managing.”

He then exclaimed, “Godso, here he comes!”

Truewit shut Jack Daw in the study, closing and locking the door and talking to him through it, “Keep your breath quiet, so that he doesn’t hear you sigh.”

Speaking loudly, as though conversing with La Foole, who was not present, Truewit said, “In good faith, Sir Amorous, Daw is not this way. Please be merciful; do not murder him; he is a Christian as good as you. You are armed as if you sought a revenge on all his family!”

He said loudly, as though conversing with Dauphine, who was still hidden behind the arras, “Good Dauphine, get him away from this place. I never knew a man’s anger so high but he would speak to his friends, he would hear reason.”

Speaking through the door, Truewit said, “Jack Daw!”

No answer.

Truewit then said, louder, “Jack Daw! Asleep?”

From behind the door, Jack Daw asked, “Has he gone, Master Truewit?”

“Aye,” Truewit said. “Did you hear him?”

“Oh, God!” Jack Daw said. “Yes.”

Truewit said to himself, “What a quick ear fear has!”

Jack Daw's fear had caused him to think he had heard La Foole's voice, although La Foole was not present.

Truewit unlocked the door, and Jack Daw came out and said, "But is he so armed as you say?"

"Armed?" Truewit said. "Did you ever see a fellow set out to take possession of property from another man?"

Even when the property had been awarded by a court of law, such an action often required force or the threat of force.

"Aye, sir," Jack Daw said.

"That may give you some light to conceive of him," Truewit said, "but it is nothing to the principal."

The principal is La Foole. "Principal" is a legal term for someone who has directly committed a crime. According to Truewit, La Foole was ready to commit murder.

Truewit said, "Some treacherous associate in the house has furnished him with weapons strangely. Or if it were out of the house, it was Tom Otter."

"Indeed, Tom Otter is a captain and his wife is La Foole's kinswoman," Jack Daw said.

"He has got somebody's old two-handed longsword, to mow you off at the knees," Truewit said. "And that sword has spawned such a dagger! But then he is so hung with pikes, halberds, petronels, calivers, and muskets that he looks like a justice of peace's hall that is hung with ancient and modern weapons."

A halberd is a weapon that is a combination spear and battle-axe. A petronel is a large pistol. Calivers are light muskets.

Truewit continued, "A man with an income of two thousand pounds a year is not assessed at so many weapons as he has on."

High-ranking citizens were required to possess a certain number of weapons in case the king needed them.

Truewit continued, "There was never a fencer challenged at so many several foils."

In other words, La Foole was carrying several different kinds of swords.

Truewit continued, "You would think he meant to murder all the many inhabitants of Saint Sepulchre's parish. If he could but victual himself for half a year in his breeches, he is sufficiently armed to overrun a country."

Breeches were voluminous pants. Truewit was saying that if only La Foole could stuff his pants with six months' worth of food, he would have sufficient food (he already had sufficient weapons) to conquer a country.

"Good lord, what does he mean, sir?" Jack Daw said. "Please, Master Truewit, be a mediator."

"Well, I'll see if he will be appeased with a leg or an arm," Truewit said. "If not, you must die this once."

"I would be loath to lose my right arm," Jack Daw said. "I use it for writing madrigals."

"Why, if he will be satisfied with a thumb or a little finger, all's one to me," Truewit said. "You must think I'll do my best."

"Good sir, do," Jack Daw said.

Truewit locked Jack Daw up again in the study, and then Clerimont and Dauphine came forth from behind the arras.

"What have you done?" Clerimont asked.

"He will let me do nothing, man," Truewit said. "He does all before me. He offers his left arm."

Truewit did not need to frighten Jack Daw. Jack Daw was frightening himself.

“Left arm?” Clerimont said. “His left wing, because he’s a Jack Daw.”

A jackdaw is a foolish, easily caught bird.

“Take it, by all means,” Dauphine said.

He meant take Jack Daw’s left arm.

We can hope that he was joking.

“What!” Truewit said. “Maim a man forever for a jest? What kind of conscience do you have?”

“It is no loss to him,” Dauphine said. “He has no use for his arms but to eat spoon meat — baby food or food for invalids. Besides, as good maim his body as his reputation.”

Truewit replied, “He is a scholar and a wit, and yet he does not think so — he does not think ‘as good maim his body as his reputation.’ But he loses no reputation with us, for we all have decided that he is an ass before now.”

He then said to Clerimont and Dauphine, “Take your places behind the arras again.”

“Please,” Clerimont said, “let me be in at the fooling of the other — La Foole — a little.”

“Look, you’ll spoil all,” Truewit said. “These are always your tricks.”

“No, I won’t spoil things,” Clerimont said, “but instead I could hit on some things that you will miss, and you will say that they are good ones.”

“I warrant you that what I say is true,” Truewit said. “Please, stop pleading; I’ll leave it off if you don’t. I’ll stop the whole jest.”

“Come away with me, Clerimont,” Dauphine said.

Clerimont and Dauphine concealed themselves behind the arras again.

La Foole entered the room.

“Sir Amorous!” Truewit said.

“Master Truewit!” La Foole said.

“Where are you going?” Truewit asked.

“Down into the court to make water,” La Foole answered.

He needed to urinate.

“By no means, sir,” Truewit said. “You shall rather put your breeches to the test and see how much water they hold.”

Breeches were voluminous and padded. The padding could soak up and hold water — or urine.

“Why, sir?” La Foole asked.

Truewit opened the door to the second study and said, “Enter here, if you love your life.”

“Why?” La Foole asked. “Why?”

“Do question why until your throat is cut,” Truewit said. “Dally until the enraged soul finds you.”

“Who’s the enraged soul?” La Foole asked.

“It is Jack Daw,” Truewit answered. “Will you go into the study and hide?”

“Aye, aye, I’ll go in,” La Foole said. “What’s the matter?”

Truewit said, “Nay, if he had been cool enough to tell us that, there had been some hope to reconcile you, but he seems so implacably enraged.”

“By God’s light, let him rage,” La Foole said. “I’ll hide myself.”

“Do, good sir,” Truewit said. “But what have you done to him within that should provoke him thus? You have made some jest at his expense before the ladies —”

“Not I, never in my life have I made a jest at the expense of any man,” La Foole said. “The bride was praising Sir Dauphine, and he went away in snuff — in a huff, indignantly — and I followed him. Maybe he is intoxicated and taking offence at me because earlier I would not drink all the full horse-cup.”

“By my faith, that may be the truth,” Truewit said. “You remember well. But he walks the round up and down, through every room of the house.”

“Walk the round” is a military metaphor meaning to go round a camp and ensure that all the sentries are vigilant against enemies.

Truewit continued, “Jack Daw does this with a towel in his hand, crying, ‘Where’s La Foole? Who saw La Foole?’ And when Dauphine and I asked the reason he was doing this, we could force no answer from him but ‘Oh, revenge, how sweet you are! I will strangle him in this towel’ — which leads us to conjecture that the main cause of his fury is because you brought your food here today, with a towel about you, to his discredit.”

“Likely enough,” La Foole said. “Why, if he is angry because of that, I’ll stay here until his anger has blown over.”

Truewit replied, “That is a good, becoming resolution, sir, if you can adopt it immediately.”

“Yes, I can adopt it,” La Foole said. “Or, I’ll go away into the country immediately.”

“How will you get out of the house, sir?” Truewit said. “He knows you are in the house, and he’ll watch out for you this seven night — this week — but he’ll have you. He’ll outwait a sergeant for you.”

Sergeants had the power to arrest people, and they had the reputation of lying in wait a long time in order to arrest people.

“Why, then, I’ll stay here,” La Foole said.

“You must think how to feed yourself for the time, then,” Truewit said.

“Why, sweet Master Truewit, will you entreat my cousin Otter to send me a cold venison pasty, a bottle or two of wine, and a chamber pot?” La Foole asked.

His cousin Otter was Mrs. Otter. He was using the masculine form of address to refer to her.

A pasty is a meat-pie.

“A stool of Sir A-jax’s invention would be better than a chamber pot, sir,” Truewit said.

In 1596, Sir John Harington invented a flushable toilet. He wrote about it in his treatise *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*. The title contained a pun: A jakes is a privy.

“Aye, that will be better, indeed, and a pallet — a straw mattress — to lie on,” La Foole said.

“Oh, I would not advise you to sleep by any means,” Truewit said.

“Wouldn’t you, sir?” La Foole asked. “Why, then, I will not.”

Truewit said, “Yet there’s another fear —”

“Is there, sir?” La Foole asked. “What is it?”

Truewit tested the door’s strength and then said, “No, he cannot break this door with his foot, surely.”

“I’ll set my back against it, sir,” La Foole said. “I have a good back.”

Truewit said, “But then if he should batter —”

“Batter!” La Foole said. “If he dares to batter the door, I’ll have an action of battery against him.”

Battery is a crime committed against a human, not a door.

“Anticipate the worst,” Truewit said. “He has sent for gunpowder already, and what he will do with it, no man knows — perhaps he will blow up the corner of the house where he suspects you are.”

He pretended to hear Jack Daw coming, and he said, “Here he comes! In quickly!”

La Foole ran into the study.

Pretending that Jack Daw was present, Truewit said loudly enough for La Foole to hear, “I protest, Sir John Daw, he is not here. What will you do? Before God, you shall hang no petard — no bomb — here. I’ll die rather. Will you not take my word? I never knew one but would be satisfied.”

He then said through the door to La Foole, “Sir Amorous, there’s no resisting. He has made a petard out of an old brass pot, to force open your door. Think of some satisfaction or terms to offer him.”

From the other side of the door, La Foole said, "Sir, I'll give him any satisfaction. I dare give any terms."

"You'll leave it to me, then?" Truewit said.

"Aye, sir," La Foole said. "I'll agree to any conditions."

Truewit then quietly told Clerimont and Dauphine to come out from behind the arras.

After they had done so, Truewit said, "Now, what do you think, sirs? Wouldn't it be a difficult thing to determine which of these two is the most scared?"

"Yes," Clerimont said, "but this one — La Foole — fears the bravest. The other is a whiniling — whining and whimpering — dastard, Jack Daw! But La Foole is a brave, heroic coward! And he is afraid of a threatening look and a manly accent. I like him rarely."

Truewit said, "Hasn't it been a pity that the real characters of these two have been concealed?"

"Shall I make a suggestion?" Clerimont asked.

"Be brief," Truewit said, "for I must strike while it is hot."

"Shall I go fetch the ladies to witness the catastrophe?" Clerimont asked.

A catastrophe is the denouement — the climax — of a play.

"Umm," Truewit said, thinking.

He made a decision: "Aye, by my truth."

"By no mortal means," Dauphine said. "Let them continue in the state of ignorance and continue to err. Let the ladies continue to think that Jack Daw and La Foole are wits and fine fellows just as they have been thinking. It would be a sin to disabuse them."

In this matter, Dauphine was perhaps the kindest of the three friends.

“Well, I will have them fetched, now I think about it, for a private purpose of mine,” Truewit replied.

He then said, “Do, Clerimont, fetch them and tell them all that’s passed so far, and bring them into the balcony of this room.”

“This is your extreme vanity, now,” Dauphine said. “You think you would be undone and ruined if every jest you make were not made widely known.”

Truewit replied, “You soon shall see how unjust you are.”

He then said, “Clerimont, tell the ladies that it was Dauphine’s plot.”

Clerimont exited to get the ladies.

Truewit said to Dauphine, “Don’t trust me if the whole drift — the jest — is not for thy good.”

He added, “There’s a carpet — a thick woolen tablecloth — in the next room. Put it on, with this scarf over your face and a cushion on your head, and be ready when I call Amorous. Go!”

In this society, carpets were not placed on floors.

Dauphine exited.

Truewit unlocked a study door and called, “John Daw!”

“What good news do you have, sir?” Jack Daw asked.

“Indeed, I have followed and argued with La Foole hard for you,” Truewit said. “I told him you were a knight and a scholar, and that you knew fortitude consists *magis patiendo quamfaciendo, magis ferendo quam feriendo.*”

The Latin means, "More in suffering than in doing, more in submitting than in striking [a blow]."

"It does so indeed, sir," Jack Daw said.

"And I told him that you would suffer," Truewit said. "So at first he demanded, by my truth, in my opinion, too much."

"What was it, sir?" Jack Daw said.

"Your upper lip and six front teeth," Truewit said.

"That was unreasonable," Jack Daw said.

"I told him plainly that you could not spare them all," Truewit said. "So, after long argument — *pro et con*, as you know — I brought him down to your two butter-teeth — that is, your two most prominent front teeth — and them he would have."

"Oh, did you so?" Jack Daw said. "Why, he shall have them."

Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Epicene, Mistress Trusty, and Clerimont entered the balcony and silently observed Truewit and Jack Daw.

"But he shall not have your front teeth, sir, by your leave," Truewit said. "The conclusion is this, sir — because you shall be very good friends hereafter, and this will never be remembered or upbraided — raised to reproach you. In addition, so he may not boast he has done any such thing to you in his own person, he is to come here in disguise, give you five kicks in private, sir, take your sword from you, and lock you up in that study, for as long as he pleases. That will be but a little while; we'll get the sword released soon."

"Five kicks?" Jack Daw said. "He shall have six, sir, to be friends."

“Believe me,” Truewit said, “you shall not overreach yourself and make an error if you send him that word by me.”

“Deliver it, sir,” Jack Daw said. “He shall have the sixth kick with all my heart in order for us to be friends.”

“Friends?” Truewit said. “Nay, if he should not be friends with you, and heartily too, upon these terms, he shall have me as his enemy as long as I live. Come, sir, bear it bravely.”

“Oh, God, sir,” Jack Daw said, “six kicks is nothing.”

Truewit replied, “True. What’s six kicks to a man who reads Seneca?”

“I have had a hundred kicks, sir,” Jack Daw said.

Truewit called to the arras behind which Dauphine was concealed, “Sir Amorous!”

He then said to Jack Daw, “No speaking to one another, or revisiting old arguments.”

Dauphine, well disguised by the carpet and shawl he was wearing, came forth and kicked Jack Daw.

Counting the kicks, Jack Daw said, “One, two, three, four, five.”

He then said, “I insist, Sir Amorous, that you shall have six.”

Truewit said, “Nay, I told you that you should not talk.”

He then said to Dauphine, whom Jack Daw thought was La Foole, “Come, give him six, if he must have them.”

Dauphine kicked Jack Daw a sixth time.

Truewit then said to Jack Daw, “Your sword.”

Jack Daw surrendered his sword to Truewit, who said, "Now, return to your safe custody. You shall soon meet in front of the ladies, and be the dearest friends one to another."

Jack Daw went into the study where he had been hidden.

Truewit said to Dauphine, "Give me the scarf now; you shall be at the other bare-faced. Stand to one side."

Dauphine gave Truewit the scarf and stood behind the arras.

Truewit called, "Sir Amorous!"

He unlocked the door to the study where Sir Amorous La Foole was hiding.

La Foole came out of the study.

Seeing Jack Daw's sword that Truewit was holding, La Foole asked, "What's here? A sword?"

"I cannot help it, unless I should take the quarrel upon myself," Truewit said. "Here, Jack Daw has sent you his sword —"

"I'll not take it," La Foole interrupted.

Truewit continued, "And he orders you to fasten it against a wall, and break your head in some few different places against the hilt."

"I will not," La Foole said. "Tell him that plainly. I cannot endure to shed my own blood."

"Will you not do what Jack Daw orders you to do?" Truewit asked.

"No," La Foole said. "I'll beat my head against a fair flat wall, if that will satisfy him; if not, he shall beat my head himself, for me: Amorous."

“Why, this is a strange shying away, when a man stands surety for you!” Truewit said. “I, however, offered him another condition. Will you stand to that?”

“Aye,” La Foole said. “What is it?”

“That you will be beaten in private,” Truewit said.

“Yes. I am content to do that, to be blunt, and if he uses the blunt part of the sword,” La Foole said.

La Foole was OK with being hit with the pommel of a sword, or perhaps with the flat of a sword.

Truewit said, “Then you must submit yourself to be hoodwinked in this scarf.”

He was punning. “Hoodwinked” means 1) blindfolded, and 2) fooled.

He continued, “And you must be led to him, where he will take your sword from you and make you bear a blow over the mouth, *gules*, and he will make you bear tweaks by the nose, *sans nombre*.”

Gules is a heraldic term meaning “blood-red” (the color of a bloody mouth) and *sans nombre* is a term meaning “without number.”

“I am content to do that,” La Foole said. “But why must I be blinded?”

“That’s for your own good, sir,” Truewit said, “because if he should grow insolent and arrogant upon this and publish it hereafter to your disgrace (which I hope he will not do) you will be able to swear safely and declare that he never beat you, to your knowledge.”

“Oh, I understand,” La Foole said.

Truewit said, "I do not doubt but you'll be perfectly good friends after this, and not dare to utter an ill thought one against another in the future."

"Not I, as God help me, against him," La Foole said.

"Nor he against you, sir," Truewit said. "If he should —"

Truewit blindfolded La Foole's eyes with the scarf and led him forward, saying, "Come, sir."

Pretending to address Jack Daw, Truewit then called, "All hid, Sir John!"

The call "All hid" is used in the children's game "Hide and Seek."

Dauphine came out from behind the arras and took La Foole's sword away from him and then tweaked his nose.

La Foole moaned, "Oh, Sir John, Sir John. Oh, o—o—o—o—o—oh —"

Truewit said, "Good Sir John, stop tweaking his nose; you'll blow his nose off."

Dauphine exited with the two swords.

Truewit said to La Foole, "It is Sir John's pleasure that you should retire into the study. Why, now you are friends. All bitterness between you, I hope, is buried. You shall come out of the study by and by, and you two shall act like Damon and Pythias and embrace with all the rankness of friendship that can be."

Damon and Pythias were two close friends. Dionysius I of Syracuse, a tyrant, sentenced Damon to death. Damon requested that he be allowed to return to his home to say goodbye to his family and settle his affairs; Pythias volunteered to stay in Syracuse as a hostage until Damon returned. He would die in Damon's place if Damon did not

return. Dionysius I of Syracuse was surprised when Damon did, in fact, return to face death. Impressed by the true friendship of Damon and Pythias, he allowed both of them to live.

In this culture, “rankness” can mean 1) abundance, or 2) foulness.

La Foole went into the study where he had been hidden.

The ladies and Clerimont, all of whom had witnessed everything, retired from the balcony.

Truewit said, “I trust we shall have them tamer in their language hereafter.”

Dauphine entered the room, closely followed by the ladies and Clerimont, and Truewit said, “Dauphine, I worship you. — God’s will, the ladies have surprised us.”

Truewit knew the ladies had witnessed the scene, but he pretended to be surprised by the ladies’ presence in order to benefit Dauphine.

— 4.6 —

Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Epicene, and Mistress Trusty, along with Clerimont, had witnessed everything. All knew that Jack Daw and La Foole, despite being knights, were cowards. Rather than earning their knighthoods on the battlefield, they had bought them.

The ladies talked among themselves, apart from the gentlemen.

Madam Haughty said, “Madam Centaur, how our judgments were imposed on by these adulterate — counterfeit — knights!”

“Nay, madam,” Madam Centaur said, “Mavis was more deceived than we; it was her commendation that made them known in the College.”

“I commended only their wits, madam, and their splendid clothing,” Mistress Mavis said. “I never looked toward their valor, manliness, and courage.”

“Sir Dauphine is valiant and a wit, too, it seems,” Madam Haughty said.

“And Dauphine is a fine dresser, too,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Was this his project?” Madam Haughty asked.

The project was revealing the cowardly nature of Jack Daw and La Foole.

“So Master Clerimont intimates, Madam,” Mrs. Otter said.

Mrs. Haughty said to Mrs. Epicene Morose, “Good Morose, when you come to the College, will you bring Dauphine with you? He seems a very perfect gentleman.”

“He is indeed so, Madam, believe it,” Epicene replied.

“But when will you come, Morose?” Madam Centaur asked Epicene.

“Three or four days from now, Madam, when I have gotten myself a coach and horses,” Epicene said.

“No, tomorrow, good Morose,” Mrs. Haughty said. “Centaur shall send you her coach.”

“Yes, indeed, do, and bring Sir Dauphine with you,” Mistress Mavis said.

“She has promised to do that, Mavis,” Madam Haughty said.

“He is a very worthy gentleman in his exterior appearance, madam,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Aye, he shows he is judicial in his clothes,” Madam Haughty said.

She meant “judicious,” not “judicial,” which means “like a judge.” “Judicious” means “showing good judgment.”

Madam Centaur said, “And yet he is not so exaggeratedly neat as some, madam, who have their faces set in a brake!”

A brake can be a thicket. She was referring to hair and beards. Some men take great care of their facial hair.

(Another kind of brake is a device to keep a horse’s hoof still as it is being shod. In that case, the faces would have a set expression. A woman can wear so much makeup that her face will crack if she smiles. Also, a woman can wear such an elaborate headdress that she must be careful when she moves her head.)

The ladies were beginning to talk about very elegant — and probably effeminate — men. (Dauphine was not one of them.)

“Aye, and have every hair in place!” Madam Haughty said.

Mistress Mavis said, “And who wear purer linen than ourselves, and practice more neatness than the French hermaphrodite!”

King Henri III of France was a famous transvestite. The English liked French fashions, but they did not like what they considered French effeminacy. Also, at the time a hermaphrodite could be seen in London.

“Aye, ladies,” Epicene said, “what lies they tell one of us, they have told a thousand, and they are the only thieves of our chaste reputation, who think to take — seduce — us with that perfume, or with that lace, and laugh at us unconscionably when they have done.”

Epicene was well aware that men gossip.

Her words “have told a thousand” were ambiguous and could mean 1) have told a thousand lies, 2) have told a thousand women, and 3) have told a thousand lies to a thousand women.

“But Sir Dauphine’s carelessness — his nonchalance — becomes him,” Madam Haughty said.

“I could love a man for such a nose!” Madam Centaur said.

One meaning of the noun “nose” is a projecting part. A lady such as Madam Centaur may be thinking of Dauphine’s penis.

“Or such a leg!” Mistress Mavis said.

A leg is a lower limb. A lady such as Mistress Mavis could be thinking of Dauphine’s penis.

“He has an exceeding good eye, madam,” Madam Centaur said.

“And a very good love-lock of hair,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Good Morose, bring him to my chamber first,” Madam Centaur said to Epicene.

“Will it please Your Honors to meet at my house, Madam?” Mrs. Otter asked.

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “See how they eye thee, man! They are taken with you, I promise you.”

Mrs. Haughty approached Truewit and Dauphine and said, “You have unbraced — exposed and disarmed — our brace — pair — of knights here, Master Truewit.”

“Not I, Madam,” Truewit replied, “it was the plot of Sir Dauphine, who, if he has disfurnished Your Ladyship of any

guard or service by it, is able to make the place good again in himself.”

The service could be love-service.

Mrs. Haughty said, “There’s no doubt of that, sir.”

She kissed Dauphine.

Madam Centaur said to Mistress Mavis, “Godso, Mavis, Haughty is kissing.”

Mistress Mavis replied, “Let us go, too, and take part.”

They approached the gentlemen.

Madam Haughty said, “But I am glad of the fortune — besides the exposure of two such empty caskets — to gain the knowledge of so rich a mine of virtue as Sir Dauphine.”

“We would all be glad to style him of our friendship — make him one of our friends — and see him at the College,” Madam Centaur said.

“He cannot mix with a sweeter society, I’ll prophesy, and I hope he himself will think so,” Mistress Mavis said.

“I should be rude to imagine otherwise, lady,” Dauphine said.

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “Didn’t I tell you, Dauphine? Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion, without reason or cause. They don’t know why they do anything but as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and — in emulation one of another — do all these things alike. Only they have a natural inclination that sways them generally to the worst when they are left to themselves. But pursue it, now you have them.”

Mrs. Haughty asked Epicene, “Shall we go in again, Morose?”

“Yes, madam,” Epicene replied.

“We’ll entreat Sir Dauphine and ask for his company,” Madam Centaur said.

Truewit said, “Wait, good madam, and witness the interview of the two friends: Pylades and Orestes. I’ll fetch them out to you straightaway.”

Pylades and Orestes were two good friends. When Agamemnon returned home to Greece after fighting the Trojan War for 10 years, his wife, Clytemnestra, killed him. She had taken a lover during the years that he was away from home. Her son, Orestes, killed her because she killed his father, and Orestes was sentenced to die. His friend Pylades was willing to die in Orestes’ place, although Orestes did not want him to, so both told the executioners, “I am Orestes!”

“Will you, Master Truewit?” Lady Haughty asked.

Dauphine said, “Aye, but, noble ladies, do not confess in your countenance or outward bearing to them any knowledge of their follies, so that we may see how they will bear up again, with what assurance, confidence, and erection.”

“Erection” means uprightness, and it is a sexual pun.

“We won’t, Sir Dauphine,” Madam Haughty said.

“Upon our honors, Sir Dauphine,” Madam Centaur and Mistress Mavis said.

Pretending to speak confidentially, Truewit said to La Foole, who was still in a study, “Sir Amorous! Sir Amorous! The ladies are here.”

From behind the door, La Foole said, “Are they?”

“Yes, but do slip out by and by when their backs are turned and meet Sir John Daw here, as if by chance, when I call you.”

Truewit went to the door of the other study and said, “Jack Daw!”

“What do you have to say, sir?” Jack Daw said from behind the door.

Truewit replied, “Whip out behind me suddenly, and have no anger in your looks toward your adversary.”

He said loudly, “Now, now!”

La Foole and Jack Daw slipped out from behind their separate doors.

“Noble Sir John Daw!” La Foole said. “Where have you been?”

“Seeking you, Sir Amorous,” Jack Daw said.

“Me?” La Foole bowed and said, “I honor you.”

Jack Daw returned the bow and said, “I anticipate you, sir.”

Clerimont said to Dauphine and Truewit, “They have forgotten their rapiers!”

“Oh, they meet in peace, man,” Truewit said.

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “Where’s your sword, Sir John?”

Clerimont asked La Foole, “And where is yours, Sir Amorous?”

“Mine?” Jack Daw said. “My serving-boy took it away to mend the handle just now.”

“And my gold handle was broken, too, and my boy took it away,” La Foole said.

Dauphine said, "Indeed, sir?"

He said to Truewit and Clerimont, "How their excuses meet and fit together!"

Clerimont said to Dauphine and Truewit, "What a consent there is in the handles!"

In this culture, "handle" can mean excuse.

Truewit said to Clerimont and Dauphine, "Nay, there is so in the points, too, I promise you."

"Points" means 1) sword-points, and 2) points made in their excuses.

Seeing Morose, Epicene's husband, Mrs. Otter said, "Oh, me! Madam, he comes again, the madman. Run!"

The ladies, Jack Daw, and La Foole hastily exited.

— 4.7 —

Morose entered the room. He was carrying two swords: those of Jack Daw and La Foole.

He asked, "What are these naked — unsheathed — weapons doing here, gentlemen?"

Truewit answered, "Oh, sir, there was likely to have been murder committed here since you went. A couple of knights quarreled about the bride's favors; we were obliged to take away their weapons, or else your house would have been begged by this time —"

A criminal's or accomplice's property would be forfeited to the Crown, and it would be begged — petitioned for — in a case of legal confiscation.

"For what?" Morose asked.

“For manslaughter, sir, as being an accessory,” Clerimont said.

“And for her favors?” Morose said.

“Aye, sir, for her heretofore — past favors — not present,” Truewit said.

He then said, “Clerimont, carry their swords to them now. They have done all the hurt they will do.”

Clerimont exited with the two swords.

“Have you spoken with a lawyer, sir?” Dauphine asked Morose.

“Oh, no!” Morose answered. “There is such a noise in the law court that they have frightened me home with more violence than I went. There was such speaking and counter-speaking, with their several voices of citations [summonings to court], appellations [appeals to a higher court], allegations [making charges in court], certificates [giving of testimony], attachments [writs to seize property], interrogatories [questions asked of witnesses or defendants], references [submissions of disputes to the Court of Chancery], convictions, and afflictions indeed among the barristers and attorneys, that the noise here is silence compared to it! Here is a kind of calm midnight.”

Seeing an opportunity, Truewit said, “Why, sir, if you would have the court judgment be resolved, indeed, I can bring you hither a very sufficient, qualified, and capable lawyer and a learned divine who shall inquire into every least uncertainty and scruple of the matter for you.”

“Can you, Master Truewit?” Morose asked.

“Yes, and they are very sober grave persons, who will dispatch the business in a chamber with a whisper or two,” Truewit answered.

“Good sir, shall I hope this benefit from you and trust myself into your hands?” Morose asked.

“Alas, sir!” Truewit said. “Since you went, your nephew and I have been ashamed and often furious when we think how you are abused. Go in, good sir, and lock yourself up until we call you. We’ll tell you more soon, sir.”

“Do your pleasure with me, gentlemen,” Morose said. “I believe in you, and that deserves no delusion. My trust in you ought not to be shown to be deluded. You ought not to trick me.”

This was a reasonable request.

Truewit said, “You shall find none, sir —”

Morose exited.

Truewit continued, “— except heaps and heaps of plenty of vexation.”

“What will you do now, wit?” Dauphine asked Truewit.

“Bring here to me Otter and the barber if you can, by any means, immediately,” Truewit said.

“Why?” Dauphine asked. “For what purpose?”

Truewit answered, “Oh, I’ll make the deepest divine and gravest lawyer out of the two of them, for him —”

“You cannot do that, man,” Dauphine said. “These are waking dreams.”

“Don’t doubt that I can do it,” Truewit said. “Just clap a civil gown with a fur border on one, and clap a canonical cloak with sleeves on the other, and give them a few terms in their mouths. If they don’t come forth as able a doctor and complete a parson for this purpose as may be wished, then don’t trust my judgment. And I hope, without wronging the

dignity of either profession, since they are but impersonations, and for mirth's sake, to torment him. The barber smatters Latin, I remember."

"Yes, and Otter, too," Dauphine said.

"Well, then, if I don't make them — Cutbeard the barber and Mr. Otter — wrangle out and dispute contentiously this case to Morose's no-comfort, let me be thought a Jack Daw or La Foole or anything worse. Go to your ladies, but first send for Jack Daw and La Foole."

"I will," Dauphine said.

They exited.

CHAPTER 5

— 5.1 —

La Foole, Clerimont, and Jack Daw entered the room.

“Where did you find our swords, Master Clerimont?” La Foole asked.

“Why, Dauphine took them from the madman,” Clerimont answered.

“And he took them from our serving-boys, I assure you,” La Foole said.

“Very likely, sir,” Clerimont said.

“Thank you, good Master Clerimont,” La Foole said. “Sir John Daw and I are both beholden to you.”

“I wish I knew how to make you so, gentlemen,” Clerimont said.

“Sir Amorous and I are your servants, sir,” Jack Daw said. “We are in your debt.”

Mistress Mavis entered the room and said, “Gentlemen, have any of you a pen and ink? I would like to write out a riddle in Italian for Sir Dauphine to interpret and explain.”

“Not I, truly, lady,” Clerimont said. “I am no professional scribe.”

“I can furnish you, I think, lady,” Jack Daw said.

Jack Daw and Mistress Mavis walked to the side, and Daw produced a pen and ink.

Clerimont said, “He has it in the haft of a knife, I believe.”

A haft is a handle. The handles of swords, knives, and walking sticks sometimes had a hollow space for carrying such items.

“No, he has his box of instruments,” La Foole said.

“Like a surgeon!” Clerimont said.

La Foole said, “For the mathematics: He has his square, his compasses, his brass pens, and his black lead in order to draw maps of every place and person where he comes.”

“What!” Clerimont said. “Maps of persons?”

“Yes, sir,” La Foole said. “He has made maps of Nomentack, the Native American from Virginia, when he was here, and of the Prince of Moldavia, and of his mistress, Mistress Epicene.”

By “his mistress,” La Foole meant “Jack Daw’s mistress (loved one),” but his ambiguous use of “his” made it sound as if Epicene were the mistress of the Prince of Moldavia.

“What!” Clerimont said. “He has not found out her latitude, I hope.”

He was punning. In this society, latitude meant 1) location, and 2) laxity (e.g., of conduct).

“You are a pleasant and witty gentleman, sir,” La Foole said.

Mistress Mavis exited, and Jack Daw rejoined Clerimont and La Foole.

“Indeed,” Clerimont said, “now that we are in private, let’s wanton it and be naughty a little and talk waggishly.

“Sir John, I was telling Sir Amorous here that you two govern the ladies; wherever you go, you carry the feminine gender before you.”

His last words were ambiguous and could mean 1) you seduce the ladies, or 2) you act effeminately.

“They shall rather carry us before them if they will, sir,” Jack Daw said.

In other words, the ladies will bear the weight of the men in the missionary position.

“Nay, I believe that they do, with all,” Clerimont said, “but that you are the prime men in their affections, and direct all their actions —”

“Not I,” Jack Daw said. “Sir Amorous is.”

“I declare that Sir John is,” La Foole said.

“As I hope to rise in the state,” Jack Daw said, “Sir Amorous, you have the person.”

“Sir John, you have the person, and the discourse, too,” La Foole said.

By “person,” they meant attractiveness. “Discourse” meant art of conversation.

“Not I, sir,” Jack Daw said. “I have no discourse — and then you have activity, beside.”

“Activity” means 1) gymnastic skill, or 2) sexual activity.

La Foole replied, “I protest, Sir John, you come as high from Tripoli as I do every whit, and you lift as many joint-stools and leap over them, if you would practice it —”

He was talking about vaulting, tumbling, lifting, and jumping. Chances are, both Jack Daw and La Foole did a fair amount of unintentional tripping.

Clerimont said, “Well, agree on it together, knights, for between you, you divide the kingdom or commonwealth of ladies’ affections.”

Clerimont’s meaning was that the ladies of Jack Daw and La Foole were a commonwealth — as a common wealth, they were everyone’s ladies, aka prostitutes. Of course, Jack Daw and La Foole thought that Clerimont meant that they shared all the ladies’ affections between them.

Clerimont continued, “I see it and can perceive a little how they observe you and fear you, indeed. You could tell strange stories, my masters, if you would, I know.”

“In faith, we have seen somewhat, sir,” Jack Daw said. “We have seen some things.”

La Foole said, “That we have: velvet petticoats and embroidered smocks and such.”

Such clothing was worn by high-class ladies — and by prostitutes.

Jack Daw said, “Aye, and —”

He hesitated.

Clerimont said, “Nay, out with it, Sir John. Do not envy your friend the pleasure of hearing, when you have had the delight of tasting.”

Jack Daw, who may not have had any stories to tell in the locker room, said, “Why — ah — you speak, Sir Amorous.”

La Foole, in the same position as Jack Daw, said, “No, you speak, Sir John Daw.”

“Truly, you shall do the speaking,” Jack Daw said.

“Truly, you shall do the speaking,” La Foole said.

Jack Daw said, "Why, we have been —"

La Foole interrupted, "— in the Great Bed at Ware together in our time. Speak, Sir John."

The Great Bed of Ware could sleep twelve people.

Perhaps the two knights did have stories to tell in a locker room frequently by gay men.

"Nay, you speak, Sir Amorous," Jack Daw said.

"And these ladies here were with you, knights?" Clerimont asked.

"No, excuse us, sir," La Foole said.

"We must not wound reputation," Jack Daw said.

"No matter," La Foole said. "They were these ladies or other ladies. Our bath cost us fifteen pounds when we came home."

Some kinds of bath treated venereal disease.

"Listen to me, Sir John," Clerimont said, "you shall tell me but one thing truly, as you love me."

"If I can, I will, sir," Jack Daw said.

"You lay in the same house with the bride Epicene here?" Clerimont said.

"Lay" means reside, but the word also has a sexual meaning.

"Yes, and conversed with her hourly, sir," Jack Daw said.

Conversation is a kind of intercourse. In this society, the word "conversation" could mean sexual intercourse or intimacy.

"And what disposition has she?" Clerimont asked. "Is she coming and open? Is she free?"

“Coming” meant compliant and eager.

“Oh, exceedingly open, sir,” Jack Daw said. “I was her servant, and Sir Amorous was to be.”

“Come, you have both had favors from her?” Clerimont said. “I know and have heard so much.”

“Oh, no, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“You shall excuse us, sir,” La Foole said. “We must not wound reputation.”

Clerimont said, “Tut, she is married now, and you cannot hurt her with any report, and therefore speak plainly. How many times, truly? Which of you led first?”

“Sir John had her maidenhead, indeed,” La Foole said.

“Oh, it pleases him to say so, sir, but Sir Amorous knows what’s what as well,” Jack Daw said.

“Do you, indeed, Amorous?” Clerimont asked.

“In a manner, sir,” La Foole said.

“Why, I commend you, lad,” Clerimont said. “Little knows Don Bridegroom of this. Nor shall he, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Don” is the Spanish title meaning “Master.”

“Hang him, mad ox,” Jack Daw said.

“Ox” means “fool.” An ox also has horns, the emblem of a cuckold.

“Speak softly,” Clerimont said. “Here comes his nephew with the Lady Haughty. He’ll take the ladies away from you, sirs, if you don’t look out for him in time.”

“Why, if he does, we’ll fetch the ladies home again, I promise you,” La Foole said.

They exited.

— 5.2 —

Lady Haughty and Dauphine entered the room.

Lady Haughty said, “I assure you, Sir Dauphine, it is the price and worth and estimation of your manly virtue only that has caused me to embark on this adventure, and I had to find a way to tell you so; nor can I repent of the act, since it is always evidence of some virtue in ourselves that we love and desire it so in others.”

“Your Ladyship sets too high a value on my weakness,” Dauphine said.

Lady Haughty replied, “Sir, I can distinguish gems from pebbles —”

Dauphine thought, *Are you so skillful in stones?*

He was punning to himself. The word “stones” can mean 1) jewels, or 2) testicles.

Lady Haughty continued, “— and howsoever I may suffer in such a judgment as yours, by admitting equality of rank or society with Centaur or Mavis —”

Dauphine interrupted, “You do not, Madam. I perceive that they are your mere foils.”

He was punning. The word “foil” can mean 1) setting to show off a jewel, or 2) contrast. In this case, the friends were supposed to contrast with Madam Haughty, to her advantage.

“Then you are a friend to truth, sir,” Lady Haughty said. “It makes me love you the more. It is not the outward but the

inward man whom I seek. They are not capable of apprehending an eminent, distinguished perfection; instead, they love flatly and dully.”

Madam Centaur called from outside the room, “Where are you, my Lady Haughty?”

Madam Haughty called back, “I come immediately, Centaur.”

She then said to Dauphine, “My chamber, sir, my page shall show you; and Trusty, my woman, shall be ever awake for you.”

Madam Haughty meant that Mistress Trusty would always be awake to let Dauphine into Madam Haughty’s chamber, but readers can be forgiven if they thought that Mistress Trusty would be always sexually available for Dauphine.

Lady Haughty continued, “You need not fear to communicate anything with her, for she is a Fidelia and lives up to her name.”

The name “Fidelia” is based on the Latin word for “faithful and trustworthy.”

Lady Haughty continued, “I ask you to wear this jewel for my sake, Sir Dauphine.”

She gave him a jewel.

Madam Centaur entered the room.

Lady Haughty asked, “Where’s Mavis, Centaur?”

“She is inside, madam, writing,” Madam Centaur answered. “I’ll follow you soon. I’ll just speak a word with Sir Dauphine.”

Lady Haughty exited.

Dauphine asked, “With me, madam?”

Madam Centaur replied, “Good Sir Dauphine, do not trust Haughty, nor put any faith in her, whatever you do besides. Sir Dauphine, I give you this warning: She is a perfect courtier and loves nobody but those whom she can manipulate and use, and for her uses she loves all.

“Besides, her physicians give her out to be none of the clearest.”

The word “clearest” meant 1) most innocent, and 2) most clear of disease. Urine is supposed to be clear; cloudy urine may mean the presence of disease.

Madam Centaur continued, “Whether she pays them or no, heaven knows.”

Madam Haughty’s physicians talked about her, perhaps because she did not pay them.

Madam Centaur continued, “And she’s above fifty, too, and plasters herself with makeup the way plasterers plaster a wall! See her before noon — before she puts on makeup.”

Carrying a piece of paper, Mistress Mavis entered the room.

Madam Centaur said quietly, “Here comes Mavis, who has a worse face than Madam Haughty! You would not like her face, even by candlelight.”

Candlelight is said to flatter all ladies.

Madam Centaur continued, “If you’ll come to my chamber one of these mornings early, or late in an evening, I’ll tell you more.”

She then asked, “Where’s Haughty, Mavis?”

“Inside, Centaur,” Mistress Mavis answered.

“What have you there?” Madam Centaur asked, referring to the piece of paper.

“An Italian riddle for Sir Dauphine,” Mistress Mavis said.

She thought, *You shall not see it, indeed, Centaur.*

She then said out loud, “Good Sir Dauphine, solve it for me. I’ll call for it soon.”

Mistress Mavis and Madam Centaur exited together as Clerimont entered the room.

“How are you now, Dauphine?” Clerimont asked. “How do you ’quit yourself of these females?”

Clerimont meant, How do you acquit yourself with these females? Dauphine, however, took the meaning as, How do you rid yourself of these females?

“By God’s light, they haunt me like fairies and give me jewels here,” Dauphine replied. “I cannot be rid of them.”

“Oh, you must not tell, though,” Clerimont said.

Telling other people about a fairy’s gift brought bad luck.

“By the Mass, I forgot that,” Dauphine said. “I was never so assaulted. One loves me for virtue, and she bribes me with this jewel.”

He showed Clerimont the jewel that Madam Haughty had given to him.

He continued, “Another loves me and gives me warnings, and by that means she would possess me. A third brings me a riddle here; and all are jealous and each rails at the others.”

“A riddle?” Clerimont said. “Please let see it.”

He read the Mistress Mavis’ paper out loud:

Sir Dauphine,

I chose this way of intimation for privacy. The ladies here, I know, have both hope and purpose to make a Collegiate and servant of you. If I might be so honored as to appear at any end of so noble a work, I would start a rumor about my undergoing medical treatment tomorrow and continue it four or five days or longer, for your visitation.

Mavis.

One end of so noble a work was the end of Dauphine's penis.

Visitation was a good deed: It meant to visit the ill. Visitation for the purpose for an adulterous assignation when one is married — as Madam Centaur was — is not a good deed.

“By my faith, she is a ‘subtle’ one!” Clerimont said. “She calls this a riddle? What would their plain dealing and plain speaking be like, I wonder?”

“We lack Truewit to tell us that,” Dauphine said.

Truewit was known for plain dealing and plain speaking.

“We lack him for something else, too,” Clerimont said. “His knights *reformados* are wound up as high and insolent as ever they were.”

Reformados are soldiers who have been disbanded but still keep their rank. Clerimont was also punning on “reformed.”

“You jest,” Dauphine said.

He thought that surely they would have learned better behavior after their recent humiliation.

“No drunkards, either with wine or vanity, ever confessed such stories of themselves,” Clerimont said. “I wouldn't give a fly's leg to be put in a balance scale to measure all the women's reputations here, if Jack Daw and La Foole could

be thought to speak the truth — they tell false tales about all the women, and if believed, they would ruin every woman's reputation. And as for the bride, they have made their affidavit against her directly —”

“What, have they said that they have lain with her?” Dauphine asked.

“Yes, and they tell times and circumstances, with the cause why and the place where,” Clerimont said. “I had almost brought them to affirm that they had done it today.”

“Not both of them?” Dauphine said.

“Yes, indeed,” Clerimont said. “With one or two more cries of ‘Really!’ or ‘Indeed!’ I would have effected it. They would have signed the affidavit.”

“Why, they will be our entertainment, I see, still, whether we want that kind of entertainment or not,” Dauphine said.

— 5.3 —

Truewit entered the room and said, “Oh, are you here? Come, Dauphine. Go, call your uncle immediately. I have put my divine and my canonist into costumes, dyed their beards, and done all else that is needed; the knaves do not know themselves, they are so exalted and raised in rank and altered. Promotion changes any man.

“Dauphine, you shall guard one door and I will guard another, and then Clerimont will be in the middle, so that Morose may have no means of escape from their caviling, bickering, and hairsplitting when the disguised Cutbeard and the disguised Mr. Otter once grow hot.

“And then the women (as I have given the bride her instructions) are to break in upon him in the *l'envoi* — the conclusion.

“Oh, it will be full and twanging and exceptionally fine and wonderfully exciting!

“Leave, Dauphine. Fetch Morose.”

Dauphine exited to get his uncle.

Mr. Otter, disguised as a divine, aka minister, entered the room.

Cutbeard the barber, disguised as a canon lawyer, also entered the room.

Truewit said to them, “Come, Master Doctor and Master Parson, look to your parts now and discharge them splendidly. You are well disguised and costumed; perform your parts as well.

“If you happen to forget your lines, do not confess it with standing still or humming or gaping one at another, but go on and talk loudly and eagerly, use vehement gestures, and just remember your technical Latin terms and you are safe.

“Let the matter — the content of your discussion — go where it will; many lawyers improvise.

“But at first be very solemn and grave like your garments, although you let yourselves go afterward and skip out like a pair of jugglers on a table.”

Truewit heard a noise and said, “Here he comes! Set your faces, and look superciliously while I present you.”

Dauphine and Morose entered the room.

Morose asked, “Are these the two learned men?”

“Yes, sir,” Truewit replied. “Will it please you to greet them?”

“Greet them?” Morose said, “I had rather do anything than wear out time so unfruitfully, sir. I wonder how these common forms of greeting, such as ‘May God save you’ and ‘You are welcome,’ have come to be a habit in our lives? Or ‘I am glad to see you!’ — when I cannot see what the profit can be of these words, since it is no whit better with him whose affairs are sad and grievous that he hears this salutation.”

“That is true, sir,” Truewit said. “We’ll get down to business, then.”

The business was divorce or annulment: Morose no longer wanted to be married to Epicene. The fake experts — Mr. Otter and Cutbeard the barber — would discuss the twelve impediments to marriage. These impediments appear in Saint Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica, Supplementum ad Tertiam Partem*:

*Error, conditio, votum, cognatio, crimen,
cultus disparitas, vis, ordo, ligamen, honestas,
si sis affinis, si forte coire nequibus,
haec socianda vetant connubia, facta retractant.*

These are the impediments that the fake experts will mention:

- 1) *impedimentum erroris*: impediment arising from error
 - *error personae*: mistaken identity
 - *error fortunae*: error as to fortune and property and financial circumstances
 - *error qualitatis*: mistake as to disposition and character
- 2) *conditio*: condition, aka social status — for example, whether one is a free person or a slave

- 3) *votum*: if either has taken a vow of chastity
- 4) *cognatio*: if the persons are closely related
 - *cognatio spiritualis*: if the groom was the bride's godfather
- 5) *crimen adulterii*: the sin of adultery
- 6) *cultus disparitas*: difference of religion
- 7) *vis*: upon compulsion or force
- 8) *ordo*: if the bride had taken holy orders
- 9) *ligamen*: if one was bound previously to someone else
- 10) *publica honestas*: public reputation
- 11) *affinitas ex fornicatione*: relationship arising from fornication
- 12) *si forte coire nequibis*: if by chance you are unable to consummate the marriage

Truewit then said, "Gentlemen, Master Doctor and Master Parson, I have acquainted you sufficiently with the business for which you have come hither. And so I know you need not now inform yourselves about the state of the question. This is the gentleman who expects your resolution, and therefore, when you please, begin."

Mr. Otter, disguised as a minister, said, "May it please you to begin, Master Doctor."

Cutbeard the barber, disguised as a canon lawyer, said, "May it please you to begin, good Master Parson."

The divine-disguised Mr. Otter said, "I would hear the canon lawyer speak first."

The canon lawyer-disguised Cutbeard the barber said, "I must give place to practical divinity, sir."

Practical divinity is in contrast to theoretical or speculative divinity.

Morose said, “Nay, good gentlemen, do not throw me into circumstantialities. Let your comforts — those that exist — arrive quickly to me. Be swift in affording me my peace, if I shall hope for any. I don’t love your disputations or your court tumults.

“And so that this won’t be strange to you, I will tell you why I feel this way. My father, in my education, was accustomed to advise me that I should always collect and contain my mind, not allowing it to flow loosely. He advised me to look at what things were necessary to the conduct of my life and what things were not necessary, embracing the one and eschewing the other. In short, he advised me that I should endear myself to rest and avoid turmoil, and this now has grown to be second nature to me.

“This has the result that I come not to your public pleadings or your places of noise — it is not that I do not care about or overlook those things that make for the dignity of the commonwealth, but only that I avoid public pleadings for the mere avoiding of clamors and impertinencies and irrelevances of orators who don’t know how to be silent.

“And it is for the reason of noise that I am now a suitor to you. You do not know in what a misery I have been exercised and tested this day, what a torrent of evil! My very house turns round with the tumult! I dwell in a windmill! The perpetual motion is here, and not at Eltham.”

Cornelius Drebbel demonstrated what was supposed to be a perpetual-motion device at Eltham Palace. This device drew large crowds.

Truewit said to the disguised Cutbeard, “Well, good Master Doctor, will you break the ice? Master Parson will wade in after you.”

“Sir, although I am unworthy and the weaker person, I will presume to go first,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It is no presumption, *Domine Doctor*.”

Domine means “master.”

“Yet again!” Morose said.

Domine Doctor was a phrase that said much the same thing twice. Both words were titles of respect used to address learned persons.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Your question is, for how many causes a man may have *divortium legitimum*, a lawful divorce. First, you must understand the nature of the word ‘divorce,’ which is *a divertendo* — which is derived from the Latin word for ‘separating.’”

“Make no excursions to discuss words, good Doctor,” Morose said. “Get to the question and answer it briefly and quickly.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “I answer, then: The canon law affords divorce in only a few cases, and the principal is in the common case, the adulterous case. But there are *duodecim impedimenta*, twelve impediments (as we call them), all of which do not *dirimere contractum*, but *irritum reddere matrimonium* — as we say in the canon law, they do not take away the bond but cause a nullity therein.”

The twelve impediments resulted in a nullification of marriage: No valid marriage ever existed.

“I understood you before,” Morose said. “Good sir, avoid your irrelevance of translation.”

Morose understood Latin and so he did not need the “experts” to translate for him, but the “experts” continued to translate much of the Latin they used — at least for now.

“He cannot expound this too much, sir, by your favor,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Yet more!” Morose said.

More unnecessary words. All Morose wanted was an answer to his question: Could he nullify his marriage to Epicene or divorce her?

Truewit said, “Oh, you must give the learned men permission to speak, sir.”

He then said, “To your impediments, Master Doctor.”

“The first is *impedimentum erroris*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“Of which there are several *species* or kinds,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Ay, such as *error personae*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If you contract yourself to one person, thinking her to be someone else,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

This kind of contract can be a betrothal.

“Then, *error fortunae*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If she is a beggar, and you thought her to be rich,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Then, *error qualitatis*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If she proves to be stubborn or headstrong, although you thought that she was obedient,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

This sounded promising to Morose, who said, “What? Is that, sir, a lawful impediment?”

They both started to talk, and Morose said, “One at a time, please, gentlemen.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, *ante copulam*, but not *post copulam*, sir. That is, before the marriage is consummated, but not after the consummation.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Master Parson says right. *Nec post nuptiarum benedictionem* — not after the ecclesiastical blessing of marriage. It does indeed but *irrita reddere sponsal* — that is, annul the contract of marriage. But after marriage the obstacle is of no obstancy — of no judicial oppositional force.”

The marriage and the consummation of the marriage are two separate events, and so Mr. Otter and Cutbeard the barber were not saying exactly the same thing.

Truewit said, “Alas, sir, what a hope are we fallen from by this timing!”

Morose and Epicene had not consummated the marriage, but they had married.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The next is *conditio*: if you thought her freeborn and she proves to be a bondwoman or slave, there is impediment of estate and condition.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, but Master Doctor, those servitudes are *sublatae* — abolished — now among us Christians.”

By Christians, the disguised Mr. Otter meant Protestant Christians.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “By your favor, Master Parson ___”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You shall give me leave, Master Doctor.”

“Nay, gentlemen,” Morose said. “You need not quarrel in discussing that impediment; it does not concern my case. Pass on to the third impediment.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Well, then, the third is *votum* — vow: if either party has made a vow of chastity. But that practice, as Master Parson said of the other impediment, is taken away from among us, thanks be to Protestant church government.”

Catholic nuns and priests who have made a vow of celibacy cannot get married. Neither Morose nor Epicene was Catholic.

The disguised Cutbeard continued, “The fourth impediment is *cognatio*: if the persons be of kin, within the degrees of kinship that are incestuous.”

The disguised Mr. Otter asked Morose, “Aye, do you know what the degrees are, sir?”

“No, nor do I care, sir,” Morose said. “They offer me no comfort in the question, I am sure.”

He and Epicene were not biologically closely related.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “But there is a branch of this impediment that may apply, which is *cognatio spiritualis*. If you were her godfather, sir, then the marriage is incestuous.”

“That comment is absurd and superstitious, Master Doctor,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “I cannot endure it.”

By “superstitious,” he meant “Catholic.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “Are we not all brothers and sisters, and as much akin in that as godfathers and goddaughters?”

“Oh, me!” Morose said. “To end the controversy, let me say that I never was a godfather — I never was a godfather in my life, sir. Pass on to the next obstacle.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The fifth is *crimen adulterii*: the known case.”

The word “case” can mean vagina. “Known case” can mean sexually experienced vagina.

The disguised Cutbeard continued, “The sixth, *cultus disparitas*: difference of religion. Have you ever examined her about her religion?”

This society opposed Roman Catholicism.

“No,” Morose replied. “I would rather she were of none than be put to the trouble of it.”

“You may have it done for you, sir,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“By no means, good sir,” Morose said. “On to the rest. Shall you ever come to an end, do you think?”

“Yes, he has done half, sir,” Truewit said.

They had discussed six of the twelve impediments to marriage.

Truewit said to Mr. Otter and Cutbeard, “On to the rest.”

He then said to Morose, “Be patient and expect the end, sir.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The seventh is *vis*: if it were upon compulsion or force.”

“Oh, no, the marriage was too voluntary, on my part — too voluntary,” Morose said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The eighth is *ordo*: if ever she has taken holy orders.”

“That’s superstitious, too,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

Again, by “superstitious,” he meant Catholic.

“It does not matter, Master Parson,” Morose said.

Epicene had never been a nun.

Morose continued, “I wish she would go into a nunnery yet!”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The ninth is *ligamen*: if you were married, sir, to any other before.”

“I thrust myself too soon into these fetters,” Morose answered.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The tenth is *publica honestas*: which is *inchoata quaedam affinitas*.”

Publica honestas means public decency. *Inchoata quaedam affinitas* means “(previous) unconsummated marriage.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, or *affinitas orta ex sponsalibus*, and is but *leve impedimentum* — a slight impediment.”

Affinitas orta ex sponsalibus means “relationship arising from a betrothal.”

“I feel no air of comfort blowing to me in all this,” Morose said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The eleventh is *affinitas ex fornicatione*.”

Affinitas ex fornicatione means “relationship arising from fornication.” A person who had committed fornication could not marry a close relative of the person with whom he had committed fornication.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Which is no less *vera affinitas* — a true relationship — than the other, Master Doctor.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “True, *quae oritur ex legitimo matrimonio.*”

Quae oritur ex legitimo matrimonio means “(no less a true relationship than that) which comes from legal marriage.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You say right, venerable Doctor. And *nascitur ex eo, quod per conjugium duae personae efficiuntur una caro* —”

Nascitur ex eo, quod per conjugium duae personae efficiuntur una caro means “it follows from this, that through physical union two people are made one flesh.”

“Heyday, now they begin,” Morose said.

Now they were beginning to get far off the track Morose wanted them to follow.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “I conceive you, Master Parson. *Ita per fornicationem aequae est verus pater, qui sic generat* —”

Ita per fornicationem aequae est verus pater, qui sic generat means “thus he is equally a true father who begets through fornication.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “*Et vere filius qui sic generatur* —”

Et vere filius qui sic generatur means “and he is truly a son who is thus begotten.”

“What’s all this to me?” Morose asked.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit and Dauphine, “Now it grows warm.” The twelfth obstacle was of special interest to the three friends. If none of the first eleven obstacles applied to Morose’s marriage, perhaps the twelfth would.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The twelfth and last impediment is *si forte coire nequibis*.”

Si forte coire nequibis means “If by chance you are unable to have sex.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, that is *impedimentum gravissimum*. It does utterly annul and annihilate, that. If you have *manifestam frigiditatem*, you are well, sir.”

Impedimentum gravissimum means “very serious impediment.”

Manifestam frigiditatem means “evident frigidity.”

The word “frigid” means “unable to be sexually aroused.” These days, we use the word to mainly refer to women, but this society used the word to also refer to impotent men.

“Why, there is comfort come at length, sir,” Truewit said. “Confess that you are a man who is unable to have sex, and she will sue to be divorced first.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, or if there be *morbis perpetuus et insanabilis*, such as paralysis, elephantiasis, or so —”

Morbis perpetuus et insanabilis means “a perpetual, continuous, and incurable disease.”

“Oh, but *frigidity* is the fairer way, gentlemen,” Dauphine said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You say the truth, sir.”

He then said, “And as it is in the canon, Master Doctor —”

“I conceive you, sir,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

Clerimont said to himself, “Before he finishes speaking.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “— that a boy or child under years — underage — is not fit for marriage because he cannot *reddere debitum*. So your *omnipotentes* —”

Reddere debitum means “pay the debt,” or “fulfil the obligation.” In marriage, both partners are expected to engage in sex.

Omnipotentes means “omnipotent men.”

The disguised Mr. Otter had made a mistake in his Latin, which Truewit now pointed out.

He whispered to the disguised Mr. Otter, “Your ‘*impotentes*,’ you whoreson lobster.”

Impotentes means “impotent men.”

A lob is a dull-witted person.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Your *impotentes*, I should say, are *minime apti ad contrahenda matrimonium*.”

Minime apti ad contrahenda matrimonia means “least suited to making marriages.”

Mr. Otter had again made a mistake in his Latin, which Truewit again pointed out.

He whispered to the disguised Mr. Otter, “‘*Matrimonium?*’ We shall have most unmatrimonial Latin with you. Say ‘*matrimonia*,’ and be hanged.”

Mr. Otter’s Latin was unmatrimonial because words that should have had the same grammatical construction did not and so the words were not joined — married — together. *Contrahenda* is plural, and *matrimonium* is singular. *Contrahenda* and *matrimonia* are both plural, and so they belong together.

Dauphine whispered to Truewit, “You put them out, man.”

Dauphine was worried that Truewit's criticism would make Mr. Otter and Cutbeard forget their lines.

The disguised Mr. Cutbeard said, "But then there will arise a doubt, Master Parson, in our case, *post matrimonium*, that *frigidity praeditus*. Do you conceive — understand — me, sir?"

Post matrimonium means "after marriage."

Frigidity praeditus means "endowed with frigidity" or "a man who is frigid."

"Very well, sir," the disguised Mr. Otter answered.

"Who cannot *uti uxore pro uxore* may *habere eam pro sorore*," the disguised Mr. Cutbeard said.

He meant: A man who cannot keep a wife as a wife may keep her as a sister.

"Absurd, absurd, absurd, and absolutely heretical," the disguised Mr. Otter said.

"You shall pardon me, Master Parson," the disguised Mr. Cutbeard said. "I can prove it."

"You can prove a will, Master Doctor," the disguised Mr. Otter said. "You can prove nothing else."

To "prove a will" means to "show in court that a will is valid."

Mr. Otter was disguised as a minister, and he was making the point that Cutbeard, who was disguised as a lawyer, was out of his element here. This particular question required a religious ruling, not a legal ruling.

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, "Doesn't the verse of your own canon say, *Haec socianda vetant conubia, facta retractant* —"

The Latin means “These things forbid uniting in marriage, and after marriages have been made these things annul them.”

“I grant you that, but how do they *retractare*, Master Parson?” the disguised Cutbeard asked. “How do they annul them?”

“Oh, this is what I feared,” Morose said to himself.

“*In aeternum*, sir,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “Forever.”

“That’s false in divinity, by your favor,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“It is false in humanity — secular learning — to say so,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “Is he not *prorsus inutilis ad thorum*? Can he *praestare fidem datam*? I would like to know.”

Prorsus inutilis ad thorum means “utterly useless in bed.”

Praestare fidem datam means “fulfil the promise given.”

The Latin word *praestare* means “perform.” It can be broken into two words: *prae* and *stare*. This means “before” and “to stand.” To the Elizabethans and Jacobean, “to stand” meant “to have an erection.”

“Yes, but what if he does *convalescere*?” the disguised Cutbeard asked. “What if he recovers his potency?”

“He cannot *convalescere*,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “It is impossible.”

Morose tried to leave, but Truewit stopped him.

Truewit said to him, “Nay, good sir, listen to the learned men, or else they’ll think you neglect them.”

The disguised Cutbeard asked, “What if he does *simulare* himself *frigidum, odio uxoris*, or so?”

He meant: What if he pretends to be frigid, out of hatred for his wife?

The disguised Mr. Otter replied, “I say he is *adulter manifestus* — a manifest adulterer — then.”

Dauphine said to Truewit and Clerimont, “They dispute it very learnedly, indeed.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “And *prostitutor uxoris* — the prostituer of his wife — and this is positive.”

Morose said to Truewit, “Good sir, let me escape.”

“You will not do me that wrong, sir?” Truewit replied.

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “And therefore if he is *manifeste frigidus* — manifestly frigid — sir —”

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Aye, if he is *manifeste frigidus*, I grant you —”

“Why, that was my conclusion,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“And mine, too,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

Truewit said to Morose, “Nay, hear the conclusion, sir.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Then, *frigiditatis causa* —”

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Yes, *causa frigiditatis* —”

“Oh, my ears!” Morose interrupted, moaning.

The disguised Mr. Otter said to Morose, “She may have *libellum divortii* — a petition for divorce — against you.”

“Aye, *divortii libellum* she will surely have —” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“Good echoes, forbear,” Morose said.

They did not need to say everything twice. Doing that hurt his ears twice as much.

“— if you confess that you are impotent,” the disguised Mr. Otter said, finishing for the disguised Cutbeard.

“Which I would do, sir —” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“I will do anything —” Morose said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “And clear myself *in foro conscientiae* — in the forum of conscience —”

In foro conscientiae is a Latin term for “in the forum of conscience.” Some situations are a matter of conscience; they are not a matter of law.

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Because you lack indeed —”

“Yet more?” Morose said.

The disguised Mr. Otter finished for the disguised Cutbeard, “— *exercendi potestate* — the power of consummation.”

— 5.4 —

Epicene, Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole entered the room.

“I will not endure it any longer,” Epicene said. “Ladies, I ask that you help me. This is such a wrong as never was offered to a poor bride before. On her marriage day, to have her husband conspire against her, and a couple of mercenary companions — contemptable fellows! — to be brought in for form’s sake to persuade a separation!”

She then said, “If you had blood or virtue — the proper lineage and manly excellence — in you, gentlemen, you would not allow such earwigs around a husband, or allow such scorpions to creep between man and wife.”

An earwig is an ear whisperer, an insinuating parasite.

“Oh, the variety and changes of my torment!” Morose said.

“Let them be cudgeled out of doors by our servants,” Madam Haughty said.

“I’ll lend you my footman,” Madam Centaur said to Epicene.

“We’ll have our men toss them in a blanket in the hall,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Just as there was tossed a man at our house, madam, for peeping in at the door,” Mrs. Otter said.

“That would give satisfaction, indeed,” Jack Daw said.

“Wait, ladies and gentlemen, you’ll hear us out before you proceed, won’t you?” Truewit asked.

“I’d have the bridegroom blanketed, too,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Begin with the bridegroom first,” Madam Centaur said.

“Yes, by my truth,” Madam Haughty said.

“Oh, mankind generation!” Morose said.

He was referring to the ladies, who had traits that are associated with men. This society looked down on masculine women. In this context, “mankind” meant “masculine.”

“Ladies, for my sake, don’t do that,” Dauphine said.

“Yes, for Sir Dauphine’s sake,” Madam Haughty said.

“He shall command us,” Madam Centaur said.

“He is as fine a gentleman of his inches, madam, as any is about the town,” La Foole said.

When La Foole referred to Dauphine’s “inches,” readers may be forgiven for thinking of the length of Dauphine’s penis rather than Dauphine’s tallness.

La Foole added about Dauphine, “And he wears as good colors when he wishes.”

La Foole had in mind heraldic colors, and so he was saying that Dauphine, a knight, wore his heraldic colors when he wished to.

Truewit said to Morose, “Be brief, sir, and confess your infirmity; she’ll be on fire to be quit of you; if she just hears that impotency named once, you shall not be able to entreat her to stay. She’ll flee from you like she would flee from one who had the marks of the plague upon him.”

Morose began, “Ladies, I must crave all your pardons —”

“Silence, ladies,” Truewit said.

Morose continued, “— for a wrong I have done to your whole sex in marrying this fair and virtuous gentlewoman —”

“Hear him out, good ladies,” Clerimont said.

Morose continued, “Being guilty of an infirmity that, before I conferred with these learned men, I thought I might have concealed —”

Truewit interrupted, “But now being better informed in his conscience by them, he is to declare it and give satisfaction by asking your public forgiveness.”

“I am no man, ladies,” Morose said.

“What!” said Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole.

Morose continued, “I am utterly unable in nature, by reason of frigidity, to perform the duties or any the least office of a husband.”

Mistress Mavis said, “Now, curses upon him, prodigious — monstrous — creature!”

“Bridegroom uncarnate!” Madam Centaur said.

“Uncarnate” means “not carnate” or “not incarnate” — not of flesh and blood. Madam Centaur was saying that Morose lacked some flesh and blood that men normally had.

“And would you offer it to a young gentlewoman?” Madam Haughty said.

“Offer it” could mean “propose marriage” or “offer your impotence” or “present this insult.”

Mrs. Otter added, “A lady of her longings?”

In addition to sexual longings, Mrs. Otter meant ’longings, aka belongings or possessions. She also meant social longings, or social ambition.

Epicene said, “Tut, a device, a device, this is; it smells rankly, ladies. It is a completely fictional comment of his own.”

“Why, if you suspect that, ladies, you may have him examined,” Truewit said.

Jack Daw added, “As the custom is, by a jury of physicians.”

“Yes, indeed, it will be excellent,” La Foole said.

“Oh, me, must I undergo that?” Morose said.

“No, let women examine him, madam,” Mrs. Otter said. “We can do it ourselves.”

“Curses upon me — that is worse!” Morose said.

“No, ladies, you shall not need to,” Epicene said. “I’ll take him with all his faults.”

“This is worst of all!” Morose said.

“Why, then there is no divorce, Doctor, if she doesn’t consent to it?” Clerimont said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “No, if the man be *frigidus* and impotent, it is *de parte uxoris* — on the behalf of the wife — that we grant *libellum divortii* — a petition of divorce — in the law.”

“Aye, it is the same in theology,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Worse, worse than worst! “ Morose moaned.

“Nay, sir, don’t be utterly disheartened,” Truewit said. “We have yet a small relic of hope left, as near as our comfort is blown out.”

He said, “Clerimont, produce your brace — pair — of knights.”

He said to the disguised Mr. Otter, “What was that, Master Parson, you told me *in errore qualitatis* — mistake as to disposition — just now?”

He then said quietly, “Dauphine, whisper to the bride that she must act as if she were guilty and ashamed.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, *in errore qualitatis* (which Master Doctor did forbear to urge) if she be found *corrupta*, that is, vitiated, deflowered, or

broken up, that was *pro virgine desponsa*, espoused for a maiden —”

The error in quality would possibly apply if Morose thought that Epicene was a virgin when he married her although she was actually not a virgin.

Hopeful, Morose asked, “What then, sir?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It does *dirimere contractum* and *irritum reddere*, too.”

Dirimere contractum means “cancel the contract,” and *irritum reddere* means “render it null and void.”

Truewit said to Morose, “If this is true, we are happy again, sir, once more. Here is an honorable pair of knights who shall affirm so much.”

Clerimont led forward Jack Daw and La Foole, both of whom had earlier claimed to have slept with Epicene.

“Pardon us, good Master Clerimont,” Jack Daw said.

“You shall excuse us, Master Clerimont,” La Foole said.

“Nay, you must make it good now, knights,” Clerimont replied, with his hand on the hilt of his sword. “There is no remedy; I’ll eat no words for you, nor no men. You know you spoke it to me?”

In other words, they had to speak up in public about their relationship with Epicene. Clerimont insisted.

“Is this gentlemanlike, sir?” Jack Daw said.

Truewit said quietly, “Jack Daw, Clerimont is worse than Sir Amorous. He is fiercer by a great deal.”

He then said quietly to La Foole, “Sir Amorous, beware! There are ten Jack Daws in this Clerimont.”

He meant that as a fighter Clerimont was as good as ten Jack Daws.

La Foole said out loud, "I'll confess it, sir."

"Will you, Sir Amorous?" Jack Daw asked. "Will you wound reputation?"

"I am resolved to do so," La Foole said.

"So should you be, too, Jack Daw," Truewit said.

He then whispered to him, "What should keep you off? She is only a woman, and in disgrace. Morose will be glad to hear what you have to say about her corruption."

Jack Daw whispered back, "Will he? I thought he would have been angry."

"You will dispatch the business, knights," Clerimont said. "It must be done, truly."

"Why, if it must, it shall, sir, they say," Truewit said. "They'll never go back."

He then said to Jack Daw and La Foole, "Do not tempt his patience."

Jack Daw said to Morose, "It is true, indeed, sir."

La Foole said to Morose, "Yes, I assure you that it is true, sir."

"What is true, gentlemen?" Morose said. "About what do you assure me?"

Jack Daw said, "That we have known your bride, sir —"

La Foole interrupted, "In good fashion. She was our mistress, or so —"

“Nay, you must be plain, knights, as you were to me,” Clerimont said.

A mistress is a loved one, but not necessarily one with whom the lover has slept.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, the question is, if you have *carnaliter* or no. Have you known her carnally?”

“*Carnaliter*?” La Foole said. “What else, sir?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It is enough: a plain nullity — a plain annulment.”

“I am ruined!” Epicene said. “I am ruined!”

“Oh, let me worship and adore you, gentlemen!” Morose said.

“I am ruined!” Epicene said again.

Morose said to her, “Yes, you have fallen into my hands, for which I thank these knights.”

He then said, “Master Parson, let me thank you otherwise.”

He gave the disguised Mr. Otter money.

“And have they confessed?” Madam Centaur asked.

“Now, curses upon them, the informers!” Mistress Mavis said.

Referring to Jack Daw and La Foole, Truewit said, “You see what creatures you may bestow your favors on, madams.”

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “I would object to them as beaten knights, wench, and not good witnesses in law.”

In this society, the word “wench” could be used affectionately.

Jack Daw and La Foole were cowardly knights and so they were not good witnesses in a court of law. As knights, they were supposed to be brave; by being cowardly, they were not keeping their knightly vows.

“Poor gentlewoman, how she takes it!” Mrs. Otter said.

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “Be comforted, Morose. I love you the better for it.”

“So do I, I assure you,” Madam Centaur said.

The disguised Cutbeard asked, “But gentlemen, you have not known her since *matrimonium*?”

“Not today, Master Doctor,” Jack Daw answered.

“No, sir, not today,” La Foole answered.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Why, then, I say, for any sexual act before, the *matrimonium* — the marriage — is good and perfect, unless the worshipful bridegroom did before witnesses precisely demand if she were *virgo ante nuptias* — a virgin before marriage.”

“No, that he did not, I assure you, Master Doctor,” Epicene said.

“If he cannot prove that, it is *ratum conjugium* — a valid marriage — notwithstanding the previous events,” the disguised Cutbeard said. “And they do in no way *impedire* — impede — the marriage. And this is my sentence; this I pronounce.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said to Morose, “I am of Master Doctor’s resolution, too, sir, if you did not make that demand *ante nuptias* — before marriage.”

“Oh, my heart!” Morose moaned. “Will you break? Will you break? This is the worst of all worst worsts that hell could have devised! Marry a whore! And so much noise!”

“Come,” Dauphine said. “I see now plain confederacy and conspiracy in this doctor and this parson to hoodwink a gentleman. You seek his affliction. Please leave, companions.”

The disguised Mr. Otter and the disguised Cutbeard did not leave.

Dauphine then said to Clerimont and Truewit, “And, gentlemen, I begin to suspect that you are on their side.”

He then said to his uncle, Morose, “Sir, will it please you to hear what I have to say?”

“Oh, do not talk to me!” Morose said. “Don’t take from me the pleasure of dying in silence, nephew.”

“Sir, I must speak to you,” Dauphine said. “I have long been your poor despised kinsman, and many a hard thought has strengthened you against me; but now it shall appear whether I love you or your peace of mind, and whether I prefer them to all the world beside. I will not be long or complaining of grievous injuries to you, sir. If I free you of this unhappy match absolutely and instantly after all this trouble, and free you who are almost in your despair now —”

“It cannot be,” Morose interrupted. “It is impossible for you to do that.”

Dauphine continued, “— sir, if I arrange things so that you will never be troubled with a murmur of it more, what shall I hope for or deserve from you?”

“Oh, whatever you want, nephew!” Morose said. “You shall deserve me and have me.”

“Shall I have your favor entirely for myself, and shall I have your love hereafter?” Dauphine asked.

“You shall have that and anything else besides,” Morose said. “Make your own conditions. My whole estate is yours. Manage it; I will become your ward.”

“Nay, sir, I will not be so unreasonable,” Dauphine said.

“Will Sir Dauphine be my enemy, too?” Epicene asked.

Dauphine said to Morose, “You know I have been long a petitioner to you, uncle, that out of your estate, which is fifteen hundred pounds a year, you would allow me just five hundred during your life and assure that I will inherit the rest after your life ends, concerning which I have often by myself and my friends tendered you a document to sign, which you would never consent or incline to sign. If you please but to effect it now —”

Dauphine wanted a third of Morose’s income simply because he was related to Morose. Such people come out of the woodwork when someone wins a sweepstakes or a lottery.

“You shall have it, nephew,” Morose said. “I will do it, and more.”

Dauphine said, “If I don’t quit you immediately and forever of this encumbrance, you shall have power instantly, I declare before all these people, to revoke your act, and I will become the slave of whomever you will give me to forever.”

“Where is the writing?” Morose said. “I will sign it — that, or I will sign a blank paper, and you can write your own conditions on it.”

“Oh, me!” Epicene said. “I am a most unfortunate, wretched gentlewoman!”

Dauphine would get all; Epicene would get nothing.

“Will Sir Dauphine do this?” Madam Haughty asked.

Crying, Epicene said, “Good sir, have some compassion on me.”

“Oh, my nephew knows you, most likely,” Morose said to her. “Away, crocodile that weeps false tears!”

“Knows you” can mean “knows you sexually” or “sees through you.”

“He does it not, surely, without good ground,” Madam Centaur said.

She wanted to believe the best about Dauphine, whom she had propositioned.

Giving Morose the documents, Dauphine said, “Here, sir.”

“Come, nephew, give me the pen,” Morose said. “I will subscribe my signature to anything, and I will put my seal to whatever you want for my deliverance. You are my restorer.”

Morose signed and returned the documents, saying, “Here, I deliver it to you as my deed. If there is a word in it lacking or written with false orthography [spelling], I declare in advance that I will not take advantage.”

“Then here is your release, sir,” Dauphine said.

He pulled off Epicene’s peruke — her wig — revealing that Epicene was a boy.

“You have married a boy, a gentleman’s son whom I have brought up this half year at my great expense,” Dauphine said, “and brought up for this settlement that I have now made with you.”

He then asked the disguised Cutbeard, “What do you say, Master Doctor? This is *justum impedimentum*— a just impediment, I hope. It is *error personae* — mistaken identity?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Yes, sir, *in primo gradu* — in the first degree.”

The disguised Cutbeard agreed: “*In primo gradu.*”

Dauphine pulled off Mr. Otter’s and Cutbeard’s false beards and disguises.

He then said to them, “I thank you, good Doctor Cutbeard and Parson Otter.”

He then said to Morose, “You are beholden to them, sir, who have taken these pains for you; and you are beholden to my friend, Master Truewit, who prepared them for the business by providing their disguises. Now you may go in and rest and be as private as you will, sir. I’ll not trouble you until you trouble me with your funeral, which I don’t care how soon it comes.”

In this matter, Dauphine was an asshole.

Morose exited.

Dauphine then said, “Cutbeard, I’ll make your lease good.”

Earlier, Morose had promised Cutbeard that the lease of his house would be free.

Dauphine then parodied his uncle: “Don’t thank me except by bowing, Cutbeard.”

Cutbeard bowed.

Dauphine said, “And Tom Otter, your princess shall be reconciled to you.”

He then looked at Clerimont and Truewit, neither of whom had known that Epicene was a boy, and said, “How are you now, gentlemen? Do you look at me?”

“A boy?” Clerimont asked.

“Yes,” Dauphine said. “Mistress Epicene.”

Truewit said, “Well, Dauphine, you have cheated your friends of the better half of the garland — the glory — by concealing this part of the plot! But I hope it may do you much good — you deserve it, lad.”

He then said, “And, Clerimont, for your unexpectedly bringing in these two to confession, wear my part of the garland freely.”

Next he said, “Nay, Sir Daw and Sir La Foole, you see the gentlewoman who has done you sexual favors! We are all thankful to you, and so should the womenkind here, especially for lying about her, although not lying with her! You meant to do so, I am sure. Were it not that we have fastened your lie upon you today in your own imagined persons, and so recently, this Amazon — Mrs. Otter — the champion of the sex, should beat you now soundly for the common slanders that ladies receive from such cuckoos as you are.”

Cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, something these two knights talked about metaphorically doing.

Truewit continued, “You are they who, when no merit or fortune can make you hope to enjoy their bodies, will yet lie with their reputations and make their fame suffer. Leave, you common moths of these and all ladies’ honors!”

Moths make holes; Jack Daw and La Foole had attempted to make metaphorical holes in the reputations of ladies.

Truewit continued, “Go, travel and work to make legs and faces — bows and smirks — and come home with some new matter to be laughed at. You deserve to live in an air as corrupted as that wherewith you feed rumor.”

Jack Daw and La Foole exited.

Truewit then said, “Madams, you are mute upon this new metamorphosis! But here stands she — Epicene — who has vindicated your fames.”

Referring to Jack Daw and La Foole, Truewit said, “Take heed of such *insectae* — insects — hereafter.”

Truewit deliberately used the incorrect feminine form of the Latin word for insects rather than the correct neuter form to insult the knights by referring to them as effeminate.

Truewit continued, “And let it not trouble you that you have revealed any mysteries — secrets — to this young gentleman. He is almost an adult, and he will make a good visitant — visiting lover — within the next twelve months. In the meantime we’ll all undertake for his secrecy, we who can speak so well of his silence.”

Truewit now spoke to the readers of this book: “Audience, if you like this comedy, rise cheerfully, and, now that Morose has gone in, clap your hands. It may be that the noise of clapping will cure him, or at least please him.”

PROLOGUES

Prologue #1

Truth says, of old the art of making plays
 Was to content the people; and their praise
 Was to the poet money, wine, and bays [fame / bay laurel
 wreaths].
 But in this age, a sect of writers are,
 That, only, for particular likings [narrow tastes] care,
 And will taste [try] nothing that is popular.
 With such we mingle neither brains nor breasts [share
 neither thoughts nor feelings];
 Our wishes, like to those [who] make public feasts,
 Are not to please the cook's taste, but the guests'.
 Yet, if those cunning palates [carping critics] hither come,
 They shall find guests' entreaty [entertainment], and good
 room;
 And though all relish not, sure there will be some,
 That, when they leave their seats, shall make them [the
 carping critics] say,
 Who [He who, i.e., Jonson] wrote that piece, could so have
 wrote [written] a play,
 But that he knew this was the better way.
 For, to present all custard [romantic content], or all tart
 [satiric content],
 And have no other meats [dishes, content in a play], to bear
 a part.

Or to want [lack] bread, and salt [stinging satire], were but
course [pun on coarse] art.

The poet prays you then, with better thought

To sit; and, when his cates [delicacies] are all in brought,

Though there be none far-fet [far-fetched], there will dear-
bought,

Be fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, esquires;

Some for your waiting-wench, and city-wires [fashionable
women who use wires in their ruffs and headdresses];

Some for your men, and daughters of Whitefriars.

Nor is it, only, while you keep your seat

Here, that his feast will last; but you shall eat

A week at ord'naries [inns], on his broken meat [fragments
of food/leftovers]:

If his muse be true,

Who commends her[self] to you.

Prologue #2

This is another Prologue occasioned by some person's impertinent exception:

The ends of all who for the scene do write

Are, or should be, to profit and delight;

And still [always] 't hath [it has] been the [subject of] praise of all best times,

So [As long as] persons were not touched [accused], to tax the crimes [to criticize folly].

Then, in this play which we present tonight,

And make the object of your ear and sight,

On forfeit of yourselves, think nothing true [real]

Lest so you make the maker [poet] to judge you;

[If you criticize the satire, it must be because the satire satirizes YOU.]

For he knows poet never credit gained

By writing truths, but things like truths well feigned.

If any yet will, with particular sleight

Of application, wrest [twist] what he doth write,

And that he meant or [either] him or her will say,

They make a libel which he made a play.

NOTES

— 1.4 —

“ ... *I had as fair a gold jerkin on that day, as any was worn in the island voyage, or at Caliz, none dispraised; ...* ”

(1.4.47)

Source of above:

The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson

7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

According to Oxford Reference, CALES is

the name by which the Spanish port of Cadiz was known in Britain up to the beginning of the 17th century ...

Source of Above:

Oxford Reference. Accessed 24 January 2021

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199205684.001.0001/acref-9780199205684-e-449>

A note in the Oxford World Classics edition of

Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008]

says this:

Calix: a botched conflation of Cadiz and its English exonym, *Cales*, referring to the English capture of Cadiz in 1596.

Dictionary.com defines “exonym” in this way:

a name used by foreigners for a place, as Florence for Firenze

and

a name used by foreigners to refer to a people or social group that the group itself does not use, as Germans for Deutsche.

Source of above:

Dictionary.com. Accessed 24 January 2021

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/exonym>

— 3.1 —

Does Mr. Otter own any animals?

He is not likely to have a real bear, a real horse, or a real bull.

He is fond of bear-baitings and bull-baitings, and he is fond of his drinking cups capped with the artificial animal heads.

Sometimes, Mrs. Otter may seem to be speaking about real animals, but she is speaking about his drinking cups. She does not want him to display them in front of the Lady Collegiates.

For example:

*Is a bear a fit beast, or a bull, to mix
in society with great ladies? (3.1.13-24)*

Source of above:

The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson
7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Truewit tells his companions about the drinking cups in the previous scene (2.6). Mr. Otter has no bear, horse, or bull, but he does have the eccentricity of referring to his drinking cups as if they were real animals. Because of that, his wife does the same thing when she talks to him.

— 4.2 —

“*bona spes*”

(4.2.119)

Source of above:

The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson

7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Cicero’s *In Catalinum (Against Catiline)* II.25 states that
“well-founded hope [fights] against universal despair.”

The translation comes from this book:

M. Tullius Cicero. *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*,
literally translated by C. D. Yonge, B. A. London. Henry G.
Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden. 1856.

— 4.4 —

A very shark. He set me i'the nick t'other night at primero.

(4.4.132)

Source of above:

The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson

7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a shark is “A worthless and impecunious person who gains a precarious living by sponging on others, by executing disreputable commissions, cheating at play, and petty swindling; a parasite; a sharper.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “to set in the nick” means “(perhaps) to cheat (a person) out of his or her money.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “nick” means:

9. (a) In the game of hazard: a throw which is either the same as the main (mainn.2 1b), or has a fixed correspondence to it (see quot. 1797); a winning throw. Now chiefly historical. (b) In the game of craps: a natural.”

This is the note in *The Routledge Anthology of Renaissance Drama* (2002) on page 309:

set ... nick: unclear; Holdsworth suggests it means ‘cleared me out’, with La Foole muddling terms from Primero (a card game) with hazard (a dice game); with ‘set’ meaning bet against, and ‘nick’ being the winning score in hazard

Of course, if Dauphine had cheated La Foole out of his money, then Dauphine’s purse would not be empty.

In my opinion, the passage is ambiguous:

1) If Dauphine bet against him (“set me”) when La Foole had the winning score (La Foole was “in the nick”), then Dauphine could very well have an empty purse. La Foole is a fool, and Dauphine is not a fool, but when it comes to games of chance, fortune can sometimes favor fools. In that case, the word “shark” could mean “an impecunious fellow.”

2) But Dauphine could have been the one “in the nick” — he could have had the winning score. In that case, Dauphine would have money in his purse. Also in that case, La Foole is lying about Dauphine’s purse being empty. Also in that case, the word “shark” could mean “a cheat.” La Foole could be lying about that, too.

La Foole may be muddled because he is (possibly) using terms from two different games: one a game of dice (hazard) and the other a game of cards (primero). His language may be muddled and ambiguous because his brain is muddled.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* also defines “nick in this way:

III. A precise moment, location, etc., and related senses.

11. Chiefly in in (also at, upon) the (very) nick. The precise or exact point of time when something takes place or requires to be done; a critical or opportune juncture, a crucial moment; (in later use) esp. the latest possible moment.

In that case, “He set me i’ the nick t’ other night at primero” means “he bet against me at the crucial moment.” This is ambiguous because it does not say who won the bet.

— Entire Play —

These characters are not likable.

La Foole and Jack Daw are fools. So are Mr. and Mrs. Otter.

The Lady Collegiates are despicable.

Truewit has a great name [True-wit-and-intelligence], but he advocates date rape, and some of his opinions about women are despicable.

Dauphine basically is telling his uncle this:

You are my uncle. I am your nephew. You have money. I want money. Your income is 1,500 pounds per year. I want one-third of your income. Although you are capable of having a wife and fathering an heir, I want you to sign a document that will make me the heir of all your wealth.

Dauphine also is willing for Jack Daw to lose his left arm.

Clerimont, perhaps the most likeable character, says he is in love with all the Lady Collegiates. The actor playing Clerimont, however, may make it clear that he does not love all the Lady Collegiates; after all, Clerimont criticizes Lady Haughty in the first scene of the play. Clerimont also remains silent when Clerimont talks about maiming Jack Daw, but Truewit quickly makes it known that Jack Daw will not be physically maimed, perhaps so quickly that Clerimont did not have a chance to say anything.

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont regard themselves as superior to the fools in the play and so they are willing to manipulate the fools into acting much more foolishly than they would on their own.

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont may not be fools, but they are assholes.

Modern audiences are likely to wonder whether Morose's sensitivity to noise is the result of a medicine condition.

William Shakespeare's comedies tend to end in love and reconciliation. Ben Jonson's comedies tend to end in hate and discontent.

Ben Jonson could have titled this play *Fools and Assholes*.

APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Comedy*, *Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare’s Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

APPENDIX B: SOME BOOKS BY DAVID BRUCE

RETELLINGS OF A CLASSIC WORK OF LITERATURE

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings

Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose

The Famous Victories of Henry V: *A Retelling*

From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica

George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling

George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling

George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: A Retelling

Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose

Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling

John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling

John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling

John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling

John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling

King Edward III: A Retelling

The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling

Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling

The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling

Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling

The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems

Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose

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