

“Man in the Moon”: a new free translation from Harley MS. 2253, accompanied by a theatrical version with staging.

by David Haden

I recently investigated the medieval narrative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in its North Staffordshire landscape and historical context, discovering and tallying much new information previously overlooked by scholars.¹ A few years later I was pleased to discover another supernatural narrative poem from the West Midlands, a poem that sits easily alongside *Sir Gawain* due to its similar time-period and lively landscape spirit. This is the short narrative lyric ‘Art. 81’ or “Man in the Moon” (“Mon in the mone stond ant strit”) from the Harley MS. 2253, a collection usually known to scholars as The Harley Lyrics.² The narrator has The Man in The Moon slipping down to earth one night as a horned crescent. Being a strange horned ‘alien being’ from among the stars, he soon finds himself out of place and becomes entangled in both rural undergrowth and the legal system. He grows dismal on earth and, escaping the law, he returns home by floating upwards before the narrator in a departure scene that might seem to anticipate many a later UFO visitation tale. The text can be seen as weirdly comedic ‘proto science-fiction’, and indeed the venerable British scholar Tom Shippey has called it “extremely bizarre”.³ Interestingly it is from a location just 20 miles from Hereford, a place which three centuries later gave the world Francis Godwin’s science-fiction voyage to the Moon *The Man in the Moone* (1638).

I here present some notes, then my free translation, and finally my version with some theatrical staging directions.

¹ David Haden, *Strange Country: Sir Gawain in the moorlands of North Staffordshire. An investigation*, Burslem Books, 2018.

² ‘MS 2253’, as dated circa 1340, and now held as part of the British Library’s Harleian Collection. The scribe of the text is known as “scribe B or the Ludlow scribe” who flourished as a professional legal scribe “in the vicinity of Ludlow from 1314 to 1349”. The Collection was created with the assistance of their Keeper and librarian, Humfrey Wanley (from Coventry, also in the English Midlands), and assembled by Robert Harley (1661–1724) and his son Edward (1689–1741). In 1753, the Collection was purchased for £10,000 by the government. The collection was first properly catalogued from 1808-1812.

³ Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth: How J. R. R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology*, page 37.

The context:

I will first offer some starting notes, for readers interested in learning more about this curious medieval poem. The historical context, of what must be supposed a popular folk figure, is given in the chapter “Caliban’s God: The Medieval and Renaissance Man in the Moon” which is found in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages* (2009).⁴ This chapter outlines some of the more solid traces of a hypothetical native British folk tradition, and offers some material evidence in the form of manorial seal iconography from the period and place. The authors then more ambitiously relate Man in the Moon to the somewhat similar character of Shakespeare’s Caliban in *The Tempest*. This academic work should be read alongside Thomas Honegger’s more compendious scholarly essay “The Man in the Moon” (1999).⁵ The wider social and political milieu of The Harley Lyrics can be found detailed in the book *Studies in the Harley Manuscript* (2000).⁶

Who wrote this text, and where? The authorities on dialect and palaeography say it is in the hand of “a single scribe working in Ludlow, south Shropshire”.⁷ He was a man active c. 1314 to 1349 in the rural hill country on the western edge of what is now the West Midlands of England. This rich sheep-land has been long known as ‘the Welsh Marches’, rolling down the long border with Wales in the silent company of massive and ancient earthworks. It is the same landscape which gave us Arthur Machen and the ley-lines of Alfred Watkins. It is thus a similarly liminal border-place to that inhabited by the scribe and patron of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, albeit with “Man in the Moon” being about one generation earlier and some 50 miles to the south-west. The text of the poem also has the same difficulties of archaic allusive Midlands language and translation as *Gawain* has, yet is just as lively and engaging once understood. A touch of Welsh, detectable in a few words, also helps to place the “Man in the Moon” on the Welsh Marches. This was a time when roving minstrelry was a common summer activity and there was intermingling between the minstrel courts of Staffordshire and Shropshire and the bardic courts in Wales. The world of these men was one that was far from London and the royal court, yet it was then all the more a place where local patrons could help to nurture poetry and culture. Some of the courts a minstrel might visit were fabulously lavish.

⁴ M. W. Driver and S. Ray (Eds.), *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁵ Thomas Honegger, “The Man in the Moon: Structural Depth in Tolkien”, IN: *Root and Branch — Approaches towards Understanding Tolkien*, Cormare Series No. 2, Walking Tree, 1999, pages 9-76.

⁶ S. G. Fein (Ed.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents and Social Context of British Library MS Harley 2253* (2000).

⁷ The dialect and its location was addressed by G. L. Brook in “The Original Dialect of The Harley Lyrics”, *Leeds Studies in English* 2, S, 1933, and the topic was later revisited by M.L. Samuels in “The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics”, *Poetica* 19, 1984. Legal documents in the same hand and place are extant.

Such as the famous court of Thomas, the second Earl of Lancaster, at Tutbury in mid Staffordshire from 1300-1322. With seeds planted in this way, the famous 'alliterative revival' would later spring up from this unlikely territory.

The poem's scribe may not have been the author, and of course ideas of authorship were then rather fluid and different. One might plausibly suppose there were once many 'Man in the Moon' tales and lyrics in circulation alongside related children's rhymes, folk-names, drinking games, love charms and the like. These could be drawn on, adapted and alluded to or punned on. In performance the poem would also have been framed by a set of other entertainments, as part of an evening's larger entertainment.

Lastly one can observe that the scribe's likely death date of 1349 is a fateful one. It was then that the Black Death plague first swept its scythe through England.

The text:

What of the text? Though a very difficult text to decipher, it was known to the Victorians. It was first printed in 1818, then given in anthologies in 1829 and 1842, and later noted by Baring-Gould in his popular *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* (1872). It was cited by Jacob Grimm in his *Teutonic Mythology* (1880-88) and was described in William Hazlitt's expanded historical dictionary *Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles* (1905). The original transcribed text is today most easily and freely found in good form in *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (1932), where it is accompanied by some illuminating notes.⁸ This book is currently available online at Archive.org.

Magpies and scholars:

"Man in the Moon" received some sustained scholarly attention in the 1960s and 70s, aided by the revival of interest in Britain's vanishing and relic folk traditions and song and by the published facsimile of Harley MS. 2253. Edmund Reiss used the text to try to illuminate an aspect of Chaucer, in "Chaucer's Friar and the Man in the Moon", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 1963. It has to be said that his essay rather strains to link Chaucer's worthy and cheery Friar Hubert character to the earlier scribe's use of magpie and churl imagery. I would suggest that the debated word "Huberd" was probably simply a common witticism drawing on *hewe* (hue, colour) + *berd* (bird), i.e. straightforwardly implying a bird displaying two distinct hues. The allusion of such a personal name, if such it was, is now long lost along with any folk ramifications of 'stealing' (i.e. magpies will steal small shiny objects, as would the mad 'moone-

⁸ These notes are especially informative on the nature of hedging practices of the period, which have a bearing on how the tale would originally have been understood in performance. Further notes on the hedging depicted in the poem are in Robert J. Menner's "The Man in the Moon and Hedging", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, No. 48, 1949, pages 1-14.

men' who were destined for sleeping under thick medieval hedges).⁹ The possible implication of the name, that Chaucer's Friar Hubert was actually a cheery embezzler of church funds who would soon be discovered and reduced to sleeping under a hedge, seems to me far too heavy a burden for the name alone to bear. It is more likely that Chaucer meant only to evoke the jolly and rotund full-moon. Anyway, I have thus left the name 'Hubert' out of my free modern version in favour of the more obvious and comprehensible "magpie".¹⁰

The performative nature of the text was ably established by Matti Rissanen in 1980, when he identified the obvious comic and dramatic recital potential.¹¹ He suggested that... "Certain features in the structure and in the treatment of the theme in 'The Man in the Moon' imply that the poem may have been intended primarily for dramatic recital, minstrel performance". I agree, but I would add something that does not appear to have been noted by scholars. That the narrative has several elements which only make sense if the 'Moon' performer is a thin crescent moon with one horn up and his other forming a hopping single leg (the hopping is never stated openly, but is implied several times). This insight also help further explain the magpie comparison, British magpies having a 'bouncing hop' when on hard ground. Incidentally, when the later Hereford author Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638) has his narrator fly to the Moon, his ingenious engine is drawn there by one-footed swans.¹²

⁹ See Thomas Dekker's *Lanthorne and Candle-light* (1609), given in Honegger (1999).

¹⁰ For readers outside the British Isles, I should state that our magpies are very common and lively black & white birds, whose flocking and roosting behaviour is still a form of divination via the well-known children's song ("One for sorrow, Two for joy, Three for a girl, Four for a boy, Five for silver..." etc). This intelligent bird is also said to be attracted to small bright shiny objects, and children fear the bird will seek to steal their trinkets to adorn a nest. The birds also haunt hedges and are very adept at 'picking up sticks', something the Moon does in the narrative.

¹¹ M. Rissanen, "Colloquial and comic elements in "The Man in the Moon"", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, Vol. 81. No. 1, 1980.

¹² The Englishman Francis Godwin (1562-1633) was possibly the great uncle of the writer Jonathan Swift. Godwin had been the Bishop of Hereford — twenty miles south from Ludlow in Shropshire — at the time he wrote the book circa the 1620s, the tale of a fantastical voyage to the Moon titled *The Man in the Moone: or A Discourse of a Voyage Thither*. Godwin's tale was published posthumously in 1638, and tells off a voyage accomplished by the man being carried to the Moon by a flock of powerful one-footed swans (not geese, as at least one modern encyclopaedia wrongly has it). A Lovecraftian might think that this sounds somewhat similar to the dream-leap of the cats to the Moon that Carter experiences in H.P. Lovecraft's "Dream Quest"... "Verily, it is to the moon's dark side that they go to leap and gambol on the hills and converse with ancient shadows [...] upon a signal, the cats all leaped gracefully with their friend packed securely in their midst". This method of flight is indeed broadly similar to Godwin, in its distributive aspect. Godwin had his hero invent a mechanical device that evenly distributed his weight among the especially powerful swans. Lovecraft could have encountered this idea via his favourite poet Samuel Butler. For instance, the author of the *Poetical Works of Samuel Butler* footnotes an allusion given in *Hudibras* as relating to... "Bishop Godwin ... getting to the Moon upon ganzas or wild swans". Lovecraft knew Samuel Butler very well and had "ploughed through" even the toughest of his poems, and he found that *Hudibras* was a special favourite. Lovecraft owned the extensively

Perhaps I am underestimating the physical ‘tumbling’ acrobats of the period, but I speculate that such a hopping movement might have been presented to a medieval audience in the form of puppetry. The word ‘puppet’ was well known in 14th-century England, and there are images of a puppet theatre booth and hand-puppets in *The Romance of Alexander* (French, begun 1338-1344).

The Christian Cain and theatrical convention:

In the opening lines of my new free version of ‘Man in the Moon’ I have also rejected a certain Christian notion. This held was that the Man was to be understood as synonymous with the Biblical brother-murdering Cain, a wandering earthly man supposedly condemned by a punishing god to forever carry a large bundle of thorns aloft in a cleft stick and/or on his back. Honegger (1999) explores the evidence on this. He finds the moralistic notion can be dated as far back as an aside in writing on the Moon’s nature by Alexander Neckam (1157-1217) and seems to be found at least visually in iconography on an English manorial seal from 1335 (figured in the 1906 edition of Baring-Gould’s *Curious Myths*). It was later used in storytelling by Dante in the 14th century, and by the 15th century was being casually deemed a harmless and faintly risible folk belief. After evaluating this evidence Honegger states that...

“The (Italian?) tradition that identifies him with Cain may or may not have been known in England before 1605 and must be considered of minor importance.”¹³

The ‘large bundle of thorns’ aspect may instead come by a theatrical tradition derived from classical re-discoveries. Shakespeare draws on this by-then antiquated¹⁴ theatrical or proverbial stereotype in his *Midsummer Nights Dream* (c. 1596), when his Peter Quince character informs his rustic amateur players that... “one must come in with a bush of thorn and a lanthorn [a lit lantern], and say he comes to present the person of Moonshine”. The audience later sees this on the ‘stage within a stage’ at the end of the play. Moon is here played by Starveling, a weedy and thin man who makes such a poor Moonshine that the

footnoted 1864 edition of this large and allusive work. The 1864 edition’s annotator refers to the Bishop and his *ganzas* (a fictional super-powerful breed of swan) on page 286 as well as observing that “There is also the more general theory, lightly held by many learned men until the 17th century, that many types of birds migrated to the Moon in winter.” Again, this was the sort of early proto-scientific theory that Lovecraft would have been aware of, being also fascinated by the Moon in his astronomical work. As for finding cats already on the Moon, as in his “Dream-quest”, we know that the 12 year old Lovecraft already delighted in the idea of other nearby worlds populated by his beloved cats, and so this seems to have been his original idea, part whimsy and part science — in the sense that the idea of ‘creatures on Venus or Mars’ was then one on which reputable scientists could speculate in the press without being ridiculed and sacked.

¹³ Thomas Honegger, “The Man in the Moon: Structural Depth in Tolkien”, IN: *Root and Branch — Approaches towards Understanding Tolkien*, Cormare Series No. 2, Walking Tree, 1999, pages 9-76.

¹⁴ It appears that these motifs had been somehow gleaned from classical antiquity. Ben Johnson in 1620 remarked cynically on the... “stale Ensignes o’the Stage’s Man i’th’ Moone, deliverd downe to you by musty Antiquitie”.

audience cannot resist offering several cynical heckles. Starveling is perhaps another nod to the folk idea that the Man in the Moon slipped down to earth as a rather thin and roguish ‘hedge sleeper’ when he was not doing his job as the jolly and rotund full-moon. This idea is vividly present in the poem of the Harley Lyrics, but if it is also being implied by Shakespeare in *Dream* must remain open to debate. In any case we appear to have here an interesting early example of a shape-shifting supernatural figure in the person of the Moon, albeit one who shifts his form very slowly. Consider also the kinship with the wiry and ravening werewolf, howling up at the full moon.

Interesting though this Cain / Moonshine imagery, I feel it is another distraction in the same mould as the name ‘Hubert’. It could well be yet another example of Christian imposition on a native folk tradition, something perhaps evidenced by the later line in the poem: “*where he were ... moon boren and yfed,*” (‘When this same man is up high, where he was born and fed when young,’). This must imply that the Man was not originally an earthly man such as Cain. For my opening lines I thus instead jettison the ‘bundle of thorns on a stick’ imagery and draw instead on earlier continental imagery, from c. 860–890 in central France. This makes the staging easier and the fall to earth more logical. The continental imagery has Man in the Moon riding in a ‘moon boat’ and bearing sickle-moon horns and with his full-face inside a cowl-hat. He appears a comically bemused jester or trickster and is holding up a white-tassled rod in either hand. Possibly these wands signify soft wavering moon-beams.



‘Luna’, a roundel with a personification of the horned Moon, in a possible boat. Carolingian, c. 860–890, south central France. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. A Public Domain image.

I am imagining here that such a design might have been seen at a substantial pageant or minstrel court, in which boat-poles hoisted aloft and held roundels that displayed such personified astronomical iconography. Thus in my version of the poem the Man is not ‘striding’ with his thorn-bundle as the opening lines might have it, since this would be out-of-character with his slowness and sedateness. He does not “stand and stride” the heavens as if the Biblical Cain, and I have instead assumed he begins as a sharp crescent-moon. It is thus the moon’s horn that is the thing doing the ‘standing’, and the lower horn forms a single ‘standing’ leg on which he later hops. Possibly we even have here witty but coy allusions to the male principle of phallic erection, and a skilled orator could have visually alluded to this with comic effect. See my staged version for development of that idea, and also note how it may relate to the idea that the Moon slips under the bedclothes of the bushy female hedge in which he lands. My opening lines are then also made congruent with the later scene in which the Moon’s sharp horn is described as cutting wooden staves from a hedge.

The influence on Tolkien:

Finally, I suggest that someone wishing to explore the text’s afterlife might also consider its tavern-song usage in Tolkien. A recital of the long narrative poem “The Man in the Moon Stayed Up Too Late” is made into a central plot-point in the first part of *The Lord of the Rings*, and readers will recall that Frodo’s impromptu tavern-song performance leads directly to the attack on the inn at Bree by the evil and supernatural Black Riders.

Tolkien likely knew that Shakespearean London had several taverns named The Man in the Moon, strongly indicating at least one medieval folk-tradition related to drinking. He also knew that ‘moonshine’ was an English tavern-word for fanciful ‘news’ purveyed by those known to be “cracked in the head”. Indeed, the word is used in that context by an unimaginative hobbit in an inn at the start of *The Lord of the Rings*, a masterly example of Tolkien’s long-distance foreshadowing.

The best starting point for exploring this later aspect of the Man in the Moon will be Thomas Honegger’s long essay “The Man in the Moon: Structural Depth in Tolkien”.¹⁵ This is by a leading Tolkien scholar and, although its Tolkien section is actually relatively brief, the author discusses “the various occurrences of the figure of the Man in the Moon” in Tolkien’s work. This is something which can be traced back to 1923 in Tolkien’s published poem “The Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon”. Some see this as the first published extract from Tolkien’s famous legendarium.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Man in the Moon based on the poem in Harley MS. 2253.

Man in the Moon has horn up straight,
And only a boat-hook to bear his weight.
Many will wonder — might he slip down here ?
See ! Weary of his nightly toil, now he shudders and shears,
Slides from fine fingers of pinching frost,
to keen thorns that would tear off his heel.
No wight in the world knows when he drops,
except the hedge, beneath whose bedclothes he steals.

Hedge — where has Man in the Moon gone ?
'Slow down the lane, setting no foot in front of the other.
There he is now, out in that field and driving in hedge-stakes,
In hopes my bramble-tangle would tie him down...'
He should not fear the heights, but look at him shaking now.
Yet he is the slowest man that ever was born,
And with his sharp horn must slice stakes quicker,
Else he'll be up in the sky for another night's flight.

When this same man is up high, where he was born,
he calmly beams from his boat like an old grey monk.
But who is this stooped sluggard, filled with fear ?
It is now many a day since he dropped down here.
If he had an errand, then naught has reached my ear.
He has but somewhere cut rough stakes from a hedge,
And startled a hayward into taking his pledge.

Moon !

If your pledge is taken, and you have no silver penny —

Then be useful, bring home your many stakes for firewood.

Set forth your other foot, stride down our hearth-ward lane.

We shall ask this hayward to our house,

Seat the idler in our plumpest chair and heap the fire.

Curl his whiskers with strongest cider,

And my warm wife shall bide and smile at him.

Then when he is as drunk as a drowned mouse,

He shall sign you a pardon for our busy bailiff.

Ah, Man in the Moon hears me not, though him I call.

Come !! Bah — I think this churl is devilish deaf !

Though I wail long upon the lawn, he will not be drawn.

The listless loon knows nothing of the law.

Hop forth, you magpie in a man's clothing,

Before that pie-bald face takes another bashing !

Bah — I'm so enraged my teeth are gnashing !

The churl has floated up again, and does but grin !

A staging of “Man in the
Moon”, from the
Harley MS. 2253.

Man in the Moon has horn
up straight,

And only a boat-hook to
bear his weight.

Many will wonder — might
he slip down here ?

See ! Weary of his nightly
toil, now he shudders and
shears,

Slides from fine fingers of
pinching frost,

to keen thorns that would
tear off his heel.

No wight in the world
knows when he drops,

except the hedge, beneath
whose bedclothes he steals.

Our orator appears before the audience. He makes as if to speak a ponderous ode... but a long boat-pole comically emerges from between his legs. Implied sexual innuendo. This puzzling pole is pulled out and out to much laughter... and then raised straight and rested against a wooden central balcony, and waved away... as if an unwanted thing, a back-stage prank. The Orator again makes as if to begin his ponderous ode. But before he can, there is revealed on the balcony the Man in the Moon, a horned moon in a small curved cockle-boat that is settled in and appears to be supported by the discarded boat-fork and its hook. A dark backcloth is seen floating and faintly rippling behind the Man. One horn of the crescent moon is up, the other serves as a leg. The first lines are spoken by the Orator, in astonished description addressed to the audience. The Orator cannot quite believe that the audience can see what he sees. *Many will wonder* — becoming sarcastic and annoyed at the interruption, the Orator with his fist knocks the boat fork three times. Shuddering it, until it topples away. The man in the Moon appears to wake from a benign doze. As he does so the curtains below the balcony are drawn back below. A black starry rural winter-landscape backcloth is there, above a stylised black hedge. The Man is now lowered by ropes in the rafters, and is moved *slowly* (by a black side-rope) between stylised representations of icy ‘frost’ and sharp thorns. The Man *slowly* shudders at the cold and threats that he navigates as the boat descends. He *slowly* lifts his heel. He is waking more fully, and peers at the approaching ground warily.

He softly drops to earth behind a thick but bare winter hedge, and the audience sees only one comic horn moving to and fro and up and down — as if the Man is ‘hopping’. There is an old woman’s brief outraged scream (implied: the Hedge has had her prim nightly privacy rudely invaded). Then the horn vanishes from sight. There is a sound of hopping on a path, growing more distant. Bouncing sound.

Hedge — where has Man in
the Moon gone ?

*'Slow down the lane, setting
no foot in front of the other.*

*There he is now, out in that
field and driving in hedge-
stakes,*

*In hopes my bramble-tangle
would tie him down...'*

He should not fear the
heights, but look at him
shaking now.

Yet he is the slowest man
that ever was born,

And with his sharp horn
must slice stakes quicker,

Else he'll be up in the sky
for another night's flight.

The Orator softly speaks to the outraged Hedge, in an understanding manner. She tearfully responds with the voice of an old lady. She may even have a human face 'in the hedge', if another player is required here.

setting no foot — the hedge is puzzled by the Man having only one foot, but this is merely implied in the wording.

There he is — the tone is accusatory.

my bramble-tangle — again a genteel outrage.

The Orator gives the Hedge an understanding and sympathetic look and pat, then swings back the hedge just as if it were a field gate. We see the silvery Man on a dark mound at the back of the alcove space below the balcony, somewhat weirdly lit. The Orator peers at him there, as if the Man is over the next field at night.

He addresses his observations to the audience.

Very slowly the thin Man rocks on the mound and appears to be trying to use one his upper horn to slice hedge-stakes. He is shaking with fear that he will be lifted back up to the sky, and looks warily up at it. Around the mound is the bramble-tangle he has hastily gathered from the Hedge. Also a few fresh stakes.

We see again that he has only one leg, and the 'no foot' comment of the Hedge is explained. Possible he needs to be comically upside down and on his back, in order to cut the stakes.

When this same man is up
high, where he was born,

he calmly beams from his
boat like an old grey monk.

But who is this stooped
sluggard, filled with fear ?

It is now many a day since
he dropped down here.

If he had an errand, then
naught has reached my ear.

He has but somewhere cut
rough stakes from a hedge,

And startled a hayward into
taking his pledge.

The curtains of the balcony alcove close on the small tableau, and on the fabric is a painting of the 'old grey monk' Man in the Moon, beaming from his shallow cockle-boat and full-faced. Possibly a lamp may be brought behind this, to add glow to this painted face. This is a vision of the Moon as he should be, pacific and bright, round and in his rightful place.

A pause. The curtains part, and slowly and wanly and slowly hopping, the Man emerges.

His thin rakish lustre has now gone, and also his sharp horns. Now he has a half-moon face. He is sluggishly fearful and out of place on Earth. He is neither one thing, nor the other.

At the mention of the *Hayward* [a lowly local rural policeman of medieval times, charged with maintaining hedges and securing runaway animals] the Man noticeably shrinks in fear and looks around.

The Orator looks kindly on him. Moves close and makes to pat the Man on his round half-side. A calm moment.

Moon !

If your pledge is taken, and
you have no silver penny —

Then be useful, bring home
your many stakes for
firewood.

Set forth your other foot,
stride down the hearthward
lane.

We shall ask this hayward to
our house,

Seat the idler in our
plumpest chair and heap the
fire.

Curl his whiskers with
strongest cider,

And my warm wife shall
bide and smile at him.

Then when he is as drunk
as a drowned mouse,

The Orator exclaims this loudly with a sudden
idea he has — and the Man is startled by the
suddenness of the volubility. The moment is a
comic one due to its suddenness and the reaction.

The half-moon Man however remains somewhat
frozen in his pose.

Orator looks for a moment, in a puzzled way, idly
wondering where the other leg/foot actually is...

Quiet, conspiratorial tone...

drowned mouse — high pitched, excited... long
pause...

He shall sign you a pardon
for our busy bailiff.

Ah, Man in the Moon hears
me not, though him I call.

Come !! Bah — I think
this churl is devilish deaf!

Though I wail long upon the
lawn, he will not be drawn.

The listless loon knows
nothing of the law.

Hop forth, you magpie in a
man's clothing,

Before that pie-bald face
takes another bashing!

He shall sign you — Low and cunning, quietly said.
Terry Thomas style, looks aside to see that no-one
else listening.

But, when the Orator looks back again he is
puzzled — the Man is not fully in his vision.
While he was speaking The Man had become
much fuller, and has very slowly started to rise up,
and the Orator is left comically staring at the
Man's lone wiggling leg which is then drawn up
into the filling circle. The Moon is being *very*
slowly hoisted back toward the balcony by ropes
from the rafters.

Orator wanly addresses the audience directly. A
dark fabric covering is discarded as the Man
ascends faster now. The fabric is pinned to the
ground by the Orator's foot, apparently un-
noticed, and thus is slowly unwinding as the Man
ascends — eventually it falls off entirely and
tumbles down onto the Orator.

More nights pass, and the Man's face is now
revealed full and round and shining. His single leg
has long-since vanished and he is now cross-
legged in his little boat. He is a nearing a full
moon, with distinct dark and light patches.

The Orator frustratedly addresses the ascending
Man directly.

Bah — I'm so enraged my
teeth are gnashing !

The churl has floated up
again, and does but grin !

The Man has ascended to the Balcony once more,
and is a now a full moon softly beaming and
smiling warmly with an open mouth at the
audience. He has evaded the law.

Orator sighs. In a resigned manner, he brings the
boat-pole back and fits it and its curved hook once
more to the balcony railing.

The full-moon Man thus once again appears to
rest in the sky on his boat and its supporting pole
and hook that symbolically connects him with the
watery earth and the tides. Possibly the pole is a
watery blue colour, rippled like water and with
silver top work.

The Orator closes the hedge-gate below, bringing
it back into view once more. A cloud-veil covers
the Man above.

In the dimmed light the Orator shrugs his
shoulders at the audience, and makes a resigned
gesture. He turns to go, tangles his feet in the
Man's discarded black wrapping, and accidentally
and comically topples back over the hedge. The
'old-lady scream' is once again heard from the
Hedge.

THE END