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The White Knight, the Ungrateful Dead and a Pair of Jacks: Further Adventures of a Folktale Motif

Elizabeth Williams

'The Grateful Dead', when it does not refer to a sixties rock band, is usually recognized as the title of a folktale with a remarkably long history.¹ It is, however, not so much a complete tale as a motif which occurs as the initiating episode in a whole group of stories which relate to each other in a web of bewildering complexity. Aarne and Thompson's monumental tale-type index divides these stories into three main groups, all beginning with a two-stage episode which they call *The Grateful Dead Man*:

- (a) The hero ransoms a corpse from creditors who refuse its burial.
- (b) The grateful dead man in the form of an old man, a servant, or a fox later helps the hero on condition that they are to divide all winnings.²

This is not, of course, the whole story. The various ways in which the transmogrified corpse 'helps the hero' and the subsequent adventures encountered are what distinguish one tale from another, though most involve the winning of a bride. The summary is in any case compiled from tales collected from largely oral tradition in comparatively modern times, but the age of the story is demonstrated by its occurrence in literary texts which are recorded much earlier; these, though accepted as versions of the same tale, offer still further variants.

Distinguishing one folktale from another, regardless of literary treatments, is already hard enough. Aarne's decision to classify the oral tales according to their major personnel and events rather than their plot-structure³ can, for instance, obscure the fact that a figure important in one story is actually a replaceable motif whose role is filled by a different character in another story which otherwise follows a closely similar course. The variation of 'an old man, a servant, or a fox' in the above summary is a

partial acknowledgement of this. Had the list included 'a cat' then certain likenesses to the familiar tale of Puss in Boots might have seemed more evident, particularly the hero's passive readiness to accept the aid of his resourceful and unusual helper. For, despite the fact that Aarne/Thompson calls the whole group 'The Grateful Dead', this macabre figure is not actually essential to the plot. What matters is not that the helper should be dead but that he should be grateful for, or merely impressed by, some selfless act performed by the hero.

That the Grateful Dead is not a tale but a variable motif is indicated by the fact that it is not found in the oldest exemplar of all, the apocryphal Book of Tobit, where the beneficent stranger is the Archangel Raphael, an all-powerful helper quite separate from the corpses Tobit had buried earlier. Significant too is the bad fit the motif frequently makes with the second half of the Aarne/Thompson summary above: in the many tales which include the Divided Winnings motif, the often relentless demands made by the stranger when he returns to claim his share can hardly be said to be grateful.

I have explored some of these issues in a previous article⁴ which centres on the use of the motif in the Middle English romance of *Sir Amadace*.⁵ Here the agreement to share winnings reaches a particularly grim climax with the Grateful Dead demanding that the hero he has aided divide his wife and child in half in exact fulfilment of his promise. This startling development is also found in some later versions, both traditional and literary, but so far as I can see *Sir Amadace* is the earliest extant text to contain it.

It is the purpose of this paper to continue the exploration of the theme of the Grateful Dead in some post-*Amadace* texts recorded in England up to the eighteenth century, using the Aarne/Thompson categories as a frame of reference. Though all the texts are, with one possible exception, literary, they may be seen to relate interestingly to the three sub-groups, even though the propriety of calling the whole set 'The Grateful Dead' remains in question. At the very least, the traditional forms of the tale can throw illuminating sidelights on the inevitable crises produced by this curious plot, notably the nature of the helper figure, who may or may not be a revenant form of the buried corpse, and the often dramatic results of his inexplicable demands upon the loyalty of the hero whom he is ostensibly helping.

It should also be emphasized that although these texts will be treated in broadly chronological order, they should be viewed not as a process of development but as the sporadic products of a continuing tradition – island summits, as it were, breaking the surface of a sea of story whose submarine mountain-chains have been only partially mapped. In only one case is the immediate dependence of one text upon another a

demonstrable certainty; in another, *The Old Wives Tale*, there is a hint of a connection, but in most the influence of pervasive oral tradition seems strongly indicated. That the group fits as well as it does into the Aarne/Thompson type categories suggests that these provide as good a map as any for exploring this particular archipelago.

The fourteenth-century romance of *Sir Amadace* is the first extant version of the story in English. Two earlier French verse romances, *Richars li biaux* and *Lion de Bourges*,⁶ have some points in common with it, notably the appearance of the revenant corpse in the form of a White Knight and the winning of the hero's bride in a tournament, but neither contains the threat to divide the wife and child, and *Sir Amadace* has a number of features in addition to this that are unique to it. Neither of the French texts should therefore be seen as the sole and immediate literary source of the Middle English. Next in line chronologically is the little-known prose romance of 'Oliver of Castille'. It too has a number of unusual features, but one or two of these carry a tantalizing hint that in this case there may be a specific link with the motif's next manifestation in Peele's *Old Wives Tale*.

The *Histoire d'Olivier de Castille et Artus d'Algarbe*⁷ was originally written in French by Philippe Camus in about 1454-56 at the court of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.⁸ It was translated into English by Henry Watson and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1518.⁹ Unique to it is the combination of the so-called Grateful Dead story with a version of the tale of the Two Brothers, usually referred to in English as *Amis and Amiloun*. Some details of this second strand of the double plot are different from the usual medieval re-tellings.¹⁰ For instance the two heroes, Oliver and Arthur, are of royal, not merely noble birth, and become stepbrothers through the marriage of their widowed parents, the King of Castille and the Queen of Algarve. For much of the plot they are apart after Oliver is forced to flee from the amorous approaches of his stepmother, leaving behind a 'life-token',¹¹ a magic glass which warns Arthur when his brother is in danger by changing colour. It is during this period of self-imposed exile that Oliver becomes the centre of the Grateful Dead plot which occupies the main part of the romance.

In Aarne/Thompson's classification the episode of the burial of the dead man leads into one of three alternative plot types: 506 *The Rescued Princess*; 507 *The Monster's Bride*, which includes the story told in Tobit; and 508 *The Bride won in a Tournament*, which is the commonest medieval variant and is the one found here. These medieval texts often supply names for people and places but the 'Oliver' version carries this practice further than most, anchoring the tale in a kind of fictionalized history. Its use of Castille and Algarve is only the beginning as Oliver's adventures

take him to England, then Ireland, and the lady he wins in the tournament is Helayne, daughter of the king of England. Of their two children the boy, Henry, we are told, showed great promise but did not live to become king, dying young on a crusade, while the girl, Clarysse, eventually married Arthur, becoming Queen of Castille and Algarve and, following the death of her (unnamed) grandfather, Queen of England too. This last is achieved only after a rebellion by the Duke of Gloucester. The text is too early for this to reflect the events of 1483, but a previous holder of the title, Thomas of Woodstock, uncle to Richard II, also came into conflict with his king, being accused of treason and (probably) murdered in 1397.¹² Other textual references also suggest an attempt to evoke, however vaguely, events of the late fourteenth century. Thus, the early death of the promising young Henry could suggest that of the Black Prince; and the Irish king, Maquemor, with whom Oliver crosses swords, perhaps recalls the belligerent career of Art McMurrough, whose role in the Irish expeditions of Richard II somewhat resembles that of Maquemor in the romance.¹³

This same air of plausible historicity also affects the Grateful Dead plot. Possibly uniquely in the use of the motif, the hero actually meets his helper before the latter's death. Moreover, this helper also has a respectable and well-known English name, Sir John Talbot, and a place of residence, near Canterbury.¹⁴ This distinguished, but impecunious, English knight probably represents the peak of the Grateful Dead's social rise from the anonymous obscurity of mere corpse to named and landed gentleman. He is usually a knight in these medieval variants, and his revenant shape is again as a White Knight.

The English *Olyver* also shares with *Sir Amadace* the macabre climax in which the White Knight returns, after an absence of many years, to claim his share in Oliver's wife and children, only relenting when the hero shows his willingness to stand by his given word and cut the queen in half. His demand, it is true, is a little less bloody than in *Sir Amadace*, since he is prepared to halve the children by simply taking one of the pair, but these demands are not made at all in the two earlier French analogues, *Richars li biaus* and *Lion de Bourges*. Since it seems unlikely that Camus knew *Sir Amadace*, its origin may lie in the folktale tradition: the *Monster's Bride* plot frequently requires violence to the lady in order to disenchant her.

In common with his anonymous predecessors (and in accordance with the usual folktale scenario) Sir John Talbot dies in debt, but since Oliver already knew him in life as a staunch companion, his generous burial of his friend and settlement with his creditors lacks the total selflessness that is an important feature of the action in other versions, where the debtor's corpse is that of a stranger.¹⁵ Sir John's second manifestation as the White Knight is then uniquely delayed. At his first re-appearance

(Ch. 20) when he promises the now destitute Oliver his aid in winning the king's daughter at a tournament, he is simply 'a man' (later called a 'knight') encountered in a wood. Subsequently, since it is to be a three-day tournament, he provides arms for Oliver in three different colours, first black, then red, and finally white, on each day accompanying Oliver himself with a magnificent entourage to match. Thereafter he appears only in white.

A three-day tournament in which the hero jousts in different colours on successive days is a common romance motif¹⁶ but, unusually, at the end of this story (Ch. 74) the knight gives these colours a specific religious interpretation, explaining that they signify the three stages of death: suffering, purgatory and salvation, which Oliver's burial of him helped him to achieve.¹⁷ This accords with the generally pious slant of the narrative in which the White Knight has something of the character of a guardian angel, even extending his protection to Oliver's brother, Arthur, and ascending finally to heaven. The family protection and the ascent are also found in *Lion de Bourges*. I have argued elsewhere¹⁸ that the White Knight in *Sir Amadace* is less firmly attached to the Christian context, being portrayed more as an arbitrary, Otherworld figure, who simply vanishes as mysteriously as he came. His initial appearance, as a white-clad figure riding through a wood, is a key element in establishing this identity, which the fragmented encounter in 'Oliver', with its three colours and its separate preliminary meeting, obscures. The *Amadace* poet was evidently quite comfortable with such a figure, but Camus perhaps felt the White Knight needed to be brought within an orthodox Christian universe. Even more emphatically a later printer added an epilogue to the French text, assuring his readers explicitly that all the wonders were the ineffable work of God.¹⁹

George Peele's *Old Wives Tale*²⁰ moves in a totally different world. From the moment the play opens, with a group of characters lost in a wood and finding shelter in a hut, we are deep in the landscape of folktale. Critics seem united in their belief that Peele, writing probably between 1588 and 1594, used oral sources for some, or most, of his material,²¹ but none of them seems to have noticed that the Grateful Dead plot at least may also have been available to him in print.

The 1518 text of *Olyuer* is very rare now, but Captain Cox had a copy of 'Olyuer of the Castl' in 1575,²² and there is other evidence that it was reprinted in the second half of the sixteenth century.²³ What is significant here is that the only two versions of the Grateful Dead story which are known to have existed in English before 1588 have a knight as the hero, and a climax in which the dead helper demands that the hero cut his lady in half in fulfilment of the Divided Winnings agreement. Both these features are also found in Peele's play. Holthausen long ago suggested that Peele

found them in *Sir Amadace*²⁴ but, if he did indeed use a written source, some print of *Olyuer* is far more likely. The play, however, does not cover a sufficiently long time-span for a child to be available for division as well, and many other features strongly indicate popular as well as literary origins for this and other parts of Peele's intricately interwoven plots – perhaps the same folktale that lies behind *Sir Amadace* and even 'Oliver'. It may or may not be significant that 'Oliver' also provides a precedent for interweaving the Grateful Dead with another plot to which it is not overtly related.

Indications of popular origins include the way the social status of the Grateful Dead character has taken a slide downwards. As already noted, the play shares with its romance analogues a chivalric hero in the person of Eumenides, the Wandering Knight, in search of his lady, Delya. But the Grateful Dead is no Sir John Talbot fallen on hard times, nor even the upwardly mobile merchant of *Sir Amadace*, but the socially unplaceable Jack, the 'frollickst frannion amongst you' (l. 470), left destitute in his coffin by his own convivial over-spending.

In addition, the whole of *The Old Wives Tale* is fraught with familiar folktale motifs. One assiduous researcher²⁵ counted over ninety, many of which are commonplace. Those which are also found in variant versions of the Grateful Dead stories include the very widespread image of the sought-after lady 'as white as snowe, and as redd as bloud' (l. 112),²⁶ and, more significantly, the 'life index', not quite the same thing as the 'life token' in the Two Brothers plot in 'Oliver' but evidently closely related to it as a kind of external soul with which its owner's well-being is vitally linked,²⁷ and whose destruction ends the magic of the conjuror, Sacrapant.

The presence of Sacrapant, however, shows that in this play we are dealing not with Aarne/Thompson 508, but with 507 *The Monster's Bride*. In this version, the need to cut the heroine in half often has magical justification, since this violent remedy is required to free her from the toils of her demon lover. This of course does not apply in *The Old Wives Tale*, where Jack's demand for his exact payment seems even more perverse than usual: the freeing of Delya is achieved by other means and, although we might be able to accept that God (possibly) or an arbitrary Otherworld figure (probably) should choose to test the hero's integrity in this extreme way, it hardly fits Jack, the good-hearted profligate.

This undoubted use of Type 507 rather than 508 distances *The Old Wives Tale* somewhat from *Olyuer*, but it is worth noting that the scene that so often seems crucial in setting the tone of these tales, the first re-encounter of the hero with the revenant helper, offers a few tantalizing parallels between the play and the prose romance. Commentators have noted, for instance, that Eumenides does not seem to see Jack at first, and has to ask, 'Who is that which pincheth me?' (l. 696). The

supposition is that Jack is invisible during the first few lines of dialogue and gets Eumenides' attention in the normal manner of unseen spirits.²⁸ This is a reasonable interpretation of Peele's text but *Olyver* is the only analogue I have come across which has anything comparable.

I have already noted that the helper's manifestation as the White Knight is delayed in *Olyver*, but the details of this first re-encounter are oddly allusive. Like Eumenides, Olyver is sunk in gloomy soliloquy when 'there came a man to hym the whiche plucked hym by the slewe dyuers tymes saynge, "Olyuer of Castylle, be nothyng abashed . . ."'²⁹ Both Olyver and Eumenides are surprised by the stranger's knowledge of them, and both scenes end with the helper sending the hero on to a place of refreshment where they are to meet again, a hermitage in *Olyver*, an inn in *The Old Wives Tale*, where Eumenides finds himself miraculously provided with a bottomless purse. This is paralleled in *Olyver* not at the hermitage but in a subsequent scene, when Olyver finds that someone has mysteriously delivered to his lodging a 'lytell fardell' of fine clothes and a 'bogette' full of 'nothyng but golde & good nobles of Englande' (Ch. xxix). From details such as these it seems not unreasonable to speculate that Peele, though drawing primarily on some traditional version of the Monster's Bride, may also have taken a hint or two from the chivalric *Olyver*. Against this, however, the possibility has to be admitted that a scene of marvellous provision may have been present in some popular source. The earlier French *Richars li biaus* has a not dissimilar episode in which the White Knight, acting as harbinger to the poverty-stricken Richars, inveigles the local provost into providing a magnificent feast for his powerful master who will be arriving shortly.³⁰ His effrontery (and his success) are hardly chivalric, and are second only to those of Puss in Boots.

The Grateful Dead hovers in the wings of at least two more English plays in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Massinger and Field's *The Fatal Dowry* was published in 1632 but must have been written by 1620.³¹ On the face of it the motif is barely present in this play since it contains no revenant corpse, but as we have seen this is not essential to the plot and it is worth looking, if a little tendentiously, for other signs of the traditional structure in this undoubtedly literary production.

When the play opens the body of a distinguished Marshall, who has spent his fortune in the service of his country, is lying unburied because of the demands of his intransigent creditors. The setting is again loosely historical and, interestingly enough, Burgundian. The action takes place in Dijon, and the named battles in which the Marshall suffered his losses are those in which Charles the Rash (son of Philip the Good) was defeated by the Swiss in 1476-7.³² His closest analogue in the texts under

discussion is thus Sir John Talbot, but the patriotic sacrifice which led to his destitution is greater, and nobler, than any.

From this beginning, however, a different deployment of roles leads into an apparently quite different course of events. The hero is Charalois, the Marshall's son, who acts, at least to start with, rather in the manner of a folktale hero, carried along by events and accepting his good fortune with a kind of stunned gratitude (though this changes when he takes the steps that turn the play into a tragedy). Destitute himself, he cannot arrange for the burial of his dead father, but performs the usual act of comprehensive self-sacrifice by taking his place in the debtors' prison. This reduces him to depths quite as abject as if he had spent his last farthing on the burial, as in the usual scenario. He is not, of course, a stranger to the corpse, but his noble acceptance of the degradation of captivity so impresses the beneficent Rochfort that he pays the debts, frees Charalois and bestows upon him his daughter and heiress, Beaumelle. Thus, instead of a hero who buries a stranger and is helped by a revenant corpse to win fortune and fair lady, we have a pious son who buries his father, which inspires a third party to supply the reward. The happy ending, however, is then turned on its head when the lady proves faithless with a former lover, Young Novall.

Gerould pointed out many years ago that 'the part played by Rochfort may be regarded as a greatly sophisticated reminiscence' of the Grateful Dead, and further suggested that Massinger 'had in mind some narrative, either popular or literary' of what we might now regard as one of Arne/Thompson's types.³³ Analysing the treatment, however, in terms of theatrical 'parts' may perhaps be taken a step further, allowing us, with a little ingenuity, to discover the Monster's Bride as a kind of sub-text, with the philandering Young Novall as a degenerate grandchild of the demon lover. Bearing in mind that the lady in some of the related folktales was not as willing to be rescued from her first liaison as Tobias's Sarah,³⁴ the parallel is not as far-fetched as might appear. The steadfast Romont even falls into place as a kind of additional surrogate for the Grateful Dead in his role of faithful friend to the hero, though his purpose in the play is to try and convince Charalois of Beaumelle's infidelity, which leads ultimately not to disenchantment but to tragedy. For this is one text in which the hero does indeed kill the heroine (and the demon lover too) but with no hope of magical, or even miraculous, restoration.

There is even less of the Grateful Dead plot in Rowe's *Fair Penitent*, printed in 1703 and described by its editor as both 'an unacknowledged adaptation of *The Fatal Dowry*' and 'one of the most successful plays of the eighteenth century'.³⁵ The names of the characters have all been changed, and the compression of the action to fit the notorious 'unities' means that the whole episode of the unburied debtor has become a

past event, referred to but not enacted. The emphasis has also shifted to give more space to the heroine, Calista, whose seduction by the profligate Lothario (type-specimen of every later 'gay Lothario') is salaciously dwelt upon in a lush reminiscence by its perpetrator (Act I, l.143ff.). In some ways this fits Lothario even better for the part of demon lover, and the sexual frailty of Calista is far more marked than that of Beaumelle. But although the hero, Altamont, succeeds in killing Lothario, he is cheated of the dispatch of his wife when she does the job herself. Nor is she markedly 'disenchanted' of her passion for Lothario by his death. By an odd coincidence (and it is surely no more) the final act opens with Calista 'discovered on a couch in black' beside a bier on which rests the body of her dead lover. It is a disconcerting reminder of one of the most memorable (and unique) scenes in *Sir Amadace*, when the hero comes upon the debtor's widow watching by the bier of her dead husband; it is an interesting critical exercise to compare the scene which is genuinely Medieval with the one that is merely Gothick.

It has to be acknowledged that the Grateful Dead is barely present in either of these plays. All we have is a debtor's corpse and in *The Fair Penitent* even that is long buried. The presence of the Monster's Bride beneath the surface of the subsequent plot is in some ways as ghostly as the revenant himself, but that it can be seen at all does suggest that a basic structure is here holding the plot together as surely as the mere presence of this initiating motif. The separation of corpse and helper into two different characters is found as early as the Book of Tobit, which also has little trace of the problematic Divided Winnings theme. But though the dead man is now marginalized and the testing of the hero no longer explicit, it is significant how much of the plot of both plays can still be seen to fit the old paradigm of generosity rewarded by a marriage involving violence and danger.

All the texts dealt with so far have related to Aarne/Thompson 507 and 508. The sole representative in English of 506 *The Rescued Princess* is, sadly, one of the least distinguished. This is the ballad usually (and ominously) known as 'The Turkey Factor' (alias 'The Turkish Factor' or 'The Factor's Garland'). The British Library lists eight copies, printed in five different places between (?)1780 and (?)1825, so it was clearly popular, and further versions have been recovered from oral tradition in the USA.³⁶ Halliwell referred to Ritson's opinion that the piece was 'founded on the romance of Oliver of Castylle',³⁷ which was astute of Ritson, as even today not many people have even heard of 'Oliver'. But he was wrong, as this story has no knights or tournaments, its hero is a humble merchant (or 'factor') and events run a different course.

The options provided by Aarne/Thompson 506 track the plot of the ballad with fair accuracy. Stage one comprises the usual generous burial of a debtor's corpse by the Factor. Stage two, a shade redundantly, involves a second good deed when 'the hero rescues a princess from slavery and marries her'. Later 'the king has learned her whereabouts by means of a cloth or flag which she has sewed, and has sent the hero for her'. This 'recognized embroidery' motif is effected when the Factor takes the rescued lady home and installs her not as his wife but his housekeeper. In this humble position she embroiders a fine garment for him which he wears on his next Turkish voyage, and the stitchery is duly recognized by the Emperor as his missing daughter's handiwork. The Factor is then sent to fetch her, as in Aarne/Thompson's summary.

In stage three, 'the hero is thrown overboard by a rival but is rescued by a dead man and finally brought to the princess'. The villain in the ballad is a treacherous ship's captain who escorts the princess to the Emperor and is offered her hand in the hero's place. Meantime the Factor, cast up on a desert island, is rescued by 'a little old man, paddling in a canoe' (st. 37) – a sad come-down from the White Knight pricking in the wood, but he still drives a hard bargain and as usual one wonders why. But the Factor has to promise the first-born child of his impending marriage, which takes place when he reaches Turkey again and exposes the treacherous captain. Two children are born and in due course the Factor's rescuer arrives to claim his payment. This is not, of course, a bargain to share winnings, but the taking of one child out of two provides what is probably the ballad's only real parallel with 'Oliver of Castille'. And as ever, once the parties have shown themselves ready to keep their given word, the man reveals his identity and returns the child. My single quoted line is a sufficient index of the quality of this text, which is not even in ballad metre but doggerel couplets. Remarkably however (and this perhaps supports Ritson's opinion) the chain of motifs found in the old 'tournament' story is here again almost complete: the Grateful Dead, the revenant with his demand for payment and the testing of the hero with the threatened loss of a child, though not of the lady.

Liljeblad found a merchant ambience to be common to all stories in the *Rescued Princess* group³⁸ but even a merchant is one stage up from Jack, that ubiquitous type-name for the opportunist folktale hero who ends up with the Princess just as surely through his own good luck and enterprise. Peele's Jack does not fall into this category, but we can end this survey of Grateful Dead stories with one of the quintessential Jacks, hero of a vulgar little chapbook printed in 1711 under the title of *The History of Jack and the Giants*, but known to most of us as Jack the Giant-Killer.³⁹

The story is a pastiche of episodes loosely stitched together, among which the Grateful Dead makes a rather disguised appearance. Already with several giants under his belt, Jack meets up with King Arthur's son who is on his way to Wales 'where a beautiful Lady lived, whom he heard was possessed with seven Evil Spirits' (p. 55). Clearly we are back with the Monster's Bride, but in a form rather different from those so far discussed. Aarne/Thompson's summary of the second stage of Type 507A includes the following:

With the help of the dead man who has taken the necessary magic means from three giants, [the hero] succeeds in the tests assigned: finding objects which [the princess] hides, and in killing the evil monster with whom she is enamored.

According to Liljeblad,⁴⁰ 'the necessary magic means' generally include a wonderful sword and a cloak of invisibility. These two Jack has no difficulty in inveigling out of a more than usually gullible giant, plus a cap of knowledge and shoes of swiftness. With their aid he is able to restore the Princess's hidden handkerchief and decapitate the demon lover.

The lover's quest for the enchanted bride, the invisible Jack and the decapitated villain have led critics to suppose that some form of this tale was known to George Peele, but as Hook has pointed out⁴¹ the differences between *The Old Wives Tale* and *Jack and the Giants* are equally striking. Particularly significant is the fact that although the chapbook Jack is the helper, he is not the Grateful Dead. The corpse burial is a separate episode, performed by King Arthur's son, who so impresses Jack by this act of generosity that he resolves to help him, with no conditions attached. This is also what happens in *The Fatal Dowry* and *The Fair Penitent* and has the same result: substituting an authority figure who offers practical assistance for a revenant of mysterious origin and unexplained intentions removes the awkward conflict between the expected gratitude of the corpse and his tricky bargain to divide winnings. Violence to the lady remains in the two plays, but in the chapbook even this is no longer necessary for her disenchantment which is simply effected when her conditions are fulfilled, 'at which Time she appeared in all her Beauty, a sweet and virtuous Creature'.

It may seem odd, when this tale is read in the context of other Grateful Dead stories, to find it told from the point of view of the helper, thus relegating the 'hero' to the subordinate position his passivity hints at elsewhere. Liljeblad, however, has drawn into the ambit of these tales another group, summarized in Aarne/Thompson 516 *Faithful John*.⁴² In these a trusty servant is indeed the hero of a plot in which he

helps his royal master to win a perilous bride. These perils may involve not only a serpent in the bridal chamber, as in Aarne/Thompson 507, but also the death of the servant, who can be saved only by the willing sacrifice of the couple's child. When the child is threatened in the medieval texts there is no question of a life to be saved, but the parallel demonstrates again how tangled are the webs that tie together this group of tales in which the Grateful Dead is only one among a mass of sometimes conflicting motifs.

All the texts looked at here have begun with the buried corpse, but with Jack on centre stage the roles of buried debtor and helper are definitively separated. The helper, moreover, is no longer the Grateful Dead but that hardy folktale favourite, the Resourceful Servant. Even Raphael fits this role, omniscient and Godlike where Jack is merely ingenious. Far from his folktale roots and his overt servant role, he still has a touch of arbitrary power as Rochfort in *The Fatal Dowry*. When linked to the corpse as a revenant his manifestations are also highly variable, but his service then comes with a price-tag, whether he is the ominous, Otherworldly and not quite Christian White Knight of *Sir Amadace*, a soul seeking salvation as in 'Oliver', or even the Factor's solitary canoeist. But the closer he gets to being a conventional, literary character, the harder it is to accept his unexplained testing of the sorely-trying hero.

Our two Jacks neatly epitomize the problem. The Giant-Killer circumvents it completely by appearing not as the Grateful Dead but as the Resourceful Servant, reducing the tale to a subsidiary narrative which leaves the insouciant Jack free to go off afterwards in search of more giants to slay. Not so Peele's Jack, a full-blown revenant whom the role of tester of the hero's loyalty fits so uneasily. Omniscient he may be in his dealings with Sacrapant, but his ending seems to draw him closer to Mephistopheles than the Almighty. His last words are 'God be with you all!' but then 'Jacke leapes down into the ground,' leaving the bewildered Eumenides to cry,

'Jacke what art thou gone? Then farewell Jacke'. (l. 910)

summary than to the medieval *Amis* group, include the 'life-token' (see n. 11) and the fact that Oliver falls into the danger from which Arthur rescues him by losing himself in a forest while out hunting.

¹¹ 'Object (animal, person) has mystic connection with the life of a person, so that changes in the life-token indicate changes in the person, usually disaster or death' (Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, FF Communications, 107 (Helsinki, 1933), II, Motif E761). MacEdward Leach identifies as primitive features both the life-token and the amorous stepmother (*Amis and Amiloun*, EETS, os 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. xlii); Orgelfinger suggests a literary source for the latter (*Hystorye*, p. xxiii). But Aarne/Thompson 303 has no sign of the famous climax in which Amis (Oliver) slays his children to cure Amiloun (Arthur) of leprosy.

¹² May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 482.

¹³ McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, pp. 470-73, 491. Orgelfinger notes the parallels with the Black Prince (*Hystorye*, p. 237) and Duke of Gloucester (p. 244) but not with McMurrough.

¹⁴ Almost certainly another 'historical' reference though a little later than those noted above: Sir John Talbot, first Earl of Shrewsbury, was a famous soldier, killed at the Battle of Castillon in 1453 and much admired in Burgundy; see Orgelfinger, *Hystorye*, p. xi.

¹⁵ It also seems to me a weakness that, despite Oliver's previous friendship with Talbot, he does not recognize his helper; this failure is perfectly reasonable in other texts where the hero knew him only as a corpse.

¹⁶ A comparative table of such episodes is supplied in O. Lengert's edition of *Roswall and Lillian*, *Englische Studien*, 17 (1892), p. 361.

¹⁷ For further discussion of the colours see Regnier-Bohler, *Traditions et structures*, pp. 67, 69.

¹⁸ See n. 4 above.

¹⁹ Orgelfinger, *Hystorye*, p. 247.

²⁰ Edited by Frank S. Hook, in *The Life and Works of George Peele*, general editor Charles Tyler Prouty, 3 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952-70); Vol. III, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele* (1970), pp. 297-443. This edition has much the best discussion of sources (pp. 319-41).

²¹ See e.g. Hook, *Dramatic Works*, pp. 319-41; *The Old Wives Tale*, ed. by Patricia Binnie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 20-23.

²² *Robert Laneham's Letter*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), p. 30.

²³ Orgelfinger, *Hystorye*, pp. xvii-xviii.

Further Adventures of a Folktale Motif

²⁴ F. Holthausen, 'Sir Amadas und Peeles *The old wive's* [sic] *tale*,' *Herrig's Archiv*, 119 (1907), p. 177.

²⁵ Sylvia Lyons-Render, cited with caution in Hook, *Dramatic Works*, p. 339.

²⁶ The phrase recurs throughout the play, applied to different characters. For the motif in *Grateful Dead* folktales see Liljeblad, *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, p. 196

²⁷ See Thompson, *Motif Index* E710 for External Soul: 'A person (often a giant or ogre) keeps his soul or life separate from the rest of his body.' The descriptions of E760 Life Index and E761 Life Token (see n.12) are bewilderingly close, but the group as a whole does include E765.1 'Life bound up with light (flame)' which seems to suit Sacrapant. See also Liljeblad, *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, pp. 186-87.

²⁸ See e.g. Binnie, *Old Wives Tale*, p. 79, note to ll.724-29. The theory is supported by Jack's entry later in the play, signalled by the theatrically challenging stage-direction, 'Enter Jack invisible' (Hook, *Dramatic Works*, p. 416.)

²⁹ Ch. xx, my punctuation.

³⁰ Holden, *Richars*, l. 4523 ff.

³¹ Philip Massinger and Nathan Field, *The Fatal Dowry*, ed. by T. A. Dunn (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), p. 1. All references are to this edition.

³² *The Fatal Dowry*, p. 103.

³³ *The Grateful Dead*, p. 43.

³⁴ See e.g., Liljeblad, *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, p. 195.

³⁵ Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*, ed. by Malcolm Goldstein (London: Arnold, 1969), p. xiv. Dunn notes (ed. cit., p. 8) that other adaptations of *The Fatal Dowry* were also made.

³⁶ For discussion and text see Bertha McKee Dobie, 'The Turkish Factor', in *Texas and Southwestern Lore*, Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, 6 (Austin, 1927), pp. 56-65. It is not in F. J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Trying to locate a text at a time when the entire British Library was in transit between the old Reading Room and the new proved astonishingly difficult. I am grateful to Dr Jenny Fellows and several librarians on both sides of the Atlantic for helping me to find a copy of this execrable but elusive opus.

³⁷ James Orchard Halliwell, *Notices of Fugitive Tracts and Chap-Books printed at Aldermay Churchyard, Bow Churchyard etc.*, Percy Society, 29 (London, 1849), p. 46. He does not say where Ritson said it.

³⁸ *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, p. 127.

³⁹ Conveniently printed with a useful discussion in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. by Iona and Peter Opie (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 47-65.

⁴⁰ *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, p. 207ff.

⁴¹ *Dramatic Works*, p. 327

⁴² *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, pp. 117-23.