The Two Gentlemen of Verona

A presentation by
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And
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Introduction
The Two Gentlemen of Verona

• Written by William Shakespeare
• Probably early 1590's
• Comedy about friendship, love and infidelity
• Satire on superficial and indiscriminate love
• Shakespeare never published his plays
• Works were published posthumously in 1623
Introduction

- Play first performed between 1594 and 1595
- Language: Early Modern English
- Humorous play with references to Greek myths
- Act 1 Scene 1: Valentine wants to leave Verona; he asks Proteus to come with him
- Proteus is in love with Julia and does not want to go
- First Valentine makes fun of him but then leaves alone
VALENTINE:

Cease to persuade, my loving Proteus:
Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.
Were't not affection chains thy tender days
To the sweet glances of thy honour'd love,

*Ever: "always"

*Thy: 2nd person, singular, informal, genitive
I rather would entreat thy company
To see the wonders of the world abroad,
Than, living dully sluggardized at home,
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.
But since thou lovest, love still and thrive therein,
Even as I would when I to love begin.

Therein: "in it," OE þærin, used before 12th century
PROTEUS

**Wilt thou** be gone? Sweet Valentine, adieu!
Think on thy Proteus, when thou **haply** seest
Some rare note-worthy object in thy travel:

**Wilt thou**: Modal for volition, rare today; **thou** is second person, singular, informal, nominative
**haply**: by chance, coincidentally
Act I, Scene 1

Wish me partaker in thy **happiness**
When thou **dost** meet good **hap**; and in thy danger,
If ever danger **do environ** thee,
Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,
For I will be thy **beadsman**, Valentine.

**happiness**: "success"
**dost**: second person, singular of “to do”
**hap**: "coincidence"
Act I, Scene 1

VALENTINE
   And on a love-book pray for my success?

PROTEUS
   Upon some book I love I'll pray for thee.

VALENTINE
   That's on some shallow story of deep love:
   How young Leander cross'd the Hellespont.
Act I, Scene 1

PROTEUS

That's a deep story of a deeper love:
For he was more than over-shoes in love.

VALENTINE

'Tis true; for you are over-boots in love,
And yet you never swum the Hellespont.

*Over-shoes: "ankle-deep"

*Over-boots: exaggeration of “over-shoes”
Act I, Scene 1

PROTEUS

Over the boots? nay, give me not the boots.

VALENTINE

No, I will not, for it boots thee not.

PROTEUS

What?

*Give me not*: direct negation of the verb without an auxiliary; Typical word order for a sentence with a negation in EModE

*It boots*: "to help, to serve, to benefit"
VALENTINE

   To be in love, where scorn is bought with groans;
   Coy looks with heart-sore sighs; one fading moment's mirth
   With twenty watchful, weary, tedious nights:
Act I, Scene 1

If haply won, perhaps a hapless gain;
If lost, why then a grievous labour won;
However, but a folly bought with wit,
Or else a wit by folly vanquished.

PROTEUS

So, by your circumstance, you call me fool.

haply: "coincidentally"

hapless: "unfortunately"

your/you: "formal singular forms"
Act I, Scene 1

VALENTINE

So, by your circumstance, I fear you'll prove.

PROTEUS

'Tis love you cavil at: I am not Love.
VALENTINE

Love is your master, for he masters you:
And he that is so yoked by a fool,
Methinks, should not be chronicled for wise.

_He masters_: “he” refers to love, mentioned in the line before. In OE, references to things were made by using “he” or ”she”; neuter was later introduced

_Methinks_: seems, seems to be
Act I, Scene 1

PROTEUS

Yet writers say, as in the sweetest bud

The eating canker **dwell**s, so eating love **Inhabit**s in the finest wits of all.

*Dwell*/ *Inhabit*: the third person, singular, present tense endings -eth/-th were replaced by -s/-es in Early Modern English
VALENTINE

And writers say, as the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker *ere* it *blow,*
Even so by love the young and tender wit
Is turn'd to folly, blasting in the bud,

Ere: "soon"

Blow: no {s} ending in 3rd person singular present tense because subjunctive
Losing his verdure even in the prime
And all the fair effects of future hopes.
But wherefore waste I time to counsel thee,
That art a votary to fond desire?

his: reference to “bud”, personal pronoun
That: non-defining relative pronoun; today not possible (ModE demands who)

Once more adieu! my father at the road
Expects my coming, there to see me shipp'd.
Act I, Scene 1

PROTEUS

And *thither will I bring* thee, Valentine.

VALENTINE

Sweet Proteus, no; now let us take our leave. To Milan let me hear from thee by letters Of thy success in love, and what news *else Betideth* here in absence of thy friend; And likewise will visit thee with mine.
Act I, Scene 1

PROTEUS

All happiness **bechance** to thee in Milan!

VALENTINE

As much to you at home! and so, farewell.

*Thither*: O.E. þider "to or toward that place"

*else*: meaning similar to today, word order different

*Betideth*: {-th} ending in contrast to {-s} ending

*bechance*: by chance
# Early Modern English Pronouns

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<tr>
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<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
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<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; p. Sing</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>myself</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; p. Sing standard (archaic formal)</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; p. Sing archaic informal</td>
<td>thou</td>
<td>thee</td>
<td>thyself</td>
<td>thy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd p. Sing.</td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
<td>himself, herself, itself</td>
<td>his, her, its</td>
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<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; p. Plu</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
<td>our</td>
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<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; p. Plu</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; p. Plu</td>
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Periphrastic “do“

“When thou **dost** meet good hap“

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular ”do“
- Contains no meaning on its own
- periphrastic do is most common where the inflectional ending on the verb would yield a complex consonantal clusters; the use of *do* was generalized to non-emphatic affirmative statements
Word formation “hap“

• hap: "coincidence"
• haply: "coincidentally"
  – “-ly“ adjective
• hapless: "unfortunately"
  – “- less“ negation
• happiness: "success"
If ever danger do environ thee,
    Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,
    For I will be thy **beadsman**, Valentine.

And on a love-book pray for my success?

Upon some book I love I'll pray for thee.

That's on some shallow story of deep love:
How young **Leander** cross'd the **Hellespont**.
Explanation of terms: Beadsmen

- Old English “biddan”: to pray
- literally "a man of prayer"
- Pensioner or beggar who prays for his benefactor
- Scotland: public beadsmen supported by the king → pray for his and the state's welfare
- Long used as an equivalent to servant
Explanation of terms: Hellespont

- separates Anatolia from Europe
- Named after Helle, who was drowned here in the mythology of the Golden Fleece
- Leander had to cross to date Hero
Explanation of terms: Leander

• Greek myth “Hero and Leander“
• Hero: priestess of Aphrodite, lived in a tower in Sestos, at the edge of the Hellespont
• Leander: lived on the other side of the strait, fell in love with her and swam across every night
• Hero lit a lamp to guide his way
• Stormy winter night: wind blew out Hero's light
• Leander lost his way and drowned
• Hero threw herself from the tower
List of references

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
While the word "gentlemen" suggests that its heroes are adults, The Two Gentlemen of Verona is more intelligible if we think of them as boys, leaving home for the first time. One has a crush on a girl, Julia, though he hasn't yet told her. Sent to court to learn to be "perfect gentlemen," Valentine and Proteus are derailed by their attraction to Sylvia, the ruler's daughter. Valentine's mental denseness does not deter Sylvia from returning his love, but he is caught, and banished, when he tries to elope with her. Proteus's desire for Sylvia wipes out his former love, leading him into despicable