

EL2211 Historical Variation in English

Tutorial No. 6

1. Respond to these statements by stating whether you agree with them (wholly, partially, not in the least), giving reasons for or elaborating on your position.

- (a) OE lexis was pretty basic and down-to-earth because OE speakers were boorish and illiterate.
- (b) The Scandinavians and the English lived peaceably with each other in Britain, and so there was a freer flow of lexis between them than between the English and the Celts (Britons).
- (c) The French brought by the Normans was a superior language to English then.
- (d) ME is different from OE because of the reduced inflections, and this was due to the Scandinavians and English simplifying their languages.
- (e) Shakespeare's English is closer to OE than PDE (present-day English).

2. Examine this passage from *A Midsommer Nights Dreame* (4.1) and answer the questions below. **[Note: please do not choose this passage for your group task.]**

Tita. My Oberon, what visions haue I seene!
Me thought I was enamour'd of an Asse.

Ob. There lyes your loue.

Tita. How came these things to passe?

O, how mine eyes doe loath his visage now!

Ob. Silence a while. *Robin*, take off this head:

Titania, musicke call, and strike more dead

Then common sleepe: of all these, fine the sense.

Ti. Musick, howe musick: such as charmeth sleepe. (peepe.

- 1 4. Come to
- 2 *pass* =
- 3 happen
- 3 8. *then* = than
- 4 8. *these* = the
- 5 four lovers
- 5 and Bottom
- 6 8. *fine* = end
- 7 9. *howe* = an
- 8 exclamation
- 9

Rob. Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fools eyes
Ob. Sound Musick: come, my queen, take hands with me,
 And rocke the ground whereon these sleepers be.
 Now, thou and I are new in amitie,
 And will to morrow midnight, solemnly
 Daunce, in Duke *Theseus* house triumphantly,
 And blesse it to all faire prosperitie.
 There shall the paires of faithfull louers be
 Wedded, with *Theseus*, all in iollitie.
Rob. Fairy King, attend, and marke:
 I do heare the morning Larke.
Ob. Then my Queene, in silence sad,
 Trippe we after nights shade:
 We, the Globe, can compasse soone,
 Swifter then the wandring Moone.
Tita. Come my Lord, and in our flight,
 Tell me how it came this night,
 That I sleeping here was found,
 With these mortals on the ground. *Exeunt*
Enter Theseus and all his traine. *VVinde borne.*
The. Goe one of you, finde out the forrester:
 For now our obseruation is performde.
 And since we haue the vaward of the day,
 My loue shall heare the musicke of my hounds.
Vncouple, in the westerne vallie, let them goe:
 Dispatch I say, and finde the forrester.
 Wee will, faire Queene, vp to the mountaines toppe,
 And marke the musicall confusion
 Of hounds and Echo in coniunction.

10 **10.** In order
 11 to save
 12 space, the
 13 end of the
 14 line is at the
 15 end of line 9
 16 **12.** *whereon* =
 17 on which
 18 **19.** *attend and*
 19 *marke* =
 20 listen and
 21 note
 22
 23
 24
 25 **29.** *VVinde* =
 26 wind (ie
 27 horns
 28 blown)
 29 **31.** *obseruation*
 30 =
 31 observance
 32 (of May Day
 33 rituals)
 34 **32.** *vaward* =
 35 vanguard,
 36 early part
 37 **34.** *Vncouple* =
 38 unleash (the
 dogs)
35. *Dispatch* =
 make haste

- (a) In what sense does this passage represent English around 1600? Does it represent literary or poetic language? Does it represent informal conversation or instructional language?
- (b) How consistent is the spelling and writing conventions in the passage? Are there spellings and conventions that are consistently different from present-day spellings?
- (c) Are the inflexions used in the English in the passage similar to ours? (*Hint*. Think about the verb form accompanying the second- and third-person singular.)
- (d) Is the word order largely like that in PDE?
- (e) Comment on the use of the second-person pronouns. How are *thou* and *you* used?
- (f) Can the question form be different (think of 'How came these things to passe?', line 4)?
- (g) Is the lexis used largely core or non-core? (Look up the *OED* for some of their sources.) What is the effect of this selection and combination of vocabulary items?