

EL2111 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.

- OE lexis was pretty basic and down-to-earth because OE speakers were boorish and illiterate.
- 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).
- The French brought by the Normans was a superior language to English then.
- ME is different from OE because of the reduced inflections, and this was due to the Scandinavians and English simplifying their languages.
- Shakespeare's English is closer to OE than PDE (present-day English).

2. Examine this passage from *A Midsummer 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.

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, solemnely

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,

Trippes 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.

1 4. *Come to*

2 *pass =*

3 *happen*

4 8. *then = than*

5 8. *these = the*

6 *four lovers*

7 *and Bottom*

8 8. *fine = end*

9 9. *howe = an*

10 *exclamation*

11

12 10. *In order*

13 *to save*

14 *space, the*

15 *end of the*

16 *line is at the*

17 *end of line 9*

18 12. *whereon =*

19 *on which*

20

21

22

23 19. *attend and*

24 *marke = listen*

25 *and note*

26

27

28

29

30 29. *VVinde =*

31 *wind (ie*

32 *horns*

33 *blown)*

34 31. *obseruation*

35 *=*

36 *observance*

37 *(of May Day*

38 *rituals)*

39 32. *vaward =*

40 *vanguard,*

41 *early part*

42

43 34. *Vncouple =*

44 *unleash (the*

45 *dogs)*

46 35. *Dispatch =*

47 *make haste*

Wee will, faire Queene, vp to the mountaines toppe,	36
And marke the musicall confusion	37
Of hounds and Echo in coniunction.	38

- (a) In what sense does this passage represent English around 1600? Does it represent literary or poetic language? Does it represent conspiratorial language or informal chat or gossip?
- (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 (**interrogative**) 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?