

THE TRAGEDY OF ROMEO AND JULIET

THE PROLOGUE

[Enter] CHORUS.

BEGIN Two households, both alike in dignity,
 In fair Verona (where we lay our scene),
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes 5
 A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage, 10
 Which but their children's end nought could remove,
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;

Title] F: The Most Excellent and lamentable Tragedie, of Romeo and Iuliet. Newly corrected, augmented, and amended: As it hath been sundry times publicly acted, by the right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants. Q2 (title page); An Excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Iuliet, As it hath been often (with great applause) plaid publicly, by the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his Seruants. Q1 (title page) The Prologue] not in F o SD Enter CHORUS.] Capell; Corus. Q2; Chorus. Q3-4; not in Q1 2] Pope; (In faire Verona... Scene) Q2-4, Q1 7 misadventured] Q2-4; misadventures, Q1 8-11] Q2-4; (Through the continuing of their Fathers strife, / And death-markt passage of their Parents rage) Q1 8 Doth] Q2-4; Do Rowe 10 rage,] Q4; rage: Q2-3; rage) Q1

THE PROLOGUE Cast as a 'Shakespearean' sonnet, this prologue-chorus serves as what was called 'The Argument of the Tragedie' (*Gorboduc* (1561)), usually prefixed to both tragedies and comedies written under classical or neo-classical influence (George Gascoigne, in *Supposes* (1566), describes it as 'The Prologue or Argument'). The verse form was probably suggested by Brooke's 'Argument', in Italian sonnet form.

1 dignity social status. Compare Brooke (25-6).
 3 ancient grudge longstanding feud. Gascoigne uses this phrase in the same context (see 1.1.0 SD.2 n.); Brooke has 'sparke of grudge' (36).

4 civil blood...unclean i.e. the blood of citizens soils the hands of fellow citizens (perhaps with ironic play on 'civil'; compare Munday, *Downfall of...Huntingdon* (1598; MSR, 763-4)).

6 star-crossed thwarted by the influence of a malignant star. Compare 'death-marked' (9) and

1.4.106-11, 5.1.24, 5.3.111; also *Lear* 1.2.124-5: 'by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence'. See suppl. note.

7 misadventured unlucky, unfortunate. *OED* records no other example and its uniqueness raises the possibility that Q1 'misadventures,' may be correct.

8 Doth Southern form of third per. pl., still common in Elizabethan English (Abbott 334).

9 fearful passage...death-marked Mahood (p. 56) recalls the 'ever-fixed mark' of *Sonnets* 116 and the 'sea-mark' of Othello's 'utmost sail' (5.2.268), and suggests that 'death-marked' may mean not only 'foredoomed' but 'with death as their objective', and that 'fearful' means either 'fearsome' or 'frightened'.

12 two hours' traffic The conventional time designated for a performance (see *H8*, Prologue, 12-13; *TNK*, Prologue, 27-9; Robert Taylor, *The Hogge Hath Lost His Pearl* (1614), Epilogue, 16).

The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. [Exit]

END

[I.I] ~~Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, with swords and bucklers, of the house of Capulet.~~

~~SAMPSON Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.~~

~~GREGORY No, for then we should be colliers.~~

~~SAMPSON I mean, and we be in choler, we'll draw.~~

~~GREGORY Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.~~

~~SAMPSON I strike quickly, being moved.~~

5

~~GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.~~

~~SAMPSON A dog of the house of Montague moves me.~~

~~GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand: therefore
if thou art moved thou runn'st away.~~

~~SAMPSON A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take the
wall of any man or maid of Montague's.~~

10

14 SD] *Capell*; no SD, Q2-4, Q1 Act 1, Scene 1 1.1] *Actus Primus. Scena Prima.* F; not in Q2-4, Q1 Location] *Capell* (after *Rowe*) 0 SD.1-2] Q2-4, F; Enter 2. *Seruing-men of the Capolets.* Q1 1 on] Q2-4; A F; of Q1: o' *Capell* 2 SH GREGORY] Q2-4, F; 2 Q1 (throughout scene) 3 SH SAMPSON] Q2-4, F; 1 Q1 (throughout scene) 3 and] Q2-4; if F; If Q1 4 Ay] *Rowe*; I Q2-4, F (not hereafter recorded unless ambiguous); Euer Q1 4 collar] F, Q1; choller Q2-3; Coller Q4 5 quickly,] F; quickly Q2-4, Q1 7 Montague] *Theobald* (from *Brooke*); *Mountague* Q2-4, F (the spelling in Q2 throughout, except *Montague* at 2.2.98); the *Mountagues* Q1 8-9 To...away.] *As prose*, Q1, *Pope*; two lines, ending stand / ...away Q2-4, F 8 stand] Q2-4, F; stand to it Q1 10-11 A...Montague's.] *As prose*, *Pope*; two lines, ending stand / ...*Mountagues* Q2-4, F; There's not a man of them I meete, but Ile take the wall of. Q1

14 miss prove inadequate in the performance.
Compare Q1 'here we want'.

14 mend improve (in the future). Compare
MND 5.1.429-30.

Act 1, Scene 1

Location Verona. A public place.

0 SD.1 *swords and bucklers* 'Heavy swords and small shields were the ordinary weapons of servants; gentlemen wore rapier and dagger' (*Kittredge*).

0 SD.2 *house of Capulet* The followers of Capulet and Montague may have been distinguished by 'tokens' worn in their hats. See George Gascoigne, 'A devise of a Maske for the right honorable Viscount Mountacute' (*The Posies* (1575), p. 83): 'he shewed in his hat, / This token which the *Mountacutes* dyd beare alwaies, for that / They covet to be knowne from *Capels* where they passe / For auncient grutch which long ago, twene these two houses was'. See supplementary note.

1 carry coals submit passively to indignity or insult. Proverbial (Tilley T513, N69).

2 colliers (1) coal carriers; (2) term of abuse

(from the dirtiness of the trade and the reputation of colliers for cheating).

3 and if.

3 in...draw draw (our swords) in anger (with play, in 4, on 'draw...collar' = slip out of the hangman's noose).

4 while you live i.e. under any circumstance (with play on being 'dead' once hanged).

5-10 moved...stand to be moved = (1) to react emotionally, (2) to be forced to retreat; to stand = (1) to take a firm and courageous position under threat of attack, (2) to have an erection (25). Quibbles like these and the similar ones at lines 3-4 above are the stock-in-trade of servants or servant-clowns in Elizabethan drama. Compare *Feste* as Olivia's 'corrupter of words', *TN* 3.1.36.

10-11 take the wall assert social position or physical superiority. City streets, lacking pavements and slanted to a kennel (or channel) running down the centre, were the dumping grounds for refuse; the wall-side was therefore cleaner and safer and was claimed by people of rank or by anyone (like Sampson) who wanted to pick a fight.