



# The Two Gentlemen of Verona (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)

*William Shakespeare*

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*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is commonly agreed to be Shakespeare's first comedy, and probably his first play. A comedy built around the confusions of doubling, cross-dressing, and identity, it is also a play about the ideal of male friendship and what happens to those friendships when men fall in love.

William Carroll's engaging introduction focuses on the traditions and sources that stand behind the play and explores Shakespeare's unique and bold treatment of them. Carroll first explores the early modern discourse of male friendship and relates it to the play's unsettling ending. Special attention is given to the strong female figure of Julia and the controversial final scene. He goes on to discuss various other relevant topics: the influence of the Prodigal Son story on the play, the problem of using a boy in drag (for the first time in a Shakespearean comedy) to depict Julia, and Shakespeare's debt to Ovid and John Lyly in using the theme of metamorphosis. Next, the editor explores the use of letters; the portrayal and breed of Crab, the play's infamous dog; the complex geography of the story; and the play's dramaturgy. Carroll concludes with an extensive look at the play's theatrical and critical afterlife, and a discussion of the original text and date. This edition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* also includes one appendix (a casting chart), and a list of abbreviations and references.

**The Arden Shakespeare** has developed a reputation as the pre-eminent critical edition of Shakespeare for its exceptional scholarship, reflected in the thoroughness of each volume. An introduction comprehensively contextualizes the play, chronicling the history and culture that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare at the time of its writing and performance, and closely surveying critical approaches to the work. Detailed appendices address problems like dating and casting, and analyze the differing Quarto and Folio sources. A full commentary by one or more of the play's foremost contemporary scholars illuminates the text, glossing unfamiliar terms and drawing from an abundance of research and expertise to explain allusions and significant background information. Highly informative and accessible, Arden offers the fullest experience of Shakespeare available to a reader.

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