

Relationships presented between males and females, by shakespeare in romeo and ju...

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Even before we delve into the metaphorical and poetic world of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the fate of our titled characters has already been told as we find out about 'A pair of star-cross'd lovers' who 'take their life'. However the story, as we begin to read, is far from explained and unfolded, in fact, Romeo and Juliet have not even met. The characters in *Romeo and Juliet* have very different opinions of what love is. Firstly, Romeo has the initial view of love as being 'too rough, too rude and too boisterous', to which Mercutio replies 'if love be rough with you, be rough with love'.

This purports how Mercutio sees love as controllable and states it as a 'tender thing'. Progressing through the play however, Romeo's outlook of love is described when he says 'Love goes towards love as schoolboys from their books, but love from love, [as schoolboys go] toward school with heavy looks' but the very use of the schoolboy metaphor could imply the immaturity and naivety of Romeo's actions and opinion towards love. On the other hand, Lady Capulet and County Paris see love as based 'on appearance' rather than personality and emotion towards a person.

The first encounter of a plausible relationship is between Romeo and Capulet's niece, Rosaline. Although we do not hear or see Rosaline, we are fed an idea of the relationship she shared with Romeo, from himself and Benvolio. Romeo is a free spirited teen of Verona, love-fixed. We are told he sighs, 'adding clouds to more clouds with his deep sighs', over his depressing and one-sided relationship with Rosaline. Romeo is first mentioned as an aimless wanderer, preoccupied with thoughts of her, by

Montague, his father, when he recalls that ' many a morning hath he been seen/ with tears augmenting with the fresh morning dew'.

Augmenting meaning to add to and combine with, we are told how, from very early in the morning, Romeo already begins to think about his disheartened love for Rosaline. His family goes on to discuss what could be wrong with the young man, noting that he is so forlorn that he often recoils in his darkened room, ' in his chamber pens himself, shuts up his windows, locks far daylight out'. Such passivity in his approach to love with Rosaline is a theme that reoccurs until he meets Juliet.

Romeo speaks very resentfully about Rosaline, after their break-up, the excuse being how she intends to be ' chaste', living in ' strong proof of chastity', as a nun, therefore refusing a sexual relationship with Romeo. We can see that this has had a profound affect on Romeo as he talks of love as a ' choking gall'. This powerful expression of bitterness, exemplifies that Romeo has metaphorically been choked by love. Furthermore, he portrays love as ' gall', by definition, a resentment of deep bitterness and anger.

In support of how Romeo speaks of Rosaline, especially in contrast with how he speaks of Juliet, he says how her ' beauty [is] starved with her severity'. Romeo, evidently, appreciates Rosaline's beauty but once again uses metaphors linked with suffering and deprivation. Similarly to the ' choking gall', he says how the attractiveness is hindered by her severity. The severity she possesses could be simply her seriousness or maturity, compared to the teenage infatuation possessed by Romeo. Throughout this play, Romeo's

relationship with Rosaline is passive. He never speaks to her or takes any decisive action to entice his lady love.

He spends his time in anguish, wavering between simplistic admiration and utter despair. Furthermore, Romeo spends a great deal of time in an indeterminate state, mooning over a woman who does not reciprocate his feelings. Despite Benvolio's urging, 'examine other beauties', the lovesick teen will not move on or consider the prospect of other women. Romeo follows Rosaline to a party hosted by the Capulet family, sworn enemies to his own. However, while there, he sulks moodily and refuses to partake in the festivities. He isolates himself from the merrymaking both socially and physically in his refusal to dance and banter with Mercutio.

Upon request by Mercutio to dance, Romeo replies by saying 'I have a soul of lead', connotations of lead being heavy, therefore disabling him to move, but also poisonous. This idea sustains the theory that Rosaline has deprived and made him suffer, to the degree of poison, also supporting Romeo's melodramatic nature. Romeo spends his time, not pursuing Rosaline, but despairing 'under love's heavy burden I do sink'. Once again, Romeo's over-metaphoric and dramatic nature describes how he is being weighed down by the symbolic weight of being out of love. It begs the question, is Romeo simply in love with the sadness of being out of it.

Another brief but significant relationship in the first Two Acts is that of Juliet and her father, Capulet. Lord Capulet is seen to be very protective of his daughter, when speaking to Paris, and expresses much care towards who

she marries, much contrast to Lady Capulet's however. Evidence of Lord Capulet's protection is admitted when he says Juliet is 'yet a stranger in the world'. As an audience, we would presume Capulet to merely be cautious, however we are told 'the Earth has swallowed all [his] hopes but she'. By swallowed, Capulet implies all other of his children have died and been buried.

He refers to Juliet as his 'hope', which shows his reliance on her, and fully explains his protective nature towards Juliet. Despite Romeo's great declarations of love for Rosaline, his feelings could actually be seen as transitory, as shown by his behaviour when he spies young Juliet. He is besotted at first sight, describing her as 'beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear'. This language is in direct contrast to how he speaks of Rosaline. Rather than objectifying Juliet as he does with Rosaline, he holds Juliet in reverent awe, 'did my heart love till now?

For swear it, sight/ for I ne'er saw true beauty till this night'. With this, Rosaline is forgotten and Juliet becomes Romeo's focal point. From this point on, and in the way Juliet is described, Romeo becomes more metaphoric, as if to portray that Juliet can only be described in a way beyond reality. Additionally, the language becomes increasingly more poetic, building up to their first conversation, as if to purport romance and passion, in much more depth and truth than Romeo's previous infatuation. Unlike how he relates to Rosaline, Romeo actively pursues Juliet from the beginning.

Upon meeting, he tries to court her and win a kiss. Despite learning Juliet's identity as a Capulet, Romeo ignores the feud and commits himself to Juliet. Romeo's utter admiration for Juliet is expressed upon first sight of her. The use of language attests the sheer reverence. 'The brightness of her cheek/As daylight doth a lamp/That birds would sing and think it were not night.', evidently, we can see Romeo speaks very highly of Juliet. The language is not only poetic, but metaphoric, in the sense he describes her as being so bright, her eyes would light up the sky, to the extent that birds in the sky would think it day.

The imagery of birds and song, portray the peace of mind, now that his deprivation of love was fulfilled, and happiness he felt. The imagery of brightness, also demonstrates how Romeo idealised Juliet as an angel, the use of celestial and heavenly metaphors supports this also. Once met, Romeo and Juliet talk in metaphors about saints and pilgrims. Romeo and Juliet describe the place where they have met a 'holy shrine'. We associate shrines with saints, and therefore miracles.

Romeo and Juliet could be talking in this way as if to recognise the miraculous circumstances they met, it also supports the play's theme, of fate. On the surface, the relationship presented by Shakespeare between Romeo and Juliet is relatively simple and tangible, nevertheless, intricated by the family name. It is, however, made increasingly more complex as the plot develops and our pair of 'star-cross'd' lovers fall victims to the unpredictable events that follow, said to be a main theme of the play. As foreshadowed in

the prologue, the doomed pair, ultimately, take their lives, as consequence of their relationship and their parents strife.