The connection between love and beauty in romeo and juliet

In Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare shows that young men often confuse beauty for love. This happens due to the fact that love and beauty are very closely connected. As George Boas says: " the ultimate object of love is the beautiful" (583). Confusing beauty for love is not good, and can even be deadly, as Romeo seems to have a habit for falling in " love" with beautiful women, and he dies in the end, out of " love". Beauty can be a difficult concept. It changes over time and people have different opinions of what is beautiful and what is not.

In Shakespearean times, a woman was considered beautiful if she had pale skin, light hair, bright eyes, and red lips and cheeks (Leed). Women went to extreme measures to achieve these ideal characteristics, plastering their faces with white cream and covering their cheeks in rouge (Leed). A fully made-up woman in Shakespearean times would look rather ridiculous today, and even Shakespeare criticizes " ideal" beauty in one of his sonnets, Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral is far more red than her lips' red: If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damask'd, red and white, But no such roses see I in her cheeks; And in some perfumes is there more delight Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks. I love to hear her speak,–yet well I know That music hath a far more pleasing sound; I grant I never saw a goddess go, My mistress when she walks, treads on the ground; And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare As any she belied with false compare. Shakespeare also shows in this sonnet that he does not love a woman for her beauty. He

describes her as the opposite of ideal beauty at the time, and yet he still loves her.

Shakespeare's sonnet is similar to Romeo and Juliet because Shakespeare is showing that beauty is not needed for love, and Romeo and Juliet ends in tragedy for Romeo; who sees beauty as love. Although Shakespeare does not find pleasure in his mistress's beauty, the dictionary. com definition of beauty is " the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind…" Beauty is simply there to create pleasure (Robinson 74). One reason beauty is mistaken for love is because something can be so beautiful and cause such pleasure, that the pleasure can be mistaken for love.

Romeo mistakes beauty for love twice in Romeo and Juliet. The first time he is in " love" is in the beginning of the story. He is sad and moping around when his cousin Benvolio finds him and asks what is troubling him. Romeo tells of his " love" for the " fair" Rosaline. He mourns the fact that she has chosen to be chaste and will not have children to carry on her beauty: " O, she is rich in beauty; only poor that, when she dies, with beauty dies her store…for beauty, starved with her severity, cuts beauty off from all posterity. She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair, to merit bliss by making me despair" (I. . 214-221). Benvolio tries to comfort Romeo with promises of more beautiful women for him to love. Benvolio also mistakes beauty for love. When the two later learn that Rosaline will be at the Capulet's feast, Benvolio urges Romeo to go so he can compare her to other beautiful women: " Tut! You saw her fair, none else being by; herself poised with

herself in either eye; but in that crystal scales let there be weighed your lady's love against some other maid that I will show you shining at this feast, and she shall scant show well that now seems best. " (I. ii. 96-101).

Benvolio turns out to be correct, as Romeo falls in " love" the second he lays eyes on Juliet at the feast: O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night as a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear – beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear! So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows as yonder lady o'er her fellows shows. The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand and, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand. Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. (I. v. 45-54) Romeo forgets all about Rosaline, the reason he came to the feast in the first place.

He only speaks of Juliet's beauty, which has pleased him so much that he thinks he is in love. Rosaline and her lesser beauty are never mentioned again. Juliet does not seem concerned whether or not Romeo is handsome. She never says anything about his looks, but she does speak of her love for him. She is also more guarded with her love. When Romeo first approaches her, asking for a kiss, she turns the conversation to prayer: " Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, which mannerly devotion shows in this; for saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, and palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss…lips that they must use in prayer" (I. . 98-103). Although she does give Romeo his kiss, she keeps her feelings hidden as she leaves Romeo to go to her nurse. Her love is only revealed in the balcony scene, when she does not know Romeo is listening. She also makes Romeo swear

he will be faithful to her before she will give him her love: " Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say ' Aye,' and I will take thy word. Yet, if thou swear'st, thou mayst prove false. At lovers' perjuries, they say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo, if thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully" (II. ii. 90-94).

Juliet knows Romeo might be unfaithful, and she is trying to decide whether or not to give him a chance. Romeo then tries to swear by the moon, which is inconstant and changes every night. He is interrupted by Juliet as he begins to swear by the " blessed" moon that " tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops" (II. ii. 107-108). Romeo wanted to swear by the beauty of the moon, once again linking love and beauty. Juliet eventually stops trying to have Romeo swear and she expresses her dislike of how quickly their relationship is happening: "…I have no joy of this contract tonight.

It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden…" (II. ii. 16-18). Juliet may love Romeo, but she still wants to progress slowly with him. She knows their families are enemies, and that it is dangerous for them to be together. Juliet never mentions if she thinks Romeo is attractive, as she is more concerned about Romeo being faithful to her; while even after Romeo discovers Juliet dead, he remarks on her beauty: "…Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, hath had no power yet upon thy beauty. Thou are not conquered. Beauty's ensign yet is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks…" (V. ii. 92-95). Romeo and Benvolio's attitude towards love and beauty is very different from Juliet's. The men love only beautiful things, while Juliet cares more about the emotional aspects of a relationship. While both Romeo and Juliet lose their lives, Romeo dies due to his false belief that Juliet is dead. He is

tricked into killing himself. When Juliet kills herself, Romeo is actually dead. Romeo kills himself so he will not have to live without his beautiful Juliet, while Juliet kills herself to bring them together again.

Love of beauty is not good, as it can lead to death for the one who loves beauty and others who love the beauty lover. Works Cited Blomquist, Eric. " William Shakespeare (1564-1616). " sonnets. org. 29 Oct. 2007. 28 Mar. 2009 . Boas, George. " Love. " Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Ed. Donald Borchert. 2nd ed. Vol. 5. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006. 583-590. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. Pope John XXIII High School, Sparta, NJ. 9 Mar. 2009 . Dictionary. com Unabridged. Vers. 1. 1. 22 Mar. 009 . Leed, Drea. " Elizabethan Make-up 101. " Elizabethan Costuming Page. 2008. 15 Mar. 2009 . Robinson, Jenefer. " Aesthetics, Problems of. " Encycopedia of Philosophy. Ed. Donald Borchert. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006. 72-81. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. Pope John XXIII High School, Sparta, NJ. 9 Mar. 2009 . Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. 1960. Ed. Peter Holland. New York: Penguin Group, 2000.