
Summary: True Love Through Romeo and Juliet's Story

Romeo and Juliet is a play written by William Shakespeare in the Elizabethan era. It is set in the Verona, Italy, where Romeo and Juliet form close bonds of true love while being heirs to two feuding families, the Capulets and the Montagues. One of the key ideas explored in the play is the proper way to express one's feelings through the use of courtly love. Another key idea in the play is impulsive love, shown through Romeo's several decisive yet nearly instantaneous changes in the heart between Rosaline and Juliet. Lastly, Shakespeare expresses his thoughts of the patriarchal society towards women in the Elizabethan era through Lord Capulet's treatment towards Juliet.

In both Act 1 and Act 2 Scene 3, Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to demonstrate Romeo's attitude of impulsive love as he immediately forgets his first love Rosaline upon meeting Juliet. In Act 2 Scene 3, line 45, Romeo says 'With Rosaline, my ghostly father? no; I have forgot that name, and that name's woe'. This suggests that Romeo views Rosaline, his first love, as nothing but a burden. Furthermore, the words "that name's woe" implies that she has become nothing but a source of sorrow and distress, and the fact that Romeo openly states that he has "forgotten that name" shows him as easily changeable in love, whereas in Act 1 Scene 4 he had said that his "soul is made out of lead". This may have been a type of criticism towards the audience, as love in that era for men was fickle, with men often times having more than 1 or 2 wives, easily falling out of and in love, whereas it was the norm for the daughter's father to choose their groom based on the other party's dowry, as back in the day the father views wedding their daughter was more of an economic transaction than for love.

This notion of Romeo being impulsive in love is further expressed in Act 1 Scene 5, line 102, as Romeo says 'Then move not while my prayer's effect I take. Thus from my lips by thine my sin is purged.' Romeo requesting a kiss from Juliet only several moments of their first meeting can be seen as either impulsive in true love or simply showing him as a playboy who finds another lover upon losing his first (Rosaline). This further reinforces the idea that Shakespeare's message for the audience in that era, to the men who are indecisive in love or desires for several love interests, viewing women as his property and not a lover.

Shakespeare also shows criticism towards the patriarchal society through the lack of familial love towards Juliet. For example in Act 3 Scene 5, lines 160-168, Juliet's father, Lord Capulet says "Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!". This suggests that Capulet is infuriated by Juliet's disobedience and that her only value for him is to be married to Count Paris. Additionally, the words "young baggage" and "disobedient wretch" shows that he views Juliet, his only child as nothing but a disagreeable, ungrateful child. This creates a sense of pathos for Juliet which may have made the audience rethink about the treatment of women in the patriarchal society of their era. This can be seen again in the following lines, "now I see this one is one too much, and that we have a curse in having her. Out on her, hilding!" This implies that if she refuses to be married to Count Paris by Thursday, he will kick her out of the house as she holds no value to him. Additionally, the word 'curse' again suggests that Lord Capulet sees her as a burden to him. Furthermore, Shakespeare may have used the arranged engagement to Paris as a message to emphasise the lack of freedom to love for women which also eventually contributes to Juliet's death.

Lastly, while Shakespeare shows the poor position of women in the patriarchal society during the Elizabethan era, he compensates for it by demonstrating Courtly love through Romeo's dramatic monologue in Act 2 Scene 2. For example in line 23, Romeo says 'O speak again, bright angel, for thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my head,' and 'As is a winged messenger of heaven'. This suggests that Romeo views Juliet as an existence higher than himself, idolizing her as if he were a pilgrim praying to her. Furthermore, the word 'winged messenger' suggests that she is as beautiful as an angel, showing the model of courtly love, to be praising women as if they were unattainable.

The can be again seen in Act 1 Scene 5, line 93, where Romeo says 'If I profane with my unworhiest hand, this holy shrine, the gentle time is this, my lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand'. This again suggests that Romeo views Juliet as a deity, literally describing himself as a 'pilgrim' before her. Additionally, the words 'my unworhiest hand' and 'this holy shrine' suggests that Romeo is unworthy to hold Juliet's hand, again suggesting that Juliet is a higher being than him, speaking in the model of courtly love. This may have made the audience reconsider their methods of approaching women, further expanding the idea of courtly love, while also acting as Shakespeare's message to the scornful men who pillaged and raped women in the Elizabethan era.

Shakespeare demonstrates true love through Romeo and Juliet's story, showing a relationship formed of the model of courtly love, while criticizing the patriarchal society that ignores true love of women for a marriage chosen by the biggest dowry, as if the wedding were an auction for the highest bidder.