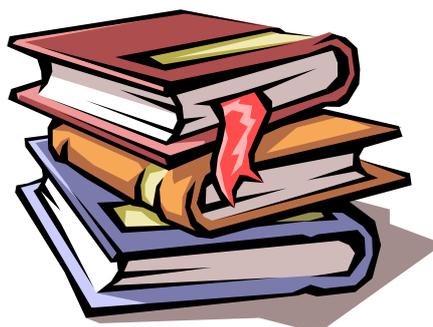


Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz

# COURSE WORK



THEME: LOVE IN SHAKESPEAR`S WORKS

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## Introduction

Although he wrote some of the world's most renowned romances and comedies, William Shakespeare's personal life remains a great mystery. Little is known about the writer and what is thought to be known is hotly debated by scholars. Conspiracy theories and suggestions of hoaxes and false identities abound, but have resisted proof for centuries.

What is known about Shakespeare is that whatever his identity, his works provide insight into human nature and the nature of love. His 38 plays, as well as his many sonnets, capture themes and emotions in story-telling that continue to be the most entertaining concept of today.

The most widely agreed upon story of Shakespeare's life suggests that he was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1554 to a prosperous glove maker. In 1582, when just a lad of 18, he married Anne Hathaway and had three children, including a son who died at the age of 11.

No documentation of Shakespeare's life between 1585 and 1592 exists, lending these "lost years" to great conjecture and controversy, [He re-emerged as a public figure in 1592, working in London as an actor and playwright.](#) Though he was not yet the writer he would become, already the playwright Robert Greene referred enviously to Shakespeare in 1592 as "the upstart crow" of the London theater. He was quickly drawing the attentions of hungry theater-owners in the burgeoning Bank side district and the jealousies of bitter rivals. He began spending his summers in London, returning to his family in Stratford every winter when the public theaters were closed due to fear of the plague.

Throughout 1593, Shakespeare published several of his most romantic sonnets, but it was in 1594 that he really made his career breakthrough, coming to the fore with this great work of romance, "Romeo and Juliet." He joined the Chamberlain's Men, a theatrical troupe which enjoyed the patronage of the royal court and which later built the famous [Globe Theater](#).

What accounted for the sudden turn-around in Shakespeare's creative life ? Did he have a real-life muse in his hidden history that unlocked the secrets of the human heart ? Several theories have been advanced by Shakespearean scholars and biographers, many involving a mysterious "dark-lady" to whom the bard seems to pine for in several of his sonnets. As the Shakespearean scholar Arthur Aches writes:

*" I believe, from what I find in the Sonnets, that our poet's connection with [a] woman commenced at almost the same period as his acquaintance with Southampton, in about 1593, ... I believe, also , that he genuinely loved her, and fired with the passion and intensity of his love, produced in those years the marvelous rhapsodies of love in "Romeo and Juliet," ... and other of his love plays, which have so charmed the world, and still charm it, and shall continue to do so while the language lives. If ever a man lived who sounded the human heart to its depths, and gauged its heights, that man was Shakespeare, and such knowledge as he had, and shows us of life, may not attained by hearsay, nor at second hand."*

What is love? How can it be defined? Is it even possible for one person to decide what this elusive emotion is? No. Because everyone has their own definition of what love consists of, then it is impossible to define what people think and how their actions belie their feelings. The universal standard of love, is caring, adoration, and the whole spew of feelings that one wishes to spend their life with another. But there are other kinds of love. Elusive love, tortured love, the hate of loving. The love that you feel for one but cannot embrace it for fear of other larger events.

The true nature of Shakespeare's love will only ever be known through his enduring works. He is believed to have died in April 1616, on the anniversary of his birthday, after developing a fever whilst spending a night entertaining the playwright Ben Johnson. He is buried in Stratford-upon-Avon.

## **Love in Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies**

The Shakespearean world is impressed, as a whole, with an unmistakable joy in healthy living. This tells habitually as a pervading spirit, a contagious temper, not as a creed put forward, or an example set up. It is as clear in the presentment of Falstaff or Iago, as of Horatio or Imogen. And nowhere is it clearer than in his handling of the relations between men and women. For here Shakespeare's preferences and repugnance's are unusually transparent; what pleased him in the ways of lovers and wedded folks he drew again and again, and what repelled him he rarely and only for special reasons drew at all. Criminal love, of any kind, holds a quite subordinate place in his art; and, on the other hand, if ideal figures are to be found there, it is among his devoted, passionate, but arch and joyous women.

It is thus possible to lay down a Shakespearean norm or ideal type of love-relations. It is most distinct in the mature Comedies, where he is shaping his image of life with serene freedom; but also in the Tragedies, where a Portia or a Desdemona innocently perishes in the web of death. Even in the Histories it occasionally asserts itself (as in Richard II's devoted queen, historically a mere child) against the stress of recorded fact.

In the earlier Comedies it is approached through various stages of erratic or imperfect forms. And both in Comedy and Tragedy he makes use, though not largely, of other than the 'normal' love for definitely comic or tragic ends.

The present study will follow the plan thus indicated. The first section defines the 'norm.' The second describes the kinds of appeal and effect, in Comedy and Tragedy, to which the drama of 'normal' love lent itself. The third traces the gradual approach to the norm in the early Comedies. The fourth and fifth sections, finally, discuss the treatment,

in Comedy and Tragedy, of Love-types other than the norm.

The Shakespearean norm of love,<sup>1</sup> thus understood, may be described somewhat as follows. Love is a passion, kindling heart, brain, and senses alike in natural and happy proportions; ardent but not sensual, tender but not sentimental, pure but not ascetic, moral but not puritanic, joyous but not frivolous, mirthful and witty but not cynical. His lovers look forward to marriage as a matter of course, and they neither anticipate its rights nor turn their affections elsewhere. They commonly love at first sight and once for all. Love-relations which do not contemplate marriage occur rarely and in subordination to other dramatic purposes. Tragedy like that of Gretchen does not attract him. Romeo's amour with Rosalind is a mere foil to his greater passion, Cassio's with Bianca merely a mesh in the network of Iago's intrigue; Claudio's with Juliet is the indispensable condition of the plot. The course of love rarely runs smooth; but rival suitors proposed by parents are quietly resisted or merrily abused, never, even by the gentlest, accepted.

Married life, as Shakespeare habitually represents it, is the counterpart, *mutatis mutandis*, of his representation of unmarried lovers. His husbands and wives have less of youthful abandon; they rarely speak of love, and still more rarely with lyric ardour, or coruscations of poetic wit. But they are no less true. The immense field of dramatic motives based upon infringements of marriage, so fertile in the hands of his successors, and in most other schools of drama, did not attract Shakespeare, and he touched it only occasionally and for particular purposes. Heroines like Fletcher's Evadne (*A Maid's Tragedy*), who marries a nominal husband to screen her guilty relations with the King, or Webster's Vittoria Corombona (*The White Devil*), who conspires with her lover to murder her husband, or Chapman's Tamyra

(Bussy d'Ambois), whose husband kills her lover in her chamber; even Hey wood's erring wife, whom her husband elects to 'kill with kindness,' are definitely un-Shakespearean.

The norm of love lent itself both to comic and to tragic situation, but only within somewhat narrow limits. The richness, depth and constancy of the passion precluded a whole world of comic effects. It precluded the comedy of the coquette and the prude, of the affected gallant and the cynical roué, of the calf-lover and the doting husband; the comedy of the fantastic tricks played by love under the obsession of pride, self-interest, meticulous scruple, or superstition. Into this field Shakespeare made brilliant incursions, but it hardly engaged his rarest powers, and to large parts of it his 'universal' genius remained strange. We have only to recall, among a crowd of other examples, Moreto's *Diana* (*El Desden con el Desden*), Moliere's *Alceste* and *Celimene*, Congreve's *Millamant*, in Shakespeare's century; or, in the modern novel, a long line of figures from Jane Austen to *The Egoist* and Ibsen's *Love's Comedy* to recognize that Shakespeare, with all the beauty, wit and charm of his work, touched only the fringes of the Comedy of love.

The normal love, not being itself ridiculous, could thus yield material for the comic spirit only through some fact or situation external to it. It may be brought before us only in ludicrous parody. We laugh at the 'true love' of Pyramus and Thisbe in the 'tedious brief' play of the Athenian artisans, or at that of Phoebe and Silvius, because Shakespeare is chaffing the literary pastoral of his day. Hamlet's love, itself moving, even tragic, becomes a source of comedy in the solemn analysis of Polonius. Or again, the source of fun lies in the wit and humour of the lovers themselves. Some of them, like Rosalind and Beatrice, virtually create and sustain the wit-fraught atmosphere of the play single-handed. But Shakespeare habitually heightens this source

of fun by some piquancy of situation almost always one arising from delusion, particularly through confusion of identity. It is a mark of the easy-going habits of his art in comedy that he never threw aside this rather elementary device, though subjecting it, no doubt, to successive refinements which become palpable enough when we pass from the *Two* *Gentlemen to Cymbeline.*

But his genius made perennially delightful even the crude forms of confusion which create grotesque infatuations like those of Titania, Malvolio, Phoebe, Olivia. More refined, and yet more delightful, are the confusions which bring true and destined lovers together, like the arch make-believe courtship with which Rosalind's wit amuses and consoles her womanhood, and that other which liberates the natural congeniality of Beatrice and Benedict from their 'merry war.' In cases like these, Shakespeare's humour has the richer and finer effluence which derives from a hidden ground of passion or tears. Rosalind's wit is that of a woman many fathoms deep in love; Beatrice's ears tingle with remorse at the tale of Benedick's secret attachment; Viola's gallant bravado to Olivia conceals her own unspoken maiden love. And Portia crowns her home-coming to her husband and her splendid service to his friend with the madcap jest of the rings. Such jesting is in Shakespeare a part of the language of love; and like its serious or lyrical speech, is addressed with predilection to love's object.

Again, the normal love offered in itself equally little promise of tragedy. No deformed or morbid passion, but the healthy and natural self-fulfilment of man and woman, calling heart and wit and senses alike into vigorous play, it provided equally little hold for the criminal erotics in which most of Shakespeare's contemporaries sought the tragic thrill, and for the bitter disenchantment and emotional decay which generate the subtle tragedy of Anna Karenina or Modern Love.

Tragic these healthy lovers of themselves will never become; they have to be led into the realm of pity and fear, as into that of laughter and mirth, by the incitement or the on thrust of alien forces. Here, too, Shakespeare's habitual instrument is delusion; only now it is not the delusion which deftly entangles and pleasantly infatuates, but that which horribly perplexes and rends apart. The blindness of Claudio, of Othello, of Posthumus, of Leontes, is provoked by circumstances of very various cogency, but in each case it wrecks a love relation in which we are allowed to see no flaw. The situation of innocent, slandered, heart-stricken womanhood clearly appealed strongly to him, and against his wont he repeated it again and again.

Shakespeare's supreme command of pity springs from his exalted faith in love. The poet of the Sonnets is implicit in the poet of Othello. And the dramas themselves abound in lyric outbursts, often hardly called for by the situation, in which his ideal of wedded love is uttered with the poignant insight of one who was probably far from having achieved or observed it himself. One need but think of France's reply to Burgundy (King Lear, I, i. 241):

Love's not love

When it is mingled with regards that stand

Aloof from the entire point.

Or of Imogen, blind to all but the path of light and air that divides her from Milford Haven:

I see before me, man; nor here, nor here,

Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them,

That I cannot look through.

Even Adriana, in the , Comedy of Errors expresses the unity of married love with an intensity which we expect neither from this bustling bourgeoisie nor in this early play:

For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall  
A drop of water in the breaking gulf  
And take unmingled thence that drop again  
Without addition or diminishing,  
As take from me thyself and not me too; (II, ii. 127.)

an utterance which in its simple pathos anticipates the agonized cry of Othello the most thrilling expression in Shakespeare of the meaning of wedded unity:

But there, where I have garnered up my heart,  
Where either I must live, or bear no life,  
The fountain from the which my current runs,  
Or else dries up: to be discarded thence!

The husband in these cases, it is true, neither forgives nor condones, and Shakespeare (unlike Heywood) gives no hint that he would have dissented from the traditional ethics on which Othello and Posthumus and Leontes acted, had their wives in fact been guilty. The wives, on the other hand, encounter the husband's unjust suspicions, or brutal slanders, without a thought of revenge or reprisal. Desdemona, Imogen, Hermione, alike beautifully fulfill the ideal of love presented in the great sonnet:

Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.

In one drama only did he represent ideal love brought to a tragic doom without a hint of inner severance. The wedded unity of Romeo and Juliet is absolute from their first meeting to their last embrace; it encounters only the blind onset of outer and irrelevant events; nothing touches their rapturous faith in one another. This earliest of the authentic tragedies thus represents, in comparison with its successors, only an elementary order of tragic experience; set beside Othello, it appears to be not a tragedy of love, but love's triumphal hymn. Yet it is only in this sense immature. If Shakespeare had not yet fathomed the depths of human misery, he understood completely the exaltation of passion, and Romeo and Juliet, though it gives few glimpses beyond the horizons of his early world, remains the consummate flower of his poetry of ideal love.

The beauty and insight of Shakespeare's finest portrayals of the comedy and the tragedy of love were not reached at once. His conception of love was still, at the opening of his career, relatively slight and superficial; his mastery of technique was equally incomplete. The early plays accordingly abound with scenes and situations where from either cause or both the dramatic treatment of love is not yet in the full sense Shakespearean. It will suffice in this sketch to specify two types of each.

The young Shakespeare, as is well known, showed a marked leaning to two apparently incongruous kinds of dramatic device paradox and symmetry. In the riotous consciousness of power he loved to take up the challenge of outrageous situations, to set himself dramaturgical problems, which he solves by compelling us to admit that the impossible might have happened in the way he shows. A shrew to be 'tamed' into a model wife. A widow following her murdered father's coffin, to be wooed, there and then, and won, by his murderer. A girl of humble birth, in love with a young noble who scorns her, to set herself, notwithstanding, to win him, and to succeed. Paradoxical feats like these were foreign to the profound normality under whatever romantic

disguise of Shakespeare's mature art. Richard and Patricio and Helen carry into the problems of love-making the enterprising audacity of the young Shakespeare in the problems of art. But the audacity of the young Shakespeare showed itself in another way. His so-called taste for 'symmetry' had nothing in common with the classical canons of balance and order. It was nearer akin to the boyish humor of mimicry. If he found a pair of indistinguishable twins producing amusing confusion in a Roman play, he capped them with a second pair, to produce confusion worse confounded in the English Comedy of Errors. And so with love. Navarre (in *Love's Labour's Lost*) and his three lords, like the four horses of an antique quad Riga, go through the same adventure side by side. All four have forsworn the sight of women; all four fall in love, not promiscuously but in order of rank, with the French princess and her ladies, whose numbers, by good fortune, precisely go round.

But love itself is not, as yet, drawn with any power. Browne's magnificent account of its attributes and effects (IV, iii., mainly re-written in 1597) is not borne out by any representation of it in the play. The 'taffeta phrases' and 'silken terms precise,' the pointed sallies and punning repartees, full of a hard crackling gaiety, neither express passion nor suggest, like the joyous quips of the later *Rosalind*, that passion is lurking behind. We are spectators of a rather protracted flirtation, a 'way of love' which was to occupy a minimal place in his later drama. Armando's dramatically unimportant seduction of Jaquenetta is likewise a symptom of his 'apprentice' phase.

The inconstancy of the Athenian lovers attests only the potency of the fairy juice. No doubt Shakespeare's denouements, even in some of the maturest comedies, show his lovers accepting with a singular facility a fate in love other than that they had chosen. Olivia accepts Sebastian in default of Viola, and the Duke Viola when Olivia is out of the question. Still less defensible artistically is Isabel's renunciation of the convent to marry the Duke. But these

acquiescences, even if they were not touched with the frequent perfunctoriness of Shakespeare's finales, are not to be classed with deliberate inconstancy.

The adventures of Imogen in disguise are purely pathetic. Pisanio indeed proposes, and Imogen agrees, to follow her husband to Italy in disguise; but this opening is significantly not followed up. (*Cymbeline*, III, iv. 150 f.)

But in the *Two Gentlemen*, the entire motive without curtailment or qualification is presented in the adventures of Julia. Abandoned by Proteus, she follows him in disguise, takes service as his page, and is employed as go-between in his new courtship of Silvia. To the young Shakespeare the situation was still wholly congenial, and he availed himself of its opportunities of pathos without reserve, though with incomplete power. His riper technique, fortified probably by a closer acquaintance with the spirited and high-bred womanhood of the Portias and Rosalinds of his time, withdrew his interest, perhaps his belief, from the risky psychology of Julia's self-assertion and self-abnegation. Like other strained situations suggested by 'golden tongued romance,' it fell away before the consolidated experience, the genial worldliness, the poetized normality, of his riper art.

The case of another devoted pursuer of an unwilling man is more complicated, and calls for closer examination. *All's Well That Ends Well* has already been referred to as an example of the paradox-plotting congenial to the young Shakespeare. But Helena's passion and her sacrifices for the man whose love she seeks ally her also with the Julia type. Yet internal evidence leaves no doubt that this play, though originally written, and therefore planned, in the early nineties, was revised by Shakespeare at a date not far remote from that of *Hamlet*. If the paradox-subject was the apprentice's eager choice, the artist at the height of his power did not reject its challenge.

Giletta of Narbonne succeeds in effect by sheer audacity and enterprise; and Boccaccio's readers doubtless enjoyed this inversion of the usual roles, where a masterful girl captures a reluctant man. Shakespeare's earlier version was

probably the lost *Love's Labour's Won* mentioned by Meres, and the title emphasizes the element of resolute and unhesitating pursuit which marks the original, and was probably more pronounced in the earlier than in the revised play.

For it is plain that precisely the resolute pursuit of a resisting man was uncongenial to Shakespeare's riper art, because unnatural in the type of high-bred and refined womanhood whose ways in love reflected his ideal of healthy love-making. Helena, as the heroine and predominant figure of the play, had to be of the sisterhood of Portia and Rosalind and Beatrice and Viola. But if the plot for bad this? And clearly, the most hazardous incident of all (the substitution of Helen for Diana) could not be eliminated without breaking up the plot altogether. Why then take up the old play at all? Plainly there must have been in the fundamental theme something which Shakespeare was unwilling to lose as well as something that he would have wished away.

This something that attracted him was evidently Helen's clear-sighted resolution in itself; in this she is, in fact, a true sister of Portia and Rosalind, though her seriousness is not, like theirs, irradiated with laughter. Could she be visibly endowed with this grace of clear sight and will, yet at the same time be rather drawn on by circumstances to the final conquest of Bertram than herself the active agent in it? Somewhat thus must the problem have presented itself to Shakespeare. Did he completely solve it? I think not. But we can to some extent follow his procedure.

Strength and delicacy are from the first blended in Helen. Her famous lines (I, i. 231):

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie  
Which we ascribe to heaven.

Strike the keynote of her resolute temper. Yet her love, a maiden's idolatry, is content without possession; with her, 'Dian' is 'both herself and love' (I, iii.

218). If she forms plans for showing her merit and thus commending herself in Bertram's eyes, she takes no step herself; it is the Countess who, having discovered her love, welcomes her prospective daughter-in-law and sends her with all proper convoy to court to 'cure the king.' Her choosing of Bertram (II, iii. 109) is an offer of life-long service, not the appropriation of a well-won prize. And when Bertram bluntly declares that he 'cannot love her nor will strive to do it,' she proposes, turning to the king, to withdraw her whole claim:

x,

That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad;

Let the rest go.

The crucial situation, however, for her (and for Shakespeare) begins only with Bertram's definite departure, and scornful intimation of the conditions on which he will be her husband. Giletta, on receiving the corresponding message, had made up her mind at once what to do; had arranged her affairs and set out on the soi-disant pilgrimage to Florence, where Beltramo she knows will be found. Helena's procedure is less clear. Two distinct courses were open to her. She might, like Gillette, make direct for Bertram at Florence, under the pretext of going on a pilgrimage. Or she might finally surrender the pursuit of a husband who had decisively shown he did not love her, as she had already proposed to do when he had only declared that he did not.

The second was unquestionably more in keeping with Helen's character. But the first was more in keeping with the plot. It might well be that Shakespeare's Helen would hesitate between the two. But it is in any case probable that Shakespeare hesitated, and that the marks of his hesitation have not been effaced from the text.

On reading Bertram's letter she is, like Imogen when she reads Posthumus's, for the moment overwhelmed. 'This is a dreadful sentence.' She hardly speaks, and gives no hint to the Countess of her thoughts. But when she is alone she breaks out in the great passionate monologue of renunciation (III, ii. 102 f.) . . .

No, come thou home, Rousillon,  
Whence honor but of danger wins a scar,  
As oft it loses all: I will be gone;  
My being here it is that holds thee hence:  
Shall I stay here to don't? no, no, although  
The air of paradise did fan the house,  
And angels office' d all: I will be gone. . . .

This can only imply, since she is alone, that she sincerely proposes to give up all claim to her nominal husband. Nevertheless, in Scene iv., the Countess is seen reading a letter from Helen which declares that she has gone as a pilgrim to Saint Jaques, in Florence. She begs the Countess, it is true, to summon Bertram home to live there in peace while she in the far land does penance for her 'ambitious love.' Was this a subterfuge, like Gillette's, or was it her sincere intention as we should infer from the previous monologue? If it is the first, Helena comes nearer to the crafty duplicity of Gillette than anywhere else in the play, and this towards the Countess who has just indignantly renounced her stubborn son, and taken Helena to her heart as her sole child (III, ii. 71). But if it is the second, we cannot but ask why then, if Helena means bona fide to avoid Bertram and leave him free, she chooses for her pilgrimage precisely the one place in the world in which she knows he will be found? And this awkward question remains unanswered, notwithstanding the evident effort to allow us to believe in Helena's innocent good faith.

Gillette, on arriving at Florence, takes up her abode at an inn, 'eager to hear news of her lord.' Helena arrives, apparently concerned only to learn the way to St. Jacques, and where the pilgrims bound thither found lodging. Then Bertram is mentioned; she learns that he is known, and has made advances to Diana; presently he passes by, and now at length Helen deliberately and

unhesitatingly takes measures to fulfill his 'impossible' conditions. Helena's conduct appears, then, to fluctuate, without clear explanation, between resolute pursuit and dignified renunciation.

What I have called the norm of love must thus rank high among the determining forces of his mature drama. Obscured and disguised at the outset by crude conceptions and immature technique, it gradually grew clear, and provided the background of passion, faith, and truth out of which, aided by misunderstandings, pleasant or grave, his most delightful comedy and his most poignant tragedy were evolved. And other types of love -- whether they made for comedy or tragedy, held a relatively slight place in his work. In particular he concerns himself only in a quite exceptional or incidental way either with the high comedy of love or with guilty passion.

His comedy of love outside the norm for the most part resembles burlesque. In other words, the 'ways of love' which he treats as comic material are not plausible or subtle approximations to romantic passion, but ludicrously absurd counterfeits of it. The fun is brilliant, but it does not strike deep; it provokes the loud laugh rather than the 'slim feasting smile.' It commonly springs from some grotesque infatuation; as when, in Bottom and Titania, human grossness and fairy fantasticality are brought together for the eternal joy of gods and men. Ridicule of such infatuations was soon to find its peculiar home in the Humor comedy of the later nineties, in the prosaic satirical air of which the romantic or normal love had no place at all. It is hardly an accident that the plays in which this Shakespearean comedy of grotesque infatuation in love runs riot were produced when the Humor comedy was at the height of its vogue, or that they bear clear traces of its influence.

Shakespeare recognized for purposes of comedy certain types of love-making alien to the ideal norm, so too, more rarely, for the purposes of tragedy. Ideal love, as has been seen, occurs constantly in the tragedies even where it does not directly affect or participate in the tragic issues; as with

France and Cordelia, Brutus and Portia, Richard II and his queen, Coriolanus and Virgilia. But the more penetrating sense of evil which becomes apparent in his tragic period contributed to draw more prominently into the sphere of his art the disastrous aspects of the relations between men and women. That he refrained from exploiting in drama the more sinister forms of passion, we have seen. But in some of his ripest and greatest work he drew love with implications, and under conditions, which sharply mark it off from the 'marriage of true minds.' It is unstable, or lawless, or grounded on illusion; and thus not merely succumbs easily to assault from without, but directly breeds and fosters tragic ruin within. Even the union of Othello and Desdemona, in every other respect a marriage of true minds' which reaches for a moment (ii. 1) incomparable intensity and beauty, is rendered fatally precarious by their ignorance of each other.

Love, like everything else which grows in Hamlet's Denmark, is touched with insidious disease. Ophelia is wonderfully imagined in keeping with the tragic atmosphere, an exquisite but fragile flower of the unwedded garden where evil things run to seed and good things wither. And her love, wholly un-Shakespearean as it is, and therefore irritating to many readers, bears within it the seed of tragedy both for Hamlet and herself. It is 'a power girt round with weakness.' She never falters in faithful devotion to him; but the 'sweet bells,' her father has told her, are 'jangled,' and she consents both to be the instrument of the king and Polonius's 'lawful espial' (which may, please heaven, restore him), and to deny his access and return his gifts. She stands alone among Shakespearean heroines in renouncing her love at a father's bidding.

We seem to approach for once the heroic renunciations of love in the name of principle or country which impress us in Corneille and Racine in *Polyeucte* or *Berenice*. But no halo of sublime self-sacrifice surrounds Ophelia's renunciation, for her or for us. It is merely a piteous surrender, which

breaks her heart, overthrows her delicately poised reason, and removes one of the last supports of Hamlet's trust in goodness.

On the other hand, Shakespeare occasionally found his tragic love in violent and lawless passion. We need not dwell on episodic incidents like the rivalry in the love of Edmund which crowns and closes the criminal careers of Goneril and Regan. In this case there was little scope for the undoing of soul which is the habitual theme of Shakespearean tragedy. But in *Measure for Measure* an inrush of sensual passion instantly shatters the imposing but loosely built edifice of Angelo's morality, and though the play was meant for comedy, and the tragic point is thus (rather clumsily) blunted or broken off, the spiritual undoing of him is discernible enough. Without a thought of resistance he proceeds to act out the whole merciless catalogue of vices which the poet of sonnet cxxix saw attending upon lust. At the same time it is clear that Isabel, with her cold austerity, is an even greater anomaly among Shakespeare's women.

Their purity is not that of a negative abstinence, but of whole-hearted devotion to the man they love. In *Cressida* he drew a kind of tragic love as lawless as Angelo's and as sensual, but insidious and seductive instead of violent. Compared with the profligate women of Restoration Comedy she has a certain girlish air of grace and innocence. If she betrays Troilus for Diomedes it is with a sigh and a half wistful glance back at the deserted lover: 'Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee' (V, ii. 107). Though classed by the Folio editors hesitatingly it would seem with the Tragedies, this play seems to set at naught the whole scheme of Shakespearean tragedy. Neither Troilus nor Cressida has the grandeur without which ruin is not sublime; and their love has not the heroic intensity of those (like Heine's *Asra*) *welche sterben wenn sie lieben*. The only imposing figures are those of the great captains of the Greek and Trojan camps, who are but slightly concerned with their love. Nevertheless, the whole effect of the play is tragic, or falls short of tragedy

only because the gloom is more unrelieved. There are no colossal disasters, plots, crimes, or suffering, nor yet the stormy splendour which agony beats out of the souls of Othello, Hamlet, Antony, or Lear, and which leaves us at the close rather exultant than depressed. This tragedy is purely depressing because it strikes less deep; the harms do not rend and shatter, but secretly undermine and insidiously frustrate. Cressida is a symbol of the love which may kindle valour for a moment, but in the end saps heroism and romance at once, and which strikes the magnificent champions of Homeric story themselves with a futility more tragic than death, the futility hinted savagely in the Horatian *Troiani cunnus teterrima belli Causa*, and superbly in Faustus's great apologue to 'the face that launched the thousand ships.'

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, on the other hand, a type of love not in its origin loftier or purer than that of Troilus and Cressida is seen dominating two souls of magnificent compass and daemonic force. Antony is held by his serpent of old Nile in the grip of a passion which insolently tramples on moral and institutional bonds, private and public alike; which brings the lovers to ruin and to death; and which yet invests their fall with a splendor beside which the triumph of their conqueror appears cold and mean. There is no conflict, no weighing of love and empire, as great alternatives, against each other, in the manner of Corneille; nor does Shakespeare take sides with either; he neither reprobates Antony, like Plutarch, for sacrificing duty to love, nor glorifies him, like the author of the Restoration drama, *All for Love*, or the *World Well Lost*; still less does he seek to strike a balance between these views. He is no ethical theorist trying exactly to measure right or wrong, but a great poet whose comprehensive soul had room, together, for many kinds of excellence incompatible in the experience of ordinary men. That Antony's passion for Cleopatra not only ruins his colossal power in the state but saps his mental and moral strength is made as mercilessly clear in Shakespeare as in Plutarch. He

is 'the noble ruin of her magic.' But it is equally clear that this passion enlarges and enriches his emotional life;

in a sense other than that intended by the sober Enobarbus,

A diminution in our captain's brain

Restores his heart; (III, xiii, 198)

and enlarged feeling opens up new regions of imagination and lifts him to unapproached heights of poetry, as in the unarming-scene with Eros (IV, xiv.) and the farewell speeches to Cleopatra ('I am dying, Egypt, dying,' IV, xv.). And Cleopatra too, in the 'infinite variety' of her moods, has momentary flickerings of genuine devotion of which she was before incapable. Momentary only, it is true; the egoist, the actress, the coquette, are only fitfully overcome; in her dying speech itself the accent of them all is heard. The 'baser elements' are not expelled, but the nobler 'fire and air' to which she dreams that she is resolved, gleam for a fitful instant in her cry 'Husband, I come' to yield a moment later to jealous alarm lest Lear (sic) should have Antony's kiss, and vindictive satisfaction at having outwitted Caesar.

- **Love in 'Romeo and Juliet'**

*Romeo and Juliet* is widely regarded as the most famous love story ever written. Shakespeare's treatment of love in this play is masterful, balancing different representations and burying them at the heart of the play. For example, when we first meet Romeo he is a love-sick puppy experiencing infatuation. It is not until he meets Juliet that he really understands the meaning of love. Similarly, Juliet is engaged to marry Paris, but this love is bound by tradition, not passion. She also discovers that passion when she first meets Romeo. Fickle love collapses in the face of romantic love, yet even this we are urged to question: Romeo and Juliet are young, passionate and heady ... but are they also immature?

Romeo and Juliet have become forever associated with love. The play has become an iconic story of love and passion, and the name “Romeo” is still used to describe young lovers.

Shakespeare’s treatment of love in the play is complex and multifaceted. He uses love in its many guises to thread together the key relationships in the play.

## **Fickle Love**

Some characters fall in and out of love very quickly in *Romeo and Juliet*. For example, Romeo is in love with Rosaline at the start of the play, which is presented as an immature infatuation. Today, we might use the term “puppy love” to describe this. Romeo’s love for Rosaline is shallow and nobody really believes that it will last, including Friar Laurence:

**Romeo.** Thou child’s me oft for loving Rosaline.

**Friar Laurence.** For doting, not for loving, pupil mine.

Similarly, Paris’ love for Juliet is borne out of tradition, not passion. He has identified her as a good candidate for a wife and approaches her father to arrange the marriage. Although this was the tradition at the time, it also says something about Paris’ staid attitude towards love. He even admits to Friar Laurence that in his haste to rush the wedding through he hasn’t discussed it with his bride-to-be:

**Friar Laurence.** On Thursday, sir? the time is very short.

**Paris.** My father Capulet will have it so;

And I am nothing slow to slack his haste.

**Friar Laurence.** You say you do not know the lady's mind:

Uneven is the course, I like it not.

**Paris.** Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt's death,

And therefore have I little talked of love;

## **Romantic Love**

Our classic idea of romantic love is embodied in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare presents this as a force of nature, so strong that it transcends societal conventions. This idea is established in the play's prologue with the line "a pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life."

## **Other Types of Love**

Many of the friendships in the play are as sincere as Romeo and Juliet's love for one another. The close relationships between Juliet and her Nurse, and between Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio are meaningful and heartfelt. They care deeply for another and protect each others honor – this ultimately costs Mercutio his life.

## **Love in 'As You Like It'**

*As You Like It* is another Shakespeare play that positions love as a central theme. Effectively, this play pits different types of love against each other: romantic courtly love versus bawdy sexual love. Shakespeare seems to come down on the side of bawdy love, presenting it as more real and obtainable. For example, Rosalind and Orlando quickly fall in love and poetry is used to convey it, but Touchstone soon undermines it with the line, "the truest poetry is the most feigning". (Act 3, Scene 2). Love is also used to distinguish social class, the courtly love belonging to the nobles and the bawdy love belonging to the lower class characters.

## **Romantic and Courtly Love**

This is demonstrated in the central relationship between Rosalind and Orlando. The characters fall in love quickly and their love is articulated in love poetry and in carvings on trees. It is a gentlemanly love but is fraught with barriers needing to be overcome. This kind of love is undermined by

Touchstone who describes this type of love as dishonest; “the truest poetry is the most feigning”. (Act 3, Scene 2).

Orlando has to overcome many obstacles in order to be married; his love is tested by Rosalind and proved to be genuine. However, Rosalind and Orlando only met a couple of times without the disguise of Ganymede. It is hard to say therefore, whether they truly know one another.

Rosalind is not unrealistic however, and although she enjoys the wooing side of romantic love, she is aware that it is not necessarily genuine, which is why she tests Orlando’s love for her. Romantic love is not enough for Rosalind she needs to know that it is deeper than that.

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Touchstone and Audrey act as a foil to Rosalind and Orlando’s characters. They are cynical about romantic love and their relationship is based more on the physical side of love; “Sluttishness may come hereafter” (Act 3, Scene 2). The audience is given the opportunity to decide which kind of love is more honest. Courtly love could be seen as superficial, based on manners and appearance as opposed to bawdy love which is presented as cynical and base but truthful.

### **Sisterly and Brotherly Love**

This is clearly evident between Celia and Rosalind as Celia abandons her home and privileges to join Rosalind in the forest. The pair are not actually sisters but support each other unconditionally.

Brotherly love is severely lacking at the beginning of *As You Like It*. Oliver hates his brother Orlando and wants him dead. Duke Frederick has banished his brother Duke Senior and usurped his dukedom (reminiscent of Antonio and Prospero in *The Tempest*.)

However, to an extent, this love is restored in that Oliver has a miraculous change of heart when Orlando bravely saves him from being savaged by a

lioness and Duke Frederick disappears to contemplate religion after speaking to a holy man, offering Duke Senior his restored dukedom.

It appears that the forest is responsible for the change of character in both of the evil brothers (Oliver and Duke Frederick). On entering the forest both the Duke and Oliver have a change of heart. Perhaps the forest itself offers a challenge the men need, in terms of proving their manliness, which was not apparent in the court (apart from in the form of Charles the wrestler?). The beasts and the necessity to hunt possibly replaces the need to attack family members?

### **Fatherly Love**

Duke Frederick loves his daughter Celia and has indulged her in that he has allowed Rosalind to stay. When he has a change of heart, and wants to banish Rosalind he does it for his daughter Celia, Believing that Rosalind overshadows his own daughter in that she is taller and more beautiful. He also believes that people will look unfavourably on him and his daughter for banishing Rosalind's.

Celia rejects her father's attempts at loyalty and leaves him to join Rosalind in the forest. His love is somewhat unrequited due to his wrong-doing. Duke Senior loves Rosalind but fails to recognize her when she is in disguise as Ganymede – they cannot be particularly close as a result. Rosalind preferred to stay in court with Celia than to join her father in the forest.

### **Unrequited Love**

As discussed, Duke Frederick's love for his daughter is somewhat unrequited. However, the main characters who represent this category of love are Silvius and Phoebe and Phoebe and Ganymede.

Silvius follows Phoebe around like a love-sick puppy and she scorns him, the more she scorns him the more he loves her.

These characters also act as a foil to Rosalind and Orlando – the more Orlando speaks lovingly of Rosalind the more she loves him. The pairing of Silvius and Phoebe at the end of the play is perhaps the least satisfying in that Phoebe is only marrying Silvius because she has agreed to on rejecting Ganymede. This is therefore not necessarily a match made in heaven. (This could be said of any of the characters however – Touchstone and Audrey are in love because it is convenient, Oliver and Celia have only briefly met and she was disguised as someone else and Rosalind and Orlando have not had time to get to know each other without Ganymede’s disguise, their poetry has also been described as feigning).

Ganymede does not love Phoebe because she is a woman and on discovering Ganymede is a woman Phoebe rejects her suggesting that she only loved Ganymede on a superficial level. Silvius is happy to marry Phoebe but the same cannot be said for her. William’s love for Audrey is also unrequited.

### **Love and Relationships in Hamlet**

It is love that seems to be the most prevalent in William Shakespear’s Hamlet, especially when it comes to the protagonists relationship with Ophelia the daughter of King Claudius` advisor, the ever forgetful and meddling Polonius. We first see evidence of a relationship between the two in Act I, Scene III, where Ophelia is speaking with her brother Laertes, before the young man leaves for France. The two discuss the girls relationship with Prince Hamlet` love for his sister is a “trifling of his favor,” and should not be taken too seriously. Because Hamlet is a prince, the brother does not feel as though his love could be true, due to the fact that Hamlet` “will is his own,” and he do what is proclaimed by the people. It is implied here that the young prince is shallow and is not capable of action, a theme that comes up again many times in the drama.

As the play continues, there is more evidence of Hamlet's love for Ophelia, but there seems to be even more evidence that he does not love her. After the prince decides that an insanity ploy is the best way to exact revenge on his step father/uncle, Ophelia becomes a victim of his plot, being treated like she was nothing more than a stepping stone in Hamlet's life.

But that brings up an important question. Could Hamlet's sudden indifference to Ophelia have sprung from an effort to keep her safe? The young prince knew that this revengeful plot could have dire consequences, consequences that could easily lead to his death or banishment. His actions could have easily been for his love protection, because if she were upset with him, then if his plan failed and he died, she would not be so hurt. Unfortunately, by doing this, he only hurt Ophelia more, once more bringing under scrutiny his true feelings for her.

However, there is evidence that Hamlet did truly love Ophelia, as seen in Act IV, Scene I, in which the prince proclaims "What, the fair Ophelia!... I love Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?" His step father /uncle attributes it to the madness, but at this point in time, Hamlet had nothing at all to gain by disparaging Ophelia. His actions seem to have sprung from a deep despair over the loss of his lover, not from the madness that he was acting to be in the throes of. Not even the uncaring Hamlet could be so callused about the death of the woman he held a tortured affection for.

Yet in a similar way, Hamlet's relationship with his mother was strained by his period of madness. When his father's ghost appeared to the young man, it tells Hamlet to "Train not thy mind against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven, and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge, to prick and sting her," which left Hamlet with little choice (Act I, Scene V). he could not actually hurt his mother, under orders from the ghost, which can be perceived as a desire to fulfil his father's words than to take actual vengeance on his mother for her

small part in the death of the king. Or it can also be perceived as a true love for his mother, which some claim to be an incestuous relationship. The only possible thing that could be interpreted as such is in Act IV, Scene VIII, when King Claudius declares that “The Queen his mother lives almost by his looks,” but even that does not point to illicit activities. Instead Hamlet’s relationship, though strained, is one of love for the woman who brought him into the world. He, under instructions from his dead father, is “cruel, but not unnatural....speaking daggers to her, but using none,” though it is alluded that he would not hurt her even without his father’s forbiddance. As he berates her in Act III, Scene IV, it is to inform her of the error in judgment, not to truly break her. He claims that she has offended his father, and the conversation, or rather the debridement of Gertrude, escalated to the point where the queen proclaimed “O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.”

Gertrude was a woman who could be easily manipulated, but unfortunately, because Hamlet didn’t say more than he did, and didn’t act upon the words he did say, the queen didn’t fully repent, and ended up quite dead, along with all of the other main characters, save Horatio. It was Hamlet’s indecisiveness that cost him his own life, as well as the lives of so many others.

### **Shakespeare love sonnets**

Shakespeare love sonnets are intensely personal and address the deep issues of life. Love is dealt with most comprehensively. Critics over the centuries have been fascinated by the two main subjects of the love sentiments – the ‘fair young man’ and the ‘dark lady.’ Scholars have explored the Elizabethan times and Shakespeare’s sonnets to try and identify these two figures and there are several theories, although there is some consensus around the identity of the young man. He seems to have been the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare’s patron between 1592 and 1595.

It is natural for the imagination to roam over these two living, breathing figures, who Shakespeare knew so intimately, but it is just as interesting to look at the whole body of sonnets to see what insights Shakespeare offers us about the role of love in life. As usual, through personal messages, humour, observations of the everyday, and so on, Shakespeare reaches depths in bits of language that have become quotable truths about human life, including love. When we look at in that way we can see descriptions of three different contexts in which love operates. In doing so he depicts a multi-faceted image of love.

Love in Shakespeare's sonnets does not have a single definition, but rather, an intangible collection of characteristics that, together, make up a powerful force that defeats all obstacles. Taking just three of the sonnets – 116, 130, and 147 – love is depicted as an overwhelming force that triumphs over time, the physical world, and reason, respectively. In sonnet 116, love is given an identity as an immortal force, which overcomes age, death, and time itself. Love is depicted as an invincible force that defies time as well as time's effects on beauty and youth, changes such as wrinkles and old age. Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks/Within his bending sickle's compass come (Lines 9 and 10). Love, unlike the physical being, is not subject to decay. In sonnet 130 the force of love is displayed through physical beauty. In that sonnet Shakespeare expands his definition of love to include an image of love as a force that overcomes social pressures. In sonnet 147, the speaker's reasonable mind is overridden by emotions which arise from his love and desire for his absent partner.

Returning to the fair young man and the dark lady, we see the depiction of different types of personal love. Sonnets 1-126 seem to be addressed to an unnamed male friend, younger than Shakespeare. The intensity of feeling and the language imply a sexual love, but that is to impose our modern perceptions of sexuality on the poems. Even the most masculine of men were not afraid to express a view of their feelings for other men and admiration of their beauty,

unlike the fear modern men have of being thought to be homosexual if they did that. Speculation about Shakespeare's sexuality is a red herring. In those sonnets, 1-126, we see a growing friendship with the young man and the development of an intensity of feeling. In sonnets 1-17 Shakespeare seems concerned with the desire to urge the young man to marry and reproduce. Then, as the friendship develops and the poet comes to love the young man intensely, we see feelings of grief caused by the poet's separation from him. They live in different worlds: the young man is a nobleman and that, in itself, is cause for a certain kind of separation. Moreover, the young man is idle and wanton, whereas Shakespeare is a hard-working actor, writer and businessman, and that, too, is a major difference in lifestyle and another level of separation. However, these sonnets reveal a deep love for the young man, an admiration of his exceptional physical beauty, and, perhaps, the payment of dues to a benefactor. Whatever the reasons are, the sonnets provide us with some of the finest expressions of love in the English language.

Then there is the dark lady, referred to as 'black.' Here again, the word is often taken literally to mean black, as in African. But it is likely that she is a non-blonde – perhaps an English brunette or a Mediterranean woman. The sonnets depict a painful and erotic relationship in which the poet remains attached to his mistress through a combination of love, and even stronger lust. But he is often revolted by her. Sonnets 127, 128 and 130 give taunting compliments to the Dark Lady. And in sonnets 129, 146, 147 and 152 he bitterly rejects her.

Whatever, the scholarly speculations about the love sonnets are, the fact remains that a reading of them offers the most comprehensive and universal treatment of love in the English language.

## **William Shakespeare Essay - Love and Romance**

In Shakespeare's plays, love and romance are often treated in ambiguous ways. Romantic love frequently ends in death, as in the tragedies, but such love may be presented in an idealized manner, shown to be courageous and unconditional. In Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the traditional comic ending featuring one or more marriages is often tempered by a more serious note, which questions the finality of that ending. Additionally, the so-called "romantic" comedies may feature a certain degree of tension between romantic and antiromantic elements. Marriage—typically viewed as the goal of romantic love—is also treated ambiguously by Shakespeare. In many of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies, marriages are frequently disrupted by the husband's usually irrational fear of being cuckolded. Despite the taint on marriage by the specter of cuckoldry or by other subversions, marriage nevertheless occupies a central role in Shakespeare's work.

Evelyn Gajowski (1992) examines the qualities shared by Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*), Desdemona (*Othello*), and Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*), maintaining that all three women give themselves freely to their beloveds without expecting or demanding any reciprocal emotion. Gajowski notes that the women, like the speaker in Shakespeare's sonnets, possess "the courage to love despite awareness of the vicissitudes of human existence." The romantic comedies treat love a bit differently than these tragedies. R. S. White (1981) demonstrates the way in which the finality of comic endings is often questioned in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, for example, the courtships of the couples are postponed when a death is announced; the men are required by their beloveds to undergo a period of self-examination before the relationships may resume. Similarly, Richard A. Levin (1985) observes that in Shakespeare's mature comedies, romantic elements are challenged by "antiromantic" elements. In these works, the conflict between love and fortune is often emphasized, Levin notes. Fortune—as either money or social status—is a "constant temptation" to lovers in these plays. While

marriage is usually seen as the happy consummation of romantic love, it is often viewed in less-than-optimistic terms, many critics assert. B. J. Pendlebury (1975) maintains that while the early plays do portray marriage in an optimistic manner, the later plays' treatment of marriage often focuses on the male fear of being deceived by an adulterous wife. Coppélia Kahn (1981) offers a similar assessment, but also notes that even in many of the earlier plays, the threat of cuckoldry "lurks in the wings." Such a fear of cuckoldry stems from a variety of factors, Kahn explains, including the patriarchal marriage itself, where women are viewed as the sexual property of their husbands, and the double standard that permits husbands to have extramarital sex, but makes the perception of the husband's virility dependent on his wife's chastity. Other critics analyze the relevancy of Elizabethan marriage laws and customs to Shakespeare's treatment of matrimony. Ann Jennalie Cook (1991) offers a detailed discussion of Elizabethan betrothal contracts, elopements, annulments, and divorces. Cook highlights the social, legal, and economic punishments exacted for participating in unsanctioned behavior related to betrothals and marriages and then explores Shakespeare's representation of such irregular behavior in his plays. In conclusion, Cook comments that as Shakespeare treats this type of behavior in both negative and positive ways, there is no easy way to assess his own opinions on the matter. Similarly, Margaret Loftus Ranald (1979) demonstrates how Elizabethan issues such as betrothals, contracts, premarital intercourse, impediments to marriage, and the marriage ceremony itself are examined by Shakespeare in many plays in a variety of ways. Ranald observes that marriages form the conclusion to every comedy and typically emphasize social harmony; that marriage is treated both humorously and tragically in Shakespeare's poems; that in the tragedies, the subversion of marital relationships results in some form of disaster; and that in the last plays, Shakespeare places less of an emphasis on the particulars of

marital law and instead celebrates "the kind of virtuous love that ends in marriage."

## **Shakespeare Love Quotes**

As the world's most romantic poet and dramatist, Shakespeare's words on love have seeped into popular culture. When we think of love, a Shakespeare quote instantly springs to mind. "If music be the food of love play on!" ... Discover the top 10 Shakespeare love quotes here.

### **Top 10 Shakespeare Love Quotes**

1. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

*(A Midsummer Night's Dream)*

2. Is love a tender thing? it is too rough,  
Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.

*(Romeo and Juliet)*

3. If music be the food of love, play on.

*(Twelfth Night)*

4. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

**(Sonnet 18)**

5. Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.

*(Twelfth Night)*

6. Hear my soul speak:  
The very instant that I saw you, did  
My heart fly to your service.

*(The Tempest)*

7. I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.

*(Much Ado About Nothing)*

8. One half of me is yours, the other half yours,  
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,  
And so all yours.

*(The Merchant of Venice)*

9. Love is a smoke and is made with the fume of sighs.

*(Romeo and Juliet)*

10. Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?

*(As You Like It)*

### **Conclusion**

Shakespeare's poetry takes account of so vast a number of other things, of so many other ways of living and aspects of life, that we hardly think even of the author of *Romeo and Juliet* as in any special sense the poet of Love. Nor is he, if we mean by this that he thinks or speaks of Love in the transcendent way of Dante, or Lucretius, or Spenser, or Shelley. Love with them is part of the vital frame of the universe. Lucretius (in spite of his atomist creed) saw it pervading 'all that moves below the gliding stars, the sea and its ships, the earth and its flocks and flowers.' Dante saw it as the force which not only draws men and women together, but 'moves the Sun and the other stars.' Spenser saw it as 'the Lord of all the world by right, that rules all creatures by his powerful saw.' Shelley saw it as the sustaining force blindly woven through the web of being. For such heights of poetic metaphysic we do not look in Shakespeare. He is one of the greatest of poets, and his poetry has less almost than any other the semblance of myth and dream; its staple is the humanity we know, its basis the ground we tread; what we call the prose world, far from being excluded, is genially taken in. And precisely where he is greatest, in the sublime ruin of the tragedies, love between the sexes has on the whole a subordinate place, and is there is most often fraught, as we have seen, with disaster and frustration. So it seemed to Keats when he turned from 'golden-

tongued Romance' to 'burn through' the strife of 'damnation with impassioned  
clay' in *King Lear*.

Shakespeare certainly did not, so far as we can judge, as either the clue to human life or as in any way related to the structure of the universe. But if, instead of these abstract questions, we ask whether any poet has united in a like degree veracious appreciation of love in its existing conditions with apprehension of all its ideal possibilities, we shall not dispute Shakespeare's place among the foremost of the poets of love.

Love in Shakespeare is a recurrent theme. The treatment of love in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets is remarkable for the time: the Bard mixes courtly love, unrequited love, compassionate love and with skill and heart.

Shakespeare does not revert to the two-dimensional representations of love typical of the time, but rather explores love as a non-perfect part of the human condition.

Love in Shakespeare is a force of nature, earthy and sometimes uneasy.

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