**Love**

In the first scene of the play, Benvolio asks Romeo what's wrong with him, and Romeo says he is "Out of her favour, where I am in love" (1.1.168). In this case, "her" is Rosaline. Then follows a long discussion of love, during which we find that Romeo is in love just exactly as the culture of the day said a young man was supposed to be in love. In the popular love poetry of Shakespeare's time, the focus is always on the sufferings of the male lover. The lady is beautiful, and her beauty strikes a man through the eyes, into the heart, making him fall in love. He suffers and tries to tell the lady of his suffering, so she may pity him and return his love. But she cruelly rejects his advances, and so he suffers some more, both from the fire of love and the coldness of her heart. Benvolio knows that it has been ever thus, and sympathizes, saying "Alas, that love, so gentle in his view, / Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!" (1.1.169-170), which means that it's too bad that love, which looks so good, should be so bad when it's actually experienced. Romeo replies, "Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still, / Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!" (1.1.171-172). Here Romeo is thinking of love as Cupid, who though he is always blindfolded ("whose view is muffled still"), still manages to make people fall in love.

A little later in the scene Romeo launches into a series of paradoxes describing love, or at least the kind of love he is experiencing, which we would call a hopeless crush. It is both love and hate at the same time. It is "any thing, of nothing first create" (1.1.177), something that can take many forms, be anything, but created out of nothing. It is a sad happiness and a serious foolishness. It is a "Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms" (1.1.179), a phrase which evokes the lover's experience of daydreaming about his beloved, but in such a jumbled way, that it's more frustrating than enjoyable.

Romeo reels off some more paradoxes about love, then concludes with one about his feelings: "This love feel I, that feel no love in this" (1.1.182-183), which means that he feels love, but is not in love with being in love. He also suspects he's a fool for being such a fool for love, and asks Benvolio, "Dost thou not laugh?" (1.1.182-183). Benvolio, however, is understanding and says he grieves for Romeo's unhappy state. Benvolio's grief for him only adds to Romeo's burden; he's not only unhappy, he's responsible for Benvolio's unhappiness. Romeo says, "This love [*i.e.*, brotherly love for Romeo] that thou hast shown / Doth add more grief to too much of mine own." (1.1.188-189). Nevertheless, Romeo adds more paradoxes to his list. He says love is the smoke made of sighs, and when the smoke is cleared away, it's a fire in a lover's eyes. It's a stormy sea of tears. It's a sane insanity. It's a bitter poison and a sweet medicine.

Benvolio tries to cure Romeo's love-sickness by persuading him to take a look at someone other than Rosaline. He says to Romeo, "Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning, / One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish; / Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning" (1.2.47). The "tut" shows that Benvolio is not taking Romeo's problem very seriously; he tells Romeo what everyone knows is true -- you can fight fire with fire, a new pain will make you forget the one you already have, and if you get dizzy by turning around in a circle, just turn around the other way. Getting to the point, Benevolio tells Romeo the cure for his current love-sickness is a new love-sickness: "Take thou some new infection to thy eye, / And the rank poison of the old will die" (1.2.49-50). This way of putting it seems to imply that love is caused by looking, and that it's caught, like a bout of the flu.

When Lady Capulet tells Juliet that "The valiant Paris seeks you for his love" (1.3.74), Juliet says nothing, perhaps because the Nurse doesn't give her a chance. The nurse sputters and searches for the words to say how handsome Paris is, then exclaims "why, he's a man of wax" (1.3.76). In other words, he is as perfect as a wax sculpture. And Lady Capulet praises Paris as the most perfect flower of Verona, then asks Juliet if she can love him. But without allowing Juliet a moment to answer, her mother tells her Paris will be at the feast that night, and then goes into a sales pitch so elaborate that it sounds as if she had rehearsed it. Comparing Paris' face to a book, Lady Capulet tells Juliet to "Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face, / And find delight writ there with beauty's pen; / Examine every married lineament [feature], / And see how one another lends content" (1.3.81-84). Juliet should look at Paris and be delighted in his beauty, then she should look again, seeing his lineaments as if he were married to her. When she does this, she will "see how one another lends content," that is, her happiness ("content") will increase because his beauty will make her want to marry him and marrying him will make him more beautiful. Lady Capulet adds, "And what obscured in this fair volume lies / Find written in the margent [margin] of his eyes" (1.3.85-86). In Shakespeare's time books were often printed with many explanatory comments in their margins. Lady Capulet is telling Juliet that if she has any doubts, one look into Paris' eyes will tell her that she will find love and happiness with him.

Concluding her speech to Juliet, Lady Capulet says, "So shall you share all that he doth possess, / By having him, making yourself no less" (1.3.93-94), and the Nurse cracks a bawdy joke: "No less! nay, bigger; women grow by men" (1.3.95). If Juliet's mother was expecting Juliet to jump at the chance to marry a rich, handsome man, she's probably disappointed; Juliet says nothing until her mother says, "Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?" (1.3.96). The order to "speak briefly" means that Lady Capulet wants a simple "yes or no" answer, but she doesn't get one. Juliet says, "I'll look to like, if looking liking move: / But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it fly" (1.3.97-99). Lady Capulet's speech to Juliet started from the assumption that because Paris is good-looking, Juliet would be attracted to him, but Juliet seems to have her doubts. "Move" means "motivate" or "persuade," and Juliet seems to be questioning "if looking liking move." And what she says next also raises a question about her attitude. "Endart" means to shoot like a dart or arrow, so apparently Juliet is saying that she won't look at Paris any more than her mother gives her consent to do so. But her mother has not only given consent for Juliet to look, but has urged her to look and fall in love, so why does Juliet say what she does? Maybe it's Juliet's way of saying "if you say so, I'll give it a try, but I'm not guaranteeing anything."

Trying to persuade the melancholy Romeo to go in to Capulet's feast, Mercutio points out that love and sadness don't have to go together; he says, "You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings, / And soar with them above a common bound" (1.4.17-18). A "common bound" is an ordinary leap in a dance; Mercutio is telling Romeo that love can give him the power to make an extraordinary leap. Romeo replies that he can't borrow Cupid's wings because he has been so badly wounded by Cupid's arrow. He says he is "so bound [tied down], / I cannot bound [leap] a pitch [height] above dull woe: / Under love's heavy burden do I sink" (1.4.20-22).

At this point Mercutio switches tactics, and makes some highly sarcastic remarks about love. Romeo has just said that he is sinking under the burden of love, so Mercutio replies that Romeo would "sink in it, should you burden love -- / Too great oppression for a tender thing" (1.4.24). This means that if Romeo is going to blame ("burden") love for his state of mind, he will only sink further into love. It also means that if he gets what he wants (sex, in Mercutio's opinion) he will sink into the woman and be a burden to her. Mercutio's general point is that Romeo is taking himself way too seriously, but Romeo is not convinced. He says love is not a "tender thing" at all, but rough and "pricks like thorn" (1.4.26), which gives Mercutio an opening for the best pun of the scene: "Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down" (1.4.28). In Mercutio's view, Romeo's love-sickness is caused by a lack of sex; if he'd just have some, he'd get over thinking he needs to be in love. A little later Mercutio promises Romeo that "we'll draw thee from the mire / Of this sir-reverence love, wherein thou stick'st / Up to the ears" (1.4.40-43). "Sir-reverence" was short for "save your reverence," which was something you said when it would be offensive to use the word you really meant. Mercutio means that love is rubbish, and that Romeo is stuck in it up to the ears.

When Romeo first sees Juliet, he says, "Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! / For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (1.5.52-53). Romeo equates looking with loving, as Lady Capulet did when she spoke to Juliet about Paris.

In the balcony scene, just after Juliet discovers that Romeo is there, he declares that love gives him the power to do anything.

Juliet asks how he came into the orchard, and why, and she seems amazed he would come at all, since the orchard walls are hard to climb and he will die if any of her kinsmen find him there. He replies that "With love's light wings did I o'er-perch [soar over] these walls" (2.2.66) , and boasts, "what love can do, that dares love attempt; / Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me" (2.2.68-69). He doesn't mean that her kinsmen can't harm him, but that love will do anything for love -- even die -- and he is love. Juliet repeats that if her kinsmen see him, they'll murder him. He answers, "Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye / Than twenty of their swords! Look thou but sweet, / And I am proof against their enmity" (2.2.71-73) . He means what was often said in the love poetry of the time, that an unfriendly glance from the eye of a lady could kill the man who was in love with her. On the other hand, a sweet look from Juliet is all he needs to protect him from her kinsmen. But she can't stop worrying, and says, "I would not for the world they saw thee here" (2.2.74). He replies that it's ok if her kinsmen find him, because his "life were better ended by their hate, / Than death prorogued [postponed], wanting of [lacking] thy love" (2.2.77-78). In other words, he'd much rather have her love and die on the spot, than not have her love and die later. Juliet then asks, "By whose direction found'st thou out this place?" (2.2.79). For this he has another passionate answer: "By love, who first did prompt me to inquire; / He lent me counsel and I lent him eyes" (2.2.81). In plain language, it was love who made him ask himself where Juliet might be and who told him he should find her; in return for love's good advice, Romeo gave love (who is blind) eyes to find her.

In the same scene Juliet describes her love as spiritual wealth.

When Romeo asks only for a vow of pure love, Juliet is more than willing to give it. She says that she has already given her vow, but wishes that "it were to give again" (2.2.129). He asks if that means she wants to take back her vow, and why she would want to do that. She answers "But to be frank, and give it thee again / And yet I wish but for the thing I have" (2.2.131-132). "Frank" (*i.e.,* "free," "generous") is Juliet's word for the deep satisfaction that comes with giving a gift that is truly appreciated. Juliet wants to feel that sense of generosity that comes from giving the gift of love, but finds that she already has it, because the more she gives, the more she has to give. This is how she describes the miracle of love in herself: "My bounty [generosity] is as boundless as the sea, / My love as deep; the more I give to thee, / The more I have, for both are infinite" (2.2.133-135)

When Romeo asks Friar Laurence to marry himself and Juliet, the Friar eventually agrees to do it, but first he makes fun of Romeo's sudden change of heart. As he is chiding Romeo, the Friar also expresses his doubt that Romeo really knows what love is.

The Friar says that if Romeo can suddenly drop Rosaline in favour of Juliet, it shows that "Young men's love then lies / Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes" (2.3.67-68). And all those tears that Romeo shed for Rosaline "were salt water thrown away in waste, / To season love, that of it doth not taste!" (2.3.71-72). Real love, the Friar saying, doesn't need to be seasoned with salt, because real love is not a matter of pain and suffering. The Friar goes on to tell Romeo that his sighs for Rosaline are still floating above their heads, that his groans for Rosaline are still echoing in the Friar's ears, and that the stain of a tear shed for Rosaline can still be seen on his cheek. Thus, since his change of heart has been so sudden, Romeo should "Pronounce [proclaim] this sentence [lesson] then, / Women may fall, when there's no strength in men" (2.3.79-80). Men liked to say that women were too quick to fall in and out of love, but the Friar is telling Romeo that he ought to tell the world that women can be forgiven for being changeable, because men are no better.

Romeo tries to defend himself by saying, "Thou chid'st me oft for loving Rosaline" (2.3.81), as though he expects the Friar to approve of the fact that he has stopped loving Rosaline, but the Friar answers, "For doting, not for loving, pupil mine" (2.3.82). In the Friar's opinion, what Romeo felt for Rosaline was a silly crush, not true love. Romeo protests that the Friar "bad'st me bury love," but the Friar shoots back, "Not in a grave, / To lay one in, another out to have" (2.3.83-84). The image of putting a corpse in the grave only to take out another corpse is grotesque, but it makes the Friar's point, which is that he is afraid Romeo has merely exchanged one infatuation for another. Romeo then asks the Friar to stop chiding, because there really is a difference between his old love and his new one: "Her I love now / Doth grace for grace and love for love allow; / The other did not so" (2.3.85-87).

Romeo's declaration that he and Juliet have a mutual love appears to mollify the Friar somewhat, but he doesn't let Romeo entirely off the hook. The Friar says of Rosaline, "O, she knew well / Thy love did read by rote and could not spell" (2.3.87-88). To "read by rote" is to "read" the way toddlers do, when they have had a story read to them so many times that they have it memorized. To "spell" is to really read by sounding out the words and making sense of them. Rosaline, according to the Friar, knew that Romeo was only in love with love, and that Romeo only sighed and suffered because he knew that was what lovers are supposed to do.

The morning after Capulet's feast, Mercutio and Benvolio are looking for Romeo. As they talk, Mercutio makes remarks expressing his scorn for love.

Benvolio says that he has found out that Romeo isn't at home. Mercutio, assuming Romeo is doing as Romeo has done in the past -- moping over Rosaline -- comments, "Ah, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline, / Torments him so, that he will sure run mad" (2.4.4-5). Then Benvolio mentions that Tybalt has sent a letter to Romeo at his father's house. Mercutio is sure it must be a challenge, and Benvolio is sure that "Romeo will answer it" (2.4.9). Benvolio means that Romeo will answer the challenge and fight Tybalt, but Mercutio says that Romeo is already dead because he has been "stabbed with a white wench's black eye, run through the ear with a love-song," and shot right through the heart with Cupid's arrow. "And" -- Mercutio asks -- "is he a man to encounter Tybalt?" (2.4.14-17). A little later, after Romeo has shown up and exchanged some jokes with Mercutio, Mercutio exclaims:

Why, is not this better now than groaning
for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou
Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well
as by nature, for this drivelling love is like a great
natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his
bauble in a hole.   (2.4.88-93)

The last time they were together, about to go into Capulet's feast, Mercutio tried to kid Romeo out of his love-melancholy, but it didn't work. This time Mercutio's kidding has worked, and he's very happy. He believes he has brought back the real Romeo, the one who is sociable and has "art" -- that is, intelligence and wit. The other Romeo lived only for love. And what is love? A "natural," a drooling fool. That fool love carries a fool's "bauble," a stick which is a mockery of a king's sceptre, and looks for a hole.

Juliet has sent the Nurse to find out from Romeo what arrangements he has made for the marriage. But the Nurse left at nine; now it's noon, and Juliet is wild with anticipation. She wants the joy of Love to come to her now, even as she is thinking about it, and she believes that what she wants is what ought to be. She says, "Therefore do nimble-pinion'd doves draw love, / And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings" (2.5.7-8). Juliet is referring to paintings, common at the time, of doves pulling the chariot of Venus and of Cupid flying through the sky with his bow, ready to shoot the arrow of love. Juliet's thought is that because Love is painted as swift, it ought to be swift.

Friar Laurence and Romeo are waiting for Juliet, so the wedding can be performed. Friar Laurence, expresses the hope that everything will turn out well, but Romeo declares that being married to Juliet will make him so happy he won't care what happens next. He says, "Do thou but close our hands with holy words, / Then love-devouring death do what he dare; / It is enough I may but call her mine" (2.6.6-8). The Friar understands that Romeo thinks love will make him bullet-proof, and tries to talk some sense into him: "These violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which as they kiss consume" (2.6.9-11). The "powder" of the Friar's simile is gunpowder; the "triumph" of fire and gunpowder is the brilliant show of fireworks that results when the two touch; "consume" means "consume each other." After the fireworks, there's nothing left. Not only that, says the Friar, but there's a good reason the ectasies of love can't last forever. This is his metaphor: "The sweetest honey / Is loathsome in his own deliciousness / And in the taste confounds the appetite" (2.6.11-13). In other words, we don't eat honey right out of the pot, and saying "I love you" over and over gets real old real quick. The Friar concludes his little talk by advising Romeo to "love moderately; long love doth so; / Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow" (2.6.14-15). Romeo isn't listening.

After Tybalt has given Mercutio his death wound and run away, Romeo is ashamed that he let Tybalt slander him by calling him "villain," but more ashamed that Mercutio is dying because he fought Romeo's fight. Romeo says, "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!" (3.1.113-115). Your "temper" is your natural disposition, the combination of all of your qualities; one of these qualities for man is a valour, which should be as hard as steel. Romeo is ashamed that love has softened his valour.

Waiting for Romeo to come to her in the night, Juliet believes that the love-making will be magical, because "Lovers can see to do their amorous rites / By their own beauties" (3.2.8-9). Even if she can't see Romeo that will be as it should be, because "if love be blind, / It best agrees with night" (3.2.9-10). Usually, when we say "love is blind" we're making an ironic comment on our tendency to fall for Mr. or Ms. Wrong while thinking that he/she is Mr. or Ms. Perfect. But at this moment, waiting for Romeo to come to her bed, Juliet embraces love's irrationality; she wants to make love, not think about it.

When Romeo threatens to kill himself because he has been banished from Verona and Juliet, Friar Laurence tells him he ought to be ashamed of himself. If Romeo kills himself it will show, says the Friar, "Thy dear love sworn but hollow perjury, / Killing that love which thou hast vow'd to cherish" (3.3.128-129). The Friar's point is that if Romeo dies, Juliet will die of grief, and so Romeo will have violated his vow to cherish her. In the Friar's view, love is a responsibility, not merely a passion.

On one fateful day Romeo and Juliet are married, Romeo kills Tybalt, and Capulet promises Juliet's love to Paris. Capulet's promise is impulsive. Paris has once again come to ask for Juliet's hand in marriage, and Capulet seems about to send him away when he suddenly says, "Sir Paris, I will make a desperate tender / Of my child's love: I think she will be ruled / In all respects by me; nay, more, I doubt it not" (3.4.12-14). A "tender" is an offer; Capulet's offer of Juliet's love is "desperate" in the sense of "bold" because he has made the offer without knowing how Juliet feels about Paris. But the more common meaning of "desperate" is "reckless" or "thoughtless," and it certainly seems that Capulet didn't think before he spoke. He seems to make things up as he goes along. "I think she will be ruled . . . by me" means "I think she will take my advice," but then he is sure that she will be "ruled" (controlled) by him. Capulet is a hasty man. As soon as he has decided that Juliet will marry Paris he starts making the arrangements. He says, "Wife, go you to her ere you go to bed; / Acquaint her here of my son Paris' love" (3.4.15-16). "Acquaint" means "tell," not "ask," and Capulet uses the words "my son Paris" because he already considers Paris to be his son-in-law. Capulet thinks Juliet's love is something he can give to Paris.

Capulet is enraged by Juliet's refusal to marry Paris, and when his wife tells him that he is "too hot," he justifies his own anger:

God's bread! it makes me mad!
Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,
Alone, in company, still my care hath been
To have her match'd, and having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly lien'd,
Stuff'd, as they say, with honourable parts,
Proportion'd as one's thought would wish a man;
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
To answer "I'll not wed; I cannot love,
I am too young; I pray you, pardon me."   (3.5.176-186)

In Capulet's view, Juliet's claim that she cannot love a man with all the right qualities is merely childish and stupid stubbornness.

Paris comes to Friar Laurence to ask him to perform the wedding ceremony between himself and Juliet. As Paris is talking with the Friar, Juliet comes to ask Friar Laurence's help in making sure the wedding never happens. As soon as he sees Juliet, Paris starts telling her that she loves him:

**Paris:** Happily met, my lady and my wife!
**Juliet:** That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.
**Paris:** That "may be" must be, love, on Thursday next.
**Juliet** What must be shall be.
**Friar Laurence:**                           That's a certain text.
**Paris:** Come you to make confession to this father?
**Juliet:** To answer that, I should confess to you.
**Paris:** Do not deny to him that you love me.
**Juliet:** I will confess to you that I love him.
**Paris:** So will ye, I am sure, that you love me.   (4.1.18-26)

Juliet's part in this dialogue is clear. She detests the idea of marrying Paris, but she has to flirt just enough to keep Paris from getting any inkling of her real attitude. But what about Paris? Does he assume that she loves him because she's going to marry him? Does he assume that she loves him because he's rich and handsome? Does he think that because he loves her, she must love him?

Paris, who has come to strew flowers on Juliet's grave, fights Romeo, who has come to join Juliet in death. Romeo quickly kills Paris, and Paris' dying words are a plea to the man who has killed him: "If thou be merciful, / Open the tomb, lay me with Juliet" (5.3.72-73). Then follows a remarkable moment. We might expect that Romeo, Juliet's husband, wouldn't want any other man, even a dead one, lying next to Juliet, but Romeo's immediate response to Paris' request is, "In faith, I will" (5.3.74). Only after making this promise to his dead foe does Romeo take a hard look at him, recognise him, and remember that Balthasar told him, sometime on the journey back to Verona, that Paris was to have married Juliet. Even after this, Romeo shows no jealousy; instead, he seems to regard Paris as a comrade in the adventure of love and death. He says to Paris' body, "O, give me thy hand, / One writ with me in sour misfortune's book!" (5.3.82). Keeping his promise, Romeo picks up the body of Paris, saying to it, "I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave" (5.3.83).