

Going Beyond the Gender Boundary: Female Virtues and Gender Reversal in *Romeo and Juliet**

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In late sixteenth-century England love poetry enjoyed great popularity. Many poets such as Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and Shakespeare, composed sonnets and poems on love and beloved women. The conventions of love poetry derived from *Canzoniere* (1347), which consisted of more than 300 poems that an Italian poet Petrarch (1304 – 74) composed to express his love for a lady called Laura. Petrarch's series of love poems to Laura saw 167 editions in the sixteenth century and 70 in the next century.¹ Petrarchan conceits and the rhetoric of love poetry came into vogue first in fifteenth-century Italy where Neo-Platonists such as Marsilio Ficino (1433 – 99), Pietro Bembo (1470 – 1547), and Baldassare Castiglione (1478 – 1529), author of *The Book of the Courtier*, revived and used the Petrarchan positive aspect of love in order to define their theory of the spiritualization of love.² Bembo and Castiglione followed Ficino's theory of love, which traced back to Plato's idea of spiritual love. Petrarchan love in the Renaissance was strongly influenced by the Neo-Platonic concept that human love enables men's spirituality to ascend to a higher level, finally up to something divine.³ Therefore, Petrarchan love tends to emphasize the spiritual elements of

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¹ Lu E. Pearson, *Elizabethan Love Conventions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), p.37.

² Leonard Foster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.115.

³ As for the Neo-Platonic concept of transcendent love, see Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on*

love rather than the physical ones. Revived by the Neo-Platonists, Petrarchan love poems and the accompanying concept of love spread throughout Western Europe.

The Neo-Platonists followed the idea of Petrarchan love poetry that love enters the mind through the eyes to establish their theory of love. According to Ficino, 'love is the desire of enjoying beauty', which is based on Plato's concept of love as the desire for beauty in the *Symposium*.⁴ 'Not the ears, not smell, not taste, not touch', Ficino continues, 'but the eye perceives that light of the body', which reflects 'that light and beauty of the soul we comprehend with the Intellect alone'.⁵ Ficino's theory affirms the positive power of love that leads a lover to ascend 'step-by-step indeed, first to the body of the beloved, second, to the Soul, third to the Angel, and finally to God, the first origin of this splendor'.⁶ It is, however, only through the spiritual love between men, especially young and old men that this effect of love can be practiced. Following Ficino's basic theory of love, Bembo in the *Gli Asolani* (1505) and Castiglione in the *Courtier* (1528) adapted it to the heterosexual relationship of love, and their idea of love flourished in sixteenth century Europe.⁷ In the *Courtier*, Bembo explains that women's 'beauty can [. . .] be enjoyed [. . .] solely through what has beauty for its true object, namely, the faculty of sight'.⁸ Thus, eyesight is regarded as an important source of love in the Renaissance idea of love, and becomes a central motif in love poetry.⁹

Petrarchan love conventions were first brought into England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in the early sixteenth century. And in

Plato's 'Symposium' on Love, trans. by Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), pp.126, 136-45.

⁴ Ficino, p.58. Also see Plato, *Symposium*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 201a-c, pp.40-41.

⁵ Ficino, p.58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁷ Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), pp.81-85, 100-102.

⁸ Castiglione, p.334.

⁹ Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare on Love & Lust* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp.14-17.

the late sixteenth century Petrarchan love conventions reappeared in the poems of Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and so on at the court of Elizabeth I.¹⁰ Now that Petrarchan conceits and rhetoric were regarded as fashionable literary criteria, the Elizabethan poets were willing to compose love sonnets in order to gain favors from nobles and to have successful literary careers. Petrarchan love poetry also provided poets who wanted to improve their rhetorical skills with poetic models for imitation.¹¹

Shakespeare, like many other poets, knew well about the Petrarchan conventions of love sonnets and used them not only in his *Sonnets* but in plays such as *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare utilized Petrarchan conventions to depict love scenes or sometimes satirize the unreal love seen in the tradition, and successfully created a new heroine like Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. I shall first look over various kinds of Petrarchan conventions in Shakespeare's plays, and then examine Shakespeare's use of the conventions in *Romeo and Juliet* to suggest that Juliet is a new type of heroine who expresses her own emotion and thought, and decides her own way of life by herself.¹²

¹⁰ Pearson, pp.35-74.

¹¹ Foster, p.23.

¹² In chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation, I researched women's status and education in the patriarchal society of those days, and also investigated Mary I and Elizabeth I as examples of self-reliant educated women through close examination of the humanistic education given them during their princess' days and their public speeches. I showed that Mary's education advised by Juan Luis Vives in his *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1523), who emphasized female virtues, especially silence as a token of chastity, led her to be obedient to her husband Philip of Spain, and, as a result, led her reign to disaster. On the other hand, as I demonstrated, thanks to the education instructed by Roger Ascham, who encouraged her to master eloquence in Latin and other languages, as he wrote later in his *The Schoolmaster* (1570), Elizabeth attained the qualities suitable for a monarch, which the people in those days believed that only men could possess, and successfully governed her country and male subjects for more than forty years. Besides Elizabeth I, learned cultured women such as Mary Sidney and Mary Wroth made productive use of their academic talents beyond the gender boundary of the patriarchal society. These women are mirrored in many of the female characters in Shakespeare's plays.

Petrarchan Lovers

One of the most apparent characteristics of Petrarchan love poetry is the portrait of a man, who has fallen in love with a woman, as a melancholic lover. According to L. Babb, the major symptoms caused by love for a woman are tears and sighs, abstracted mood, lament and despair, and composing sonnets or poems for the beloved woman.¹³ In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Speed catalogues such symptoms of love-sickness when he recognizes his master Valentine as a man who has fallen in love with a woman.

Val. Why, how know you that I am in love?

Speed. Marry, by these special marks: first, you have learn'd, like Sir Proteus, to wreath your arms, like a malecontent; to relish a love-song, like a robin-redbreast; to walk alone, like one that had the pestilence; to sigh, like a schoolboy that had lost his A B C; to weep, like a young wench that had buried her grandam; to fast, like one that takes diet; to watch, like one that fears robbing; to speak puling, like a beggar at Hallowmas. You were wont, when you laugh'd, to crow like a cock; when you walk'd, to walk like one of the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you look'd sadly; it was for want of money: and now you are metamorphis'd with a mistress, that when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master.

[2.1.17 – 32]

Pointing out how different Valentine appears now from what he used to be, Speed is surprised that Valentine has been metamorphosed by loving a woman from a manly gentleman into a melancholic lover. In like manner in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the misogynist Berowne, one of the courtiers attending to the King of Navarre,

¹³ Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580-1642* (East Lansing: Michigan-State University Press, 1951; repr. 1965), Chapter IV, pp.128-42; Charney, pp.22-24.

admits that he has fallen in love: 'Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan' [3.1.204].

At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is also portrayed as suffering from love-sickness, a kind of disease caused by unrequited love. In Petrarchan conventions, a lover never gets reward for his love from his lady. It is one-sided love. That is why a Petrarchan lover is always tortured by his painful love and his lady's coldness. Romeo's friend Benvolio reports Romeo's melancholic mood to Lady Montague, Romeo's mother.

Ben. Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drive me to walk abroad,
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
That westward rooteth from this city side,
So early walking did I see your son.
Towards him I made, but he was ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood.
I, measuring his affections by my own,
Which then most sought where most might not be found,
Being one too many by my weary self,
Pursued my humor not pursuing his,
And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me. [1.1.118 – 30]

Benvolio implies his own love-sickness in describing Romeo's state of mind. As Jill L. Levenson points out, Benvolio's walking outside caused by his 'troubled mind' shows 'a classical symptom of melancholy in general and love melancholy in particular'.¹⁴ The forest of 'sycamore' is associated with love-sickness, as found

¹⁴ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), note on 1.1.116.

in *Love's Labour's Lost* [5.2.89] and *Othello* [4.3.40]. Both Benvolio and Romeo are anxious to avoid company and to be alone in order to abandon themselves to their fancies for their beloved ladies. This is also a typical symptom of love melancholy.¹⁵

Therefore, Romeo's father Montague is concerned about his son's strange behaviour, which apparently shows that Romeo is suffering from love sickness.

Mon. Many a morning hath he there been seen,
 With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
 Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs,
 [.]
 Away from light steals home my heavy son,
 And private in his chamber pens himself,
 Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
 And makes himself an artificial night.
 Black and portendous must this humor prove,
 Unless good counsel may the cause remove. [1.1.131 – 42]

Montague, using typical poetic tropes like tear-dew and cloud-sigh and an oxymoron of light-heavy, describes his son's melancholy. Tears, sighing, and confining himself in his room are easily identified with symptoms of love-sickness. 'Black', which means black humour or black bile, one of the four human humours, is also related to a melancholic mood.¹⁶

The most obvious linguistic rhetoric in Petrarchan conventions is oxymoron.¹⁷ Romeo's expressions of his love are full of this poetic conceit: 'O brawling love! O loving hate! / [. . .] / O heavy lightness, serious vanity, / Misshapen chaos of

¹⁵ Babb, p.135.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.21-23.

¹⁷ A.J. Earl, 'Romeo and Juliet and the Elizabethan Sonnets', *English* 27(1978), 99-119 (p.102).

well [-seeming] forms, / Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health' [1.1.176 – 80]. Romeo laments over his unrequited love for Rosaline. His lamentation sounds exaggerated and seemingly ridiculous to the audience, and his love for her does not seem to be real because his lady Rosaline never appears on stage throughout the play. Shakespeare clearly satirizes unreal Petrarchan love by exposing Romeo's conventional love-sickness in order to contrast his real love for Juliet with his unreal love for Rosaline.

During the scene of the banquet, where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time, Romeo compares himself to a pilgrim. This comparison is one of the conventional tropes, as read in a Petrarch poem.¹⁸

Rom. [To Juliet.] If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Jul. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this:
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Rom. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Jul. Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in pray'r.

Rom. O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do,
They pray – grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Jul. Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Rom. Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purg'd.

[kissing her.] [1.5.93 – 107]

¹⁸ Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The 'Rime sparse' and Other Lyrics*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1976), poem 16, pp.50-51.

Following the Petrarchan tradition, Pilgrim Romeo admires Juliet as a holy female 'saint'. The religious images come down from the idea of Petrarchan idealized love that the beloved lady, regarded as a perfect figure with physical and spiritual beauty, has the power to purify the lover's soul. Shakespeare obeys the conventional trope of pilgrim-saint, to be sure, but it is notable that in the above quoted conversation he uses the form of a sonnet. This scene presents a remarkable contrast between Petrarchan love and realistic love. In the Petrarchan traditions, a beloved lady normally responds to the lover with a disdainful and cold attitude, or even gives no reply, so that the melancholic lover recites his poem alone, often in the style of a sonnet. But, Juliet replies to Romeo, and will accept his love in a later scene. Furthermore, while conversing in the form of a sonnet, Romeo and Juliet have physical contact with each other, as indicated by the stage directions in the banquet scene. Even without the stage directions, it is not difficult to imagine that Romeo would kiss Juliet at the end of their conversation. One possible stage direction is that Romeo touches her hand while reciting the sonnet with her. This physical contact obviously signifies their sexual desire and satisfaction as well as their 'mutuality' at this moment.¹⁹ Shakespeare's lovers deviate considerably from the Petrarchan conventions, which do not allow the lover to gain physical contact or satisfaction from his lady. Therefore, the love between Romeo and Juliet contrasts significantly with Romeo's unrequited love for Rosaline.

Shakespeare brings physical and sexual elements into the conventional Petrarchan conceit of love in the case of Romeo and Juliet to distinguish their love from Petrarchan love. Also in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare ridicules the loves of the King and the three nobles of Navarre by using Petrarchan tropes, as a contrast to realistic love.

¹⁹ Roger Stilling, *Love and Death in Renaissance Tragedy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1976), p.78.

At the beginning of the play, the King of Navarre and his courtiers swear an oath to engage in study and not to take pleasure in 'the world's desires' such as love, food, and sleep, in order to gain fame and immortality as a reward for a 'contemplative' life [1.1.1 – 14]. They think that to win fame through pursuing a studious life will lead them to 'eternity', that is, immortality [1.1.7]. But, meeting the French Princess and her ladies in waiting, the King of Navarre and his courtiers of Navarre fall in love with them. The scene of their composing sonnets is pivotal for the action of the play; after this the King of Navarre and his courtiers abandon their oath to live a studious life and move onto pursuing their loves. While the King of Navarre and the two courtiers, Longaville and Dumaine, recite poems one after another, the other courtier Berowne, hiding himself somewhere, eavesdrops on them, and then criticizes their poems. Their love poems are full of typical Petrarchan conceits, but express nothing of the Neo-Platonic spiritualization of love, because their passions are explicitly inclined to physical desire, not to the spiritual ascent to divinity, which is the ultimate Neo-Platonic purpose of love.

This is clearly shown in Berowne's critical comment on Longaville's adoration for Maria in his poem: [*Aside.*] This is the liver-vein, which makes flesh a deity, / A green goose a goddess: pure, pure [idolatry] [4.3.72 – 73]. Longaville follows a Petrarchan convention by comparing his lady to a goddess; Berowne, however, reduces Longaville's devotion to sexual desire, since 'the liver' is regarded as 'the seat of sexual passion', as H.R. Woudhuysen annotates the word.²⁰ Berowne's comment on Longaville's verse suggests Shakespeare's satire on Petrarchan tradition.²¹ After Berowne's love letter for Rosaline is brought to the King of Navarre and his courtiers by the dairymaid Jaquenetta and the clown Costard, and

²⁰ *The Arden Shakespeare Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. by H.R. Woudhuysen (Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997; repr. 1999), note on 4.2.71-72.

²¹ Patricia L. Carlin, *Shakespeare's Mortal Men: Overcoming Death in History, Comedy and Tragedy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p.33.

the fact that even Berowne has fallen in love is brought to light, Berowne admits his sexual passion.

Ber. Sweet lords, sweet lovers, O, let us embrace!
 As true we are as flesh and blood can be.
 The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face;
 Young blood doth not obey an old decree.
 We cannot cross the cause why we were born;
 Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn. [4.3.210 – 15]

The King of Navarre and his courtiers are all 'flesh and blood,' which is self-evident and 'true' like the coming and going of the tide and the cycle of day and night. Berowne concedes, accordingly, that sexual passion caused by love, which is the cause why humans are born, is also natural for human life. If physical desire is excluded from love, it would be unnatural and inadequate for human life. Shakespeare seems to condemn the nobles for having so far assumed that their loves are spiritual and ideal without sexual passion. In this respect, and as a foreshadowing of the nobles' realization, only the Spanish braggart knight Armado understands the needs for natural human life, so that as a result of his wooing and winning the love of Jaquenetta, he begets a child by her.

Shakespeare criticizes the idea that sexuality should be eliminated from human life to attain virtuous achievement or spiritual perfection based on and suggested by Petrarchan Neo-Platonism. In this sense, the conventional courtship with Petrarchan rhetoric is just formal and over-spiritualized, and does not convey the realistic affection of human love, like Romeo's love for Rosaline. The idea of natural sexuality is embodied in the Nurse, to whom as I shall return later.

Gender Reversal and the Expression of Female Sexuality in *Romeo and Juliet*

Shakespeare subverts some of the conventions of Petrarchan love. One is that

Romeo's love for Juliet is not unrequited: the love is mutual between them, contrary to the Petrarchan tradition that a lover never gains affection from his beloved. Furthermore, what is most significant is that it is not Romeo but Juliet who takes the initiative in their relationship. This is the subversion of the convention that a man should woo his lady, but not vice versa. Shakespeare might have changed the convention in order to present Juliet as a new type of heroine who speaks out and behaves actively in the pursuit of her own life.²² Even gender reversal sometimes occurs between Romeo and Juliet. In the earlier scene at the balcony [2.2], their physical position is dramatically reversed, so that Juliet stands in the balcony high above Romeo.

<i>Rom.</i>	She speaks!
O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art	
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,	
As is a winged messenger of heaven	
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes	
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,	
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds,	
And sails upon the bosom of the air.	[2.2.25 – 32]

It is true, according to Romeo's description of her 'being o'er my [Romeo's] head', that Juliet is physically above Romeo, while he is hiding himself under the balcony of her chamber. This situation conspicuously shows their reversed gender roles.²³ Moreover, Romeo addresses her as if she were a male 'bright angel', using

²² I examined, in chapter 2 of the dissertation, heroines in comedies such as Rosalind in *As You Like it* and Viola in *Twelfth Night* as active self-reliant female characters who attain their freedom of speaking and behavior through disguise in male's attire. These heroines reflect Elizabeth's androgynous image using the theory of the King's Two Bodies, which I demonstrated by close reading of her public speeches.

²³ Soji Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Bunka-shi: Shakai · Engeki · Iconology* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2000), p.20.

the male pronouns, 'him' and 'he'. The phrase 'fall back' in Romeo's speech, which indicates the common female physical position in copulation, is a reflection of the bawdy joke of the Nurse's husband: 'Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit, / Wilt thou not, Jule?' [1.3.42 – 43]. In the ordinary sexual gender role Juliet should 'fall back'. Romeo plays, however, the role of a woman falling backward to look up at Juliet who stands on the balcony above him.

In addition to the physical position of the two young lovers in the balcony scene, gender reversal occurs in their expressions of love in some crucial scenes of the play. For instance, Juliet, answering the Nurse's call, shows herself again at the balcony of her chamber and calls back to Romeo as follows.

Enter JXOHWagain [above].

Jul. Hist, Romeo, hist! O, for a falc'ner's voice,
 To lure this tassel-gentle back again!
 Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud,
 Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
 And make her airy tongue more hoarse than [mine],
 With repetition of my [Romeo's name.] Romeo! [2.2.158 – 63]

The imagery of falconry is used here. Juliet wishes for 'a falc'ner's voice' in order to call back Romeo. The voice of Juliet has the power to 'lure' a falcon, Romeo. From the point of view of the term of falconry, the word 'lure' also means 'tame'. Probably without knowing, Juliet expresses her intention to manipulate Romeo in the same way as a falconer does his falcon. She praises Romeo as 'this tassel-gentle', a falcon, that is, a noble bird.²⁴ Juliet, however, right after using the falconry images, compares herself to Echo, a mythological figure in Ovid's

²⁴ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 2.2.204-5.

Metamorphoses, whose sad love story tells her serious and earnest affection for Narcissus. Echo's image for Juliet is deliberately used to show her as a young woman with fidelity and chastity and a love for Romeo as serious as Echo's love, despite Juliet's manifestation of her wish to 'lure' Romeo. Moreover, Echo's image might also imply the tragic end of the love between Juliet and Romeo.

The falconry imagery occurs once more later in the love-talk between them. She uses it again when parting from Romeo as morning comes after the night they had spent together.

Jul. 'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone –
 And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
 That lets it hop a little from his hand,
 Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
 And with a silken thread plucks it back again,
 So loving-jealous of his liberty. [2.2.176 – 81]

Juliet shows her desire to control Romeo like a falconer without knowing it, as her expressions, 'a wanton's bird', 'with a silken thread', clearly indicate. Her speech fused with falconry imagery creates the impression that Romeo has only limited 'liberty' to move around within a cage like a bird watched by Juliet and is tamed 'like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves' by Juliet. With the falconry terms and images used by Juliet, Shakespeare emphasizes the gender reversal between Juliet and Romeo. As a falconer, it is natural for Juliet to play the leading role and to express a love unsuitable for a young upper-class woman. In this sense, she is unconventional like Shakespeare's other heroines who challenge their fates with courage and open-mindedness.

Juliet openly expresses her sexual desire for Romeo while waiting for him after their secret marriage. Juliet expresses her love and sexual desire for Romeo with honesty and straightforwardness, which shows their love as natural. Their love is

presented in contrast to Romeo's idealized love for Rosaline or to Mercutio's cynical view of love. It should be noted that Juliet uses less artful conceits and rhetoric when she expresses her emotional feeling for Romeo than Romeo does. In their love relationship, it is apparent that she plays the leading role.

The most remarkable gender reversal occurs in the scene where Juliet recites a kind of epithalamium [3.2.1 – 31], which is traditionally sung by the bridegroom to celebrate a wedding. Besides the untraditional reciting of her speech, Juliet naturally and openly expresses her earnest sexual desire for Romeo and the 'love-performing night' [3.2.5].

[*Jul.*] Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging; such a waggoner
As Phaëton would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately. [3.2.1 – 4]

The beginning of her speech reminds us of Mercutio's speech about Queen Mab [1.4.53 – 94]. Queen Mab rides on 'Her chariot' made of 'an empty hazel-nut' [1.4.59] operated by 'Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat' [1.4.67], 'in this state she gallops night by night / Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love' [1.4.70 – 71]. This speech ends when Mercutio mentions a bawdy act which is thought to be intended by Queen Mab.

Mer. This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,
That presses them and learns them first to bear,
Making them women of good carriage. [1.4.92 – 94]

According to Mercutio, Queen Mab is a 'malicious female sprite',²⁵ who drives

²⁵ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 1.4.90.

young women into erotic activity with men. The phrase 'maids lie on their backs' explicitly means the female physical position in sexual intercourse. The word 'bear', coupled with 'good carriage', refers to the meaning not only of bearing 'the weight of a man' but also of 'childbirth' as a result of the copulation.²⁶ Thus, through the expression 'Gallop apace'; the bawdy images conveyed by Queen Mab in Mercutio's speech flow into the beginning part of Juliet's invocation to Romeo in the second scene of the third act.

Juliet's speech while waiting for Romeo is surprisingly rich in erotic expressions and images. She passionately and frankly confesses her emotion for Romeo and expectation for the sexual pleasure that she is about to experience with him.

Jul. Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That [th'] runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo
Leap to these arms untalk'd of and unseen! [3.2.5 – 7]

In his *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, Gordon Williams sees an erotic allusion of 'a woman's open-legged posture for copulation' in the word 'spread'.²⁷ This sexual meaning of 'spread' draws an image of virginity from 'close curtain'. For the phrase, 'Leap to these arms', Mary Bly points out the echo of the lines from Marlow's *Tragedy of Dido* (1587): 'If thou wilt stay / Leap in mine arms; mine arms are open wide; / If not, turn from me, and I'll turn from thee [. . .]' [5.1179 – 81].²⁸ According to Gordon Williams, 'leap' also carries a meaning of 'mount sexually', which derived from farm animals' behaviour 'to spring upon the female in copulation'.²⁹ Shakespeare

²⁶ *Ibid.*, note on 1.4.91.

²⁷ Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols (London: Athlone, 1994), p.1294.

²⁸ Mary Bly, 'Bawdy Puns and Lustful Virgins: the Legacy of Juliet's Desire in Comedies of the Early 1600s', *Shakespeare Survey*, 49 (1996), 97-109 (p.100).

²⁹ Williams, pp.791-92.

uses the word 'leap' with an erotic image in his other works. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick replies to Claudio's allusion about Europe as a mythological female figure, who is raped by the mighty god Jove disguised as a white bull: 'Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low, / And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow, / And got a calf' [5.4.48 – 50].³⁰ Shakespeare 'links horsemanship with conubial pleasure' in *Henry V*: 'If I could win a lady at leap-frog, or by vaulting into my saddle with my armor on my back, [. . .] I should quickly leap into a wife' [5.2.136 – 39].³¹ Thus, Juliet's use of 'leap' in her speech is used to help strengthen an erotic overtone.

Juliet continues to express her feeling for the coming romantic night with Romeo. She compares her marriage to a game: 'learn me how to lose a winning match, / Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods' [3.2.12 – 13]. Gordon Williams gives an explanation for this sentence as to 'achieve success in love by yielding'.³² Juliet wins her lover in her match, which means 'a wedding and an erotic game'; at the same time, she loses her virginity for her marriage.³³ Juliet also reveals her impatience to wait for Romeo and their wedding night.

Jul. O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it, and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoyed. [3.2.26 – 28]

The active voice ('have bought' and 'possessed') and passive ('am sold' and '[being] enjoyed') in the same sentence grammatically express Juliet's double position in her love for Romeo. Juliet successfully leads Romeo to their wedding; at the same

³⁰ Williams cites these lines as one of the examples for 'leap' in his *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, p.792.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.792.

³² *Ibid.*, p.862.

³³ Bly, p.101.

time, she takes a passive position in relationship to her husband as his bride and wife. It is clear that Juliet mentions sexual pleasure with the word 'possess', whose meaning is interchangeable with 'enjoyed'. Stanley Wells annotates 'the mansion of a love' as the 'human body which is a source of sexual pleasure.'³⁴ Another expression of Juliet's impatient feeling implicitly shows gender reversal.

Jul. As is the night before some festival
 To an impatient child that hath new robes
 And may not wear them. [3.2.29 – 31]

In the garment imagery of 'robes' and 'wear', as Gordon Williams explains, the latter word conveys a sexual implication that a man draws on in coitus like a garment, and his object is customarily a woman.³⁵ In ordinary usage, a man is supposed to draw on a woman in copulation as if the man is putting on a garment. In contrast to the conventional gender role, Romeo is regarded as the object, 'new robes,' that Juliet should 'wear'. In this sense, Juliet again reverses her sexual gender role. This shows Juliet's activeness and her open expression of sexual desire, although she is not conscious of either of them.

Juliet's Virginity and the Sincerity of Her Love for Romeo

It has been said that Shakespeare made use of Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* as one of the sources for *Romeo and Juliet*. There are slight but substantial detachments from Brooke's version in the contemplation by Shakespeare's Juliet of Romeo's love for her and her love for Romeo. Brooke's Juliet at least once doubts Romeo's love for her because he is the son of the

³⁴ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 3.2.26.

³⁵ Williams, p.1508. John Donne uses this 'wear', as cited in Williams: 'a cheap whore, who hath beene / Worne by many as severall men in sinne, / As are black feathers, or musk-colour hose' in *Complete English Poems*, 'Satyre I', pp.150-54 (p.151).

Montagues, a foe of her family [ll.385 – 88].³⁶ On the other hand, Shakespeare's Juliet has no doubt about Romeo's love for her. While Brooke's Juliet considers her marriage to Romeo a secret scheme to make peace between the two houses [ll.426 – 28],³⁷ in Shakespeare it is Friar Laurence who concocts the peace-making plan by utilizing the marriage of Romeo and Juliet. Brooke's Juliet gives an impression of being a discreet and astute young woman, but she seems somehow less pure and less honest than Shakespeare's Juliet. Juliet in Shakespeare wholeheartedly believes Romeo's serious love for her and emotionally decides to choose him as a husband. She never dreams that she can eliminate the rivalry between the families. Her sincerity and passion show Juliet's love for Romeo in the Shakespeare version to be more earnest and honest than that of Juliet in Brooke's version.

Juliet is presented as a virgin heroine; Romeo is her first love. Her love for Romeo is all the more pure and sincere for her virginity. But her expression of sexual desire for Romeo after they have spent the night together apparently seems more lustful than Cleopatra's passion for Antony. The fact that Juliet is a virgin is emphasized in her father's answer to Paris: 'My child is yet a stranger in the world' [1.2.8]. This speech implies that she has not made her debut yet in the society of Verona, and that she does not know a man in terms of a romantic relation. In addition, the fact that Romeo does not realize she is a daughter of the Capulets at the banquet scene tells us that Juliet's face has not been socially recognized throughout the city. If she had already made her debut in society, Romeo should have known and recognized her as a daughter of the Capulets, the foe of his family.

³⁶ Arthur Brooke, 'The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet' in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957; Routledge, 1996), I, p.296.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.297.

Two Mothers of Juliet

The important element for Juliet in the formation of her idea of love is that she has two mothers: the one who gave birth to her and the other who raised her.³⁸ Juliet's mother, Capulet's wife, is a typical wife in patriarchy, respecting chastity, silence, and obedience to her husband.³⁹ Juliet's second mother, the Nurse, is a warm-hearted woman full of good humour. She thinks of love and sexual desire as natural human feelings. As Barbara Everett notes, the Nurse embodies Nature as life-giving and affirms sexual desire as a natural part of human life.⁴⁰ The Nurse's view of love always combines physical and sexual elements.⁴¹ Juliet has grown up under the influence of these two different types of women. While Juliet is educated by her mother to be an ideal courtly lady and to be an obedient wife like her mother, she is taught to know natural human life, or more precisely, to know love and sexuality as natural human feelings, by the Nurse.

Juliet's mother explains to her daughter how marriage for the upper class family in patriarchal society should be. Her idea of marriage is presented as typical of a patriarchy. Just before the night of a banquet in the Capulets' house, Juliet's mother tries to persuade Juliet to marry Paris, a young nobleman, by using a book metaphor.

La. Cap. What say you? can you love the gentleman?

This night you shall behold him at our feast;
 Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
 And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;
 Examine every married lineament,
 And see how one another lends content;

³⁸ Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Bunka-shi*, p.12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁴⁰ Babara Everett, 'Romeo and Juliet: The Nurse's Story,' *Critical Quarterly*, 14 (1972), 129-39.

⁴¹ Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Bunka-shi*, p.14.

And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies

Find written in the margent of his eyes.

[1.3.79 – 86]

With the terms of book imagery such as 'volume', 'pen', 'lineament', 'content', and 'margent', Juliet's mother links Paris with 'this fair volume,' and praises him implicitly as an ideal husband for Juliet. She tells Juliet to examine every harmonized feature ('married lineament') on Paris' face,⁴² so that Juliet may see how one sets off another's beauty, to satisfy the eye ('how one another lends content').⁴³ Her conceits of book imagery also engage marital matters.

La. Cap. This precious book of love, this unbound lover,

To beautify him, only lacks a cover.

The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride

For fair without the fair within to hide.

That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,

That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.

[1.3.87 – 92]

Paris has not reached maturity yet, because he is not a married man. The word 'unbound' means 'not married.' It also has a meaning related to the book images. To be recognized as a mature man in society, he has to be married. As a legal term, 'a cover' means a married woman.⁴⁴ Juliet's mother compares a married couple to a book bound with a 'fair' cover. In her metaphor, a wife is regarded as 'gold clasps' that lock marital worth, that is, 'the glory'. The words 'gold' and 'golden' emphasize financial need as one of the important aspects of marriage, that is to

⁴² *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 1.3.85-86.

⁴³ Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, 2 vols (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 'Content subst.'

⁴⁴ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 1.3.90.

say, wealth and the social status of marriage in a patriarchy.⁴⁵ In this sense, 'the glory' of marriage indicates fortunes or possessions as well as the beauty of a couple. The phrase 'in many's eyes', meaning other people around a couple, refers to another aspect of marriage. Marriage is a social institution: a married couple is regarded as a social unit that makes up society. Levenson points out that wifely status is 'a commodity' annotating the comparison of a wife to 'golden clasps' described 'in terms of the precious metal with good value'.⁴⁶ This is a typical patriarchal view of a wife. Thus, marriage for the upper-class in society is a device to unite a man and a woman as a social unit, to place them in an appropriate place in the society, and to promote the family's finances or status. This is the view of Juliet's mother about marriage. Her view is obviously different from that of the Nurse, who believes that marriage has another more important side, mutual love and sexual pleasure.

Juliet's mother also has influence on Juliet's court-lady-like behaviour. That Juliet's behaviour is suitable for a courtly lady is shown in her answer to her mother, when her mother offers the arranged marriage to Paris.

La. Cap. Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

Jul. 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. [1.3.96 – 99]

Just before Juliet replies, her mother has talked to her about marriage using a book metaphor in the manner of composing rhymed couplets [1.3.79 – 94]. Following her mother's style of speech, Juliet replies in rhymes every two lines to show her

⁴⁵ Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Bunka-shi*, p.15.

⁴⁶ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 1.3.94.

obedience to her parents.⁴⁷ Juliet also uses the conventional rhetoric of Renaissance love poetry, where the eyesight of a lady often pierces through the heart of a lover like a dart. She knows how to behave as an upper-class lady even when Romeo overhears her true feeling for him under the balcony of her chamber.

Jul. Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
 What I have spoke, but farewell, compliment!
 Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say, "Ay,"
 And I will take thy word; [. . .]
 [.] O gentle Romeo,
 If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;
 Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,
 I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,
 So thou wilt woo, but else not for the world. [2.2.88 – 97]

When she realizes that her confession of love for Romeo has been overheard by him, Juliet explains that she should behave 'on form,' which is a bookish manner suitable to a court lady, so that he does not think her 'too quickly won'. She knows how an upper-class young woman should behave when wooing. When she says 'nay' to the man who wants to win her love, she knows that he will 'woo' her all the more passionately and fervently for her coldness and disdainfulness. But, she dares to throw away this 'compliment' and turns to her straightforward confession of love for Romeo. This candid manner of her speech shows her love to be more honest and, as Juliet Dusinberre remarks, 'modest because honest'.⁴⁸

In Renaissance England, women's honesty was one of the most important and

⁴⁷ Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Bunka-shi*, pp.15-16.

⁴⁸ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975; repr. 1996), p.71.

valuable virtues.⁴⁹ Honesty means chastity, as Dusiaberre points out: 'women's honesty was [. . .] chastity in sexual matters.'⁵⁰ For women, physical chastity had priority over sincerity in mind. The word 'honest' in this sense is found in the nunnery scene of *Hamlet*. When Hamlet is walking in the gallery thinking about revenge on his uncle, King Claudius, he finds Ophelia pretending to pray with a book. He asks her about her honesty in order to see if she is deceiving him or not.

Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?

Oph. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?

Oph. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, [your honesty] should admit no discourse to your beauty.

Oph. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. [3.1.102 – 13]

Hamlet uses 'honest' to mean not only 'truthful' or 'sincere' but also physically 'chaste'.⁵¹ Since his mother has remarried too quickly after her former husband died, he casts doubt on women's chastity in relation to sexual behaviour, as is seen in the conversation with his mother Gertrude later in her bedchamber. And moreover, he explains to Ophelia that women's honesty is incompatible with their

⁴⁹ Concerning the female three virtues, silence, chastity, and obedience, imposed on women in the patriarchal society, see chapter 1, where I examined women and their virtues through visual materials such as paintings, woodcuts, and emblem books, as well as literal references.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁵¹ *The Arden Shakespeare Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982; Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997), note on 3.1.103.

beauty. According to Hamlet, a 'fair' woman must be 'a bawd', not truthful and chaste. To be an honest woman, she should be sincere and chaste in sexual matters. In this sense, for women, honesty is always associated with chastity. In consideration of Hamlet's use of honesty, it can be said that Juliet's honest confession of love for Romeo paradoxically shows her chastity and modesty in sexual matters because of her artless expression of her love for Romeo. This is in contrast to Ophelia in the nunnery scene.

Let us see Juliet's confession of love for Romeo in the balcony scene.

Jul. In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
 And therefore thou mayest think my behavior light,
 But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
 Than those that have [more] coying to be strange.
 I should have been more strange, I must confess,
 But that thou overheardst, ere I was ware,
 My true-love passion. [2.2.98 – 104]

Juliet is not following the conventional manner of 'coying to be strange', which means to pretend to be 'reserved' or 'shy' in her response to his love.⁵² The word 'coying' reminds us of Andrew Marvell's (1621 – 78) well known poem 'To his Coy Mistress', in which the poet persuades his shy lady to respond to his love. Coyness was a female strategy in the Renaissance to let women appear to be chaste and honest as well as to make lovers set a high value on their beloved because of the difficulty in gaining their reciprocal love. Coyness was a social behaviour code for Renaissance women. Juliet seems to feel obliged to obey this conventional code of coyness, as shown in the speech quoted above: 'I should have been more strange, I must confess.' In *Troilus and Cressida*, Cressida

⁵² *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 2.1.144.

ingeniously acts as a typical Renaissance woman following this behaviour code of coyness in order to be seen as a chaste woman and to make Troilus woo her more fervently for her coyness.

Cres. Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing:
 Things won are done, joy's soul lies in the doing.
 That she belov'd knows nought that knows not this:
 Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is.
 That she was never yet that ever knew
 Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
 Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:
 Achievement is command; ungain'd, beseech;
 Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
 Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear. [1.2.286 – 95]

Cressida knows exactly how to react to Troilus' wooing as an upper-class woman: her love should be difficult to be gained. She pretends to reject Troilus' love and acts disdainfully for his love, so that she might manipulate him in their love-game to make him believe she is more valuable than she actually is. She cunningly appears to be shy and coy, so that she can be respected as an honest and chaste woman. As far as her behaviour is concerned, Cressida is actually an honest and chaste woman. Thus, women's code of coyness does not always show their mental and physical honesty. An honest woman should not exert her coyness but just behave as an honest woman. Miranda in *The Tempest*, when she meets Ferdinand for the first time, immediately confesses her love for him without coyness.

Mir. Hence, bashful cunning!
 And prompt me, plain and holy innocence!
 I am your wife, if you will marry me. [3.1.81 – 83]

Miranda does not know the conventional behaviour of female coyness, because she has been brought up on an island far from the court. She expresses her instinctive affection for Ferdinand with straightforward honesty. Unlike Cressida, she has no art in her confession of love. In the same manner, like Miranda, Juliet insists that she should 'prove' her 'true-love passion' for Romeo, not by the conventional conduct of coyness but through her own candid words [2.2.85 – 106]. Unlike Cressida, Juliet does not think of her relationship with Romeo as a love-game. That's why Juliet has no art in her expression of love for Romeo, and doesn't assume coyness at all. This shows paradoxically her honesty in mind and her chastity in sexual behaviour.

While Lady Capulet made Juliet's behaviour suitable for a court lady, the Nurse must have given great influence on Juliet to form her open and artless behaviour in love.

In Tudor England, people believed that the wet-nurse's nature and character would be transmitted to the babies that they breast-fed: 'the nurse's character, and whatever she ate or activity she engaged in had the potential to affect the child she fed: "the propertie and nature of the milke is of power to change and alter the disposition of the Infant".'⁵³ For an example of the influence of mother's milk, in *Titus Andronicus*, Chiron and Demetrius, two sons of Tamora, the ex-queen of the Goths and now wife of Saturninus, the Emperor of Rome, rape Lavinia and mutilate her wrists and tongue so that she cannot speak about their cruel crimes to anyone. Their brutality is greatly influenced by Tamora's wicked nature through her milk, which they sucked from her breasts.⁵⁴ In *Coriolanus*, Volumnia, mother to Coriolanus, influenced his brave, courageous, but arrogant nature: 'Thy

⁵³ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.29.

⁵⁴ Susan Dunn-Hensley, 'Whore Queens: The Sexualized Female Body and the State' in *High and Mighty Queens' of Early Modern England: Realities and Representations*, pp.101-16 (pp.109-10).

valiantness was mine, thou suck'st it from me' [3.2.129]. In *Romeo and Juliet*, according to the scene of the Nurse's memory of the time of Juliet's weaning [1.3.23 – 48], it is clear that Juliet was given milk from the Nurse. Thus, it would not be difficult for an Elizabethan audience to think that Juliet has to some extent a similar disposition to the Nurse.

When Capulet's wife talks to Juliet about marriage to Paris, she emphasizes its importance for the Capulets and in society; while the Nurse naturally relates marriage to the physical result after sexual conduct, that is to say, pregnancy: 'No less! nay, bigger: women grow by men' [1.3.95]. Knowing that Juliet would meet Paris at the banquet, the Nurse tells her to 'seek happy nights to happy days' [1.3.105]. The words 'happy nights' explicitly indicates sexual pleasure for the couple. She advises Juliet, who badly laments for Romeo's banishment and her forced marriage, to abandon Romeo and to marry Paris. There is a bawdy note in her advice.

Nurse. For it excels your first; or if it did not,
Your first is dead, or 'twere as good he were
As living here and you no use of him. [3.5.223 – 25]

The Nurse compares Juliet's first match with her 'second match' [3.5.222] in terms of social status for men. The Nurse concludes that Paris 'excels' Romeo, Juliet's 'first' husband, because Romeo, banished from Verona, is no longer a gentleman. This realistic advice shows the accepted view that marriage is a social institution concerning the wealth and status of both families. The Nurse, however, draws the same conclusion from a different reason, which seems to be more appropriate for her character. Even if 'he were' alive, Romeo is 'no use' as a husband for Juliet in the sense of 'profit' and 'sexual enjoyment' because he is not in Verona.⁵⁵ The

⁵⁵ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 3.5.224.

for women renders them effeminate'.⁵⁸ Wright apparently warns against the dangerous effect of love for the male integrity. In this sense, 'sexuality itself is misogynistic'.⁵⁹ Romeo's passion for Juliet makes him unwilling to fight Tybalt and metamorphoses him into a womanish-man, although he fears to lose his honor and integrity as a man. Both Wright's statement and Romeo's rebuke, as Orgel points out,⁶⁰ are associated with the traditional antithesis of love and warfare: 'a valiant Captain in the field' described by Wright and Romeo's 'valour's steel' mentioned by himself recall armour or a weapon like a sword of a warrior. This theme of love and warfare is effectively used in both the beginning and the ending of the play, as I shall examine later.

Juliet's Self-Direction

In Renaissance patriarchal society, marriage was a highly important issue not only for parents but also for their sons and daughters. In particular, marriage became a troublesome issue when daughters did not accept matches arranged by their fathers or other male authorities. Disobedient behaviour by daughters threatened to undermine male authority. In other words, when daughters disobeyed fathers or male authority and insisted on their own choice of marriage, they were regarded as endangering the society to which they belonged. However, some heroines in Shakespeare's plays challenge the social code of behaviour imposed on daughters. This suggests that a new idea of marriage, conjugal love and sympathy, influenced by the movements of humanism and Protestantism came to be formed in the mid-sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, a father has absolute influence on the marriage of his daughter even after his death. Portia obeys her father's will concerning the

⁵⁸ Orgel, p.26.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.25.

lottery of the three caskets for choosing her future husband [1.2.27 – 33]. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a father's authority threatens the life of the disobedient daughter. Egeus commands his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius, whom he has chosen for her marriage, but she does not obey him because she is in love with Lysander, who loves her, too. Then, Egeus comes to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to solve the matter of her marriage. Theseus admonishes her to obey her father's authority.

The. What say you, Hermia? Be advis'd, fair maid.
 To you your father should be as a god;
 One that compos'd your beauties; yea, and one
 To whom you are but as a form in wax,
 By him imprinted, and within his power,
 To leave the figure, or disfigure it. [1.1.46 – 51]

As Theseus says, in Shakespeare's day, fathers had absolute power over their daughters 'as a god' to humans. The phrase 'within his power / To leave the figure or disfigure it' suggests that a daughter's life or death depends upon her father's will. If Hermia stubbornly refuses to obey Egeus, she should 'Either to die the death, or to abjure / For ever the society of men', which means spending her life in a nunnery, as Theseus tells her [1.1.65 – 66]. Living as a nun means that she must stay unmarried all through her life. For Hermia, even if physically alive, this would have the same meaning as death because she would not be allowed to marry Lysander. Not being afraid of dreadful punishment for her disobedience to male authority, Hermia resolves to marry Lysander by herself.

Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Anne Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Desdemona in *Othello*, and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* are all disobedient to their fathers in their choice of husband.

Let us go back to the story of Juliet. Juliet challenges male authority when she

[.....] O, how my heart abhors
 To hear him nam'd, and cannot come to him
 To wreak the love I bore my cousin
 Upon his body that hath slaughter'd him! [3.5.93 – 102]

This is another example of intentionally ambiguous pronouns in Juliet's laments. Her 'kindsman' seems, at least to Lady Capulet, to mean Tybalt; however, Juliet actually refers to Romeo. In the same manner, the following pronoun 'him' indicates the two people, Romeo and Tybalt, on different levels. Even though Juliet adds the word 'dead' to let her mother believe that she would wish Romeo to die because he killed Tybalt, she expresses her passionate love for Romeo.

Juliet's laments before her mother hint at her later denial of the arranged marriage to Paris. Juliet intends to let her mother believe that she deeply laments the loss of Tybalt by means of ambiguous pronouns such as 'the friend,' 'a kinsman,' and 'him'. As soon as Lady Capulet tells Juliet about her father's offer of the wedding to Paris, Juliet decisively refuses the offer: 'I will not marry yet' [3.5.121]. Juliet makes an objection to her mother. Lady Capulet represents her husband Capulet as far as the matter of marriage is concerned. She does not neglect the important duty of a wife to obey her husband in her daughter's marriage. In the following scene, Juliet shows her father her reluctance to marry Paris [3.5.146 – 48]. Thanks to her heavy grief at the loss of Tybalt, she allows her parents to believe she does not want to marry at this stage. Actually Juliet cannot marry Paris, because she has already married Romeo. Flying into a fury due to his daughter's disobedience, Capulet commands Juliet to marry Paris. He exerts powerful male authority over his daughter.

Cap. God's bread, it makes me mad! [. . .]
 Graze where you will, you shall not house with me.
 [.....]

And you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
 And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
 For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
 Nor what is mine shall never do thee good. [3.5.176 – 94]

A daughter in a patriarchy is regarded as the property of male authority, as Capulet states 'you be mine'. This idea gives a father the power to deal with his daughter as he wishes. He freely marries her to anyone whom he likes. If his daughter does not obey him, he exerts male authority to punish his disobedient daughter. If Juliet disobeys her father Capulet, she must 'hang, beg, starve, die in the streets', cursed by him because she has lost male support for herself.

The Antithesis of Love and Warfare

Shakespeare utilizes bawdy puns in the beginning of the play to imply the tragic ending and to relate the language of obscenity to the love-death theme, as many critics have pointed out. The antithesis of love and warfare suggests not only male sexual desire for women as it is found in the bawdy puns of Samson and Gregory in the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet* but also male anxiety at losing dignity and integrity as Romeo recognizes that he has been effeminized by Juliet [3.1].

In the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, the dialogue between Samson and Gregory, who are servants of the Capulets, explicitly shows obscenity through wordplays.

Sam. 'Tis all one; I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids; I will cut off their heads.

Gre. The heads of the maids?

Sam. Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads, take it in what sense thou wilt. [1.1.21 – 26]

The two servants of the Capulets talk about sexual desire indulging in the word-play of 'maidenheads', and it is interesting that the word itself is literally 'cut off' between 'heads' and 'maids'. This is a bawdy wordplay, and it implies that Juliet is to lose her virginity in due course and foreshadows the ominous end of the play.

The dialogue between Samson and Gregory also suggests another aspect of the relationship between men and women, that is, violent male dominance over women. Their wordplays of fighting and sexual intercourse, a metaphor of love-warfare, are one of the traditional conceits in Renaissance love poetry based on Petrarch's poems. The motif of love and warfare often interspersed with bawdy puns is consistent throughout the whole play. In addition, the swords which Samson and Gregory probably carry with them in this scene inevitably remind the audience of their erotic implication as a phallic symbol. This association of sword and phallic symbol is linked to the eyesight of beloved, which is regarded as Cupid's arrows in Neo-platonic Petrarchan love poetry conventions.

The eyes of the lady bring joy into the lover's heart; at the same time, they carry severe anguish to the lover because of the ambivalent nature of love, that is, the bitter and the sweet, as Romeo laments for the 'gall' and 'sweet' of love [1.1.194]. Sir Philip Sidney also describes this peculiarity of love in *Astrophel and Stella*.

O eyes, which do the spheres of beauty move,
 Whose beams be joys, whose joys all virtues be,
 [.]
 Yet still on me, O eyes, dart down your rays!
 And if from majesty of sacred lights
 Oppressing mortal sense my death proceed,
 Wracks triumphs be which love high-set doth breed.⁶²

⁶² Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, 2nd edn, ed. by Robert Kimbrough (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p.186.

Sidney depicts the contradictory nature of love by the sweet eyes providing 'joys' and the bitter ones of which the beams 'dart down' on a lover unto death. This bitter side of the love is emphasized in terms of Cupid's arrows in *Romeo and Juliet*. Not knowing that Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet, Mercutio still makes fun of Romeo's melancholic love for Rosaline.

Mer. Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabb'd with a white wench's black eye, run through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft. [2.4.13 – 16]

The beam of Rosaline's 'black eye' is linked to 'the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft,' which is regarded as a dangerous weapon to stab a lover's heart. This associated image of eye beam and Cupid's arrow reminds us of Romeo addressing Juliet from under the balcony of her room: 'Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye / Than twenty of their swords!' [2.2.71 – 72]. Juliet's eyes are associated with a sword piercing the heart of Romeo. These metaphoric images of eye connected to a sword and Cupid's arrow anticipate Juliet's later speech, when she is informed that her cousin Tybalt has been stabbed to death by Romeo, and eagerly asks the Nurse about Romeo.

Jul. Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but ay,
And that bare vowel *I* shall poison more
Than the death [-darting] eye of cockatrice.
I am not I, if there be such an ay,
Or those eyes [shut], that makes thee answer ay.
If he be slain, say ay, or if not, no.
Brief sounds determine my weal or woe. [3.2.45 – 51]

The punning on 'ay' – 'I' – 'eye' emphasizes the deadly power of the eye as the

Fig. 1. Veen, 'Lookes are loves arrowes' (1608)



death-darting eye of cockatrice. The cockatrice is a mythic monster whose glance kills people, as Levenson annotates.⁶³ If the Nurse answers 'ay,' Juliet ('I') shall die because of her answer, which is poisonous and fatal enough to take away her life like the cockatrice's eye beam.

The idea that the eyes or eye beams of a lady can give a fatal injury to a lover was popular in Renaissance love poetry. Otto van Veen visualizes this idea under the title 'Lookes are loves arrowes' with a poem in his emblem book *Amorum Emblemata* (Fig. 1).⁶⁴

⁶³ *The Oxford Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, note on 3.5.47.

⁶⁴ Otto van Veen, *Amorum Emblemata* (Antwerp: 1608; New York: repr. Garland Publishing, 1976), p.150. The spellings are preserved as original except for modernization of 'u' for 'v' and 's' for long 's' to avoid misunderstanding.

My loves lookes unto mee, the force of love empartes,
 Each glance an arrow is, which from her eyes proceed,
 Now Cupid rest thy self, to shoot throw haste no need,
 For her lookes wound my harte aswell [*sic*] as do thy dartes.

This woodcut and poem epitomizes the idea that love enters through the eyes when a woman's beauty comes through 'her eye' into a lover's heart. Shakespeare brings the metaphor of the eye beam as an arrow into reality for the love of Romeo and Juliet.⁶⁵ Romeo, pierced by the 'peril' of Juliet's eyes [2.2.71], falls in love with her but at last dies for love; Juliet, attracted by him when she sees him at the banquet, takes her life with a 'happy dagger' [5.3.169]. Their love for each other, coming through the eyes, leads them to death at the end. The associated image of eye and sword is related to the antithesis of love and warfare, and implies the tragic end of Juliet's life with a 'happy dagger'.

The motif of love and warfare is enacted by Juliet herself at the denouement of the play. Romeo is effeminized, but Juliet behaves like a man and bravely chooses her death herself. Her last words 'O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath' [5.3.169 – 70] recalls the sexual image suggested by a dagger as a phallic symbol as well as the motif of love and warfare from the beginning of the play. Her speech 'there rust, and let me die' [5.3.170] additionally increases the erotic overtones in terms of the sexual meaning of the word 'die'. Associating the actions of 'prick' or 'stab' with these sexual connotations of copulation, she finally stabs herself with a dagger. Juliet metaphorically plays a male sexual role. The gender reversal between Romeo and Juliet, which repeatedly occurs throughout the play, is at its height at the end of the play.

Renaissance men might have felt that they were threatened by women. Juliet openly expresses her love for Romeo and follows faithfully her own passion. She

⁶⁵ Soji Iwasaki, *Shakespeare no Iconology* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1994), p.47.

is not restrained by the conventional code of coyness imposed on women.

In Elizabethan England women's honesty had two aspects of meaning: sincerity in mind and chastity in sexual behaviour. An upper-class woman was expected to behave to the man who wooed her in accordance with the social code of coyness. She should seem to be shy and inexperienced in love, and she could be assumed to be chaste, whether or not she actually had carnal knowledge. Therefore, women's coyness could be deceptive. Juliet, however, does not use the accepted social code of coyness but follows her will and openly expresses her passionate love for Romeo. She seemingly might not be taken as chaste and modest because of her boldness. However, her honest performance paradoxically proves her to be chaste and modest. Thus, Juliet's virginity and her honest expression of passion influenced by the Nurse's view on love and sexuality enable her to behave sincerely and truly to her lover. The gender reversal between Romeo and Juliet supports her active role in their love relationship. Shakespeare uses the conventions of Petrarchan love to depict a new heroine who dynamically and positively pursues her own fortune and chooses her marriage by herself.

Other Gender Reversals in the Two Tragedies

I would like to conclude this chapter by referring to other tragic heroines who go beyond the gender boundary of patriarchal society. Desdemona in *Othello* disobeys her father and chooses Othello as her husband by herself. After her marriage, she behaves as if she were above her husband, or at least equal to him, which behaviour destroys her in the end. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth goes beyond the patriarchal gender boundary, and behaves as if she were an aggressive and merciless man in order to achieve her and her husband's ambition. Her manly behavior leads both of them to their destruction in the end.

In the beginning of *Othello*, Desdemona's father Brabantio is informed that his daughter has eloped with Othello, a Moor. In front of the Duke of Venice, Brabantio accuses Othello of tempting his daughter; Othello, however, replies that

she has chosen him. Desdemona logically explains to the Duke her 'divided duty' between her father and her husband [1.3.180 – 89], as Cordelia does to Lear in *King Lear* [1.1.95 – 104]. Sid Ray points out that Desdemona 'displays independence of thought and action, refusing to be ruled by father, and her legacy, persuasive speeches'.⁶⁶ Knowing his daughter's disobedience, Brabantio warns Othello: 'Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see; She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee' [1.3.292 – 93]. In patriarchal society, a daughter's behaviour of choosing her husband against her father's opinion was regarded as 'Against all rules of nature' [1.3.101]. A man should be a head for a woman. In this sense, Desdemona is categorized as a disobedient woman.⁶⁷

After she has become the wife of Othello, Desdemona behaves as an equal to her husband.⁶⁸ She is considered by the people around her to be superior to him because she is white and a Christian. Cassio describes Desdemona to Montano.

Mon. But, good lieutenant, is your general wiv'd?

Cas. Most fortunately: he hath achiev'd a maid

That paragons description and wild fame;

One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,

And in th'essential vesture of creation

Does tire the [ingener].

[2.1. 60 – 65]

Desdemona is highly praised for her beauty and excellent nature beyond descriptions of any poets. Cassio portrays Desdemona as if she were a supreme

⁶⁶ Sid Ray, "No Head Eminent Above the Rest": Female Authority in *Othello and The Tempest* in *High and Mighty Queens' of Early Modern England: Realities and Representations*, pp.133-50 (p.139).

⁶⁷ Desdemona is called 'our great captain's captain' [2.1.74] and 'my fair warrior'[2.1.182], as the indications that she is regarded as superior to Othello. See Peter Erickson, *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), p.90.

⁶⁸ Ray, pp.139-40.

creature, as Honigmann notes that the word 'inginer' indicates 'exhaust (the power of the) divine inventor (God)'.⁶⁹ If the word 'wived' in Montano's line means 'effeminized', this implies that Othello would be subjected to Desdemona.

On the night when Othello and Desdemona arrives at Cyprus, Cassio is dismissed from the position of lieutenant for causing a disturbance, which was actually plotted behind the scenes by Iago. Cassio, following Iago's advice, asks Desdemona to help him to restore his lost place as soon as possible. She gives Cassio her assurance that she will help him. Desdemona goes beyond the gender boundary, because Cassio's cause belongs to the public world, that is, the male territory into which she, as a good wife, should not step.

Des. Do not doubt that; before Emilia here,
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it
To the last article. My lord shall never rest,
I'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift,
I'll intermingle every thing he does
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio,
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away. [3.3.19 – 28]

Desdemona promises that she will not fail to persuade Othello to return Cassio to the post of lieutenant. Her determination to 'tame' Othello in order to help Cassio implies that she is a teacher of her husband, as a falconer strictly trains his wild bird. She intends to talk to Othello about Cassio's suit in bed as well as at table

⁶⁹ *The Arden Shakespeare Othello*, ed. by E.A.J. Honigmann (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997, repr. 1999), note on 2.1.65.

until Othello accepts it. Desdemona, even though not consciously, repeatedly exhorts Othello to help Cassio, as Emilia describes: 'she speak for you stoutly' [3.1.44].

Oth. Who is't you mean?

Des. Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,

If I have any grace or power to move you,

His present reconciliation take;

[.....]

I prithee call him back.

[3.3.44 – 51]

Desdemona entirely believes that she is deserved to have her wish satisfied because she is loved by Othello. She is also confident that she has the 'grace or power' to influence or even manipulate her husband Othello because of his love for her. Thus, Desdemona unconsciously deviates from the female virtues of silence and submissiveness, and behaves as if she were a head above Othello.

However, Othello cannot bear to be subjugated by Desdemona. He persists all the more in male sovereignty in domesticity as well as in public life because he is a Moor; Sid Ray points out that 'his blackness necessitates Othello's strict adherence to European principles'.⁷⁰ In addition to his position as a stranger in Venice, the society of the white, his social status as a soldier does not allow Othello to be controlled by his wife, a woman, the weaker sex, that is, his inferior.

In patriarchal society, a wife's disobedience and speaking out were thought to indicate that she was not faithful to her husband and was sexually unbridled.⁷¹ Desdemona never thinks how her behaviour is considered in the male-dominated

⁷⁰ Ray, p.140.

⁷¹ Silence, one of the female three virtues, was regarded as a token of chastity, according to the idea of the closed mouth being equal to the closed body in those days. See especially pp.9-17 of chapter 1 of the dissertation.

world. In the scene where Desdemona tries to persuade Othello persistently and clamorously, and Othello seemingly yields to his wife, Desdemona declares that 'What e'er you be, I am obedient'[3.3.89]. Her behaviour enables Othello to believe that she is disobedient. In addition, Iago cunningly leads him to believe that Desdemona is lecherous and having an affair with Cassio.

Desdemona behaves towards her husband as if she has the ability to persuade him to do whatever she likes, simply because he loves her. This behaviour is against the patriarchal ideology of wifely duty to her husband, and she, without knowing it, destroys her marriage.

In *Macbeth* we meet another woman who goes beyond the gender boundary of patriarchal society. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband Macbeth through her eloquent words in order to lead him to take the crown of Scotland from Duncan. In the early part of the play where Lady Macbeth receives a letter from her husband telling her about his military success and the strange prophecies given by three witches, she decides that she will throw away her femininity and assist him to realize his ambition.

Lady M. Yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.
[.....] Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
and chastise with the valor of my tongue. [1.5.16 – 27]

In the above speech, Lady Macbeth worries about her husband's gentle and tender disposition that might prevent him from usurping the throne. His tender nature is compared to 'milk' a feminine element indicating maternity, which

foreshadows her speech about manliness in a later scene. On the other hand, she calls her courage 'valour', a word that is often used to describe masculine bravery in war. The gender reversal between them is explicitly indicated: Lady Macbeth has a powerful speaking ability to transform her husband into a brave man. She declares that she will never be a woman.

Lady M. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to toe topfull
Of direst cruelty! Make thick thy blood,
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th' effect and [it]! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall. [1.5.40 – 48]

She evokes spirits, as Kenneth Muir annotates, to help her to be brave by using the popular allusion to the opening lines in Seneca's *Medea*: 'Come, spiteful fiends, come heaps of furies fell, / Not one by one, but all at once!'⁷² Lady Macbeth metamorphoses herself into a witch-like being.⁷³ She no longer needs her 'breasts' nor 'milk,' the symbols of femininity; she wishes to be unsexed and be masculine. She behaves as if she were a man, and tries to encourage and manipulate her husband by her powerful words to force him to grab the throne from Duncan for himself.

⁷² *The Arden Shakespeare Macbeth*, 9th edn, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1962; repr. 1983), note on the line 1.5.40.

⁷³ James Schiffer, 'Macbeth and the Bearded Women', in *Another Country Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Drothea Keller and Susan Baker (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1991), pp.205-217. Schiffer suggests a beard as the symbol of Lady Macbeth's masculinization, and discusses her manly behaviour and Macbeth's effeminization.

ly appeals to his pride as a brave and manly soldier in order to stir up his courage. She continues her untamed words by saying that she is throwing away her maternal tendencies.

Lady M. I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this. [1.7.54 – 59]

Lady Macbeth had an experience of having a baby and nursing it. But now, she says that she could dash out the brain of the baby and destroy it to achieve her ambition, like a cruel and violent murderer. In one of the medieval iconographical traditions of Mary the Virgin, she exposes her breasts to win the mercy of God while Jesus displays his wounds (Fig. 2).⁷⁵ The audience who has heard the above speech of Lady Macbeth might have been reminded of the image of Mary the Virgin baring her breasts. Mary the Virgin, who is full of maternal love and mercy, is exactly the opposite image of Lady Macbeth.

When Macbeth listens to this speech, which is against nature, he again fears to execute the plot.

Macb. If we should fail?
Lady M. We fail?
 But screw your courage to the sticking place,
 And we'll not fail. [1.7. 59 – 61]

⁷⁵ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), B & W figure 26. As for the Virgin Mary's milk, see Chapter XIII, 'The Milk of Paradise', pp.192-205.

Fig. 2. 'Jesus display his wounds and Mary bares her breast' (c. 1402)



That Lady Macbeth repeats the 'we' used by Macbeth indicates that she is sharing the ambition with her husband. Macbeth is unified with his wife in murder and usurpation. By using her persuasive strategy of appealing to his pride and manliness, she successfully manipulates and controls her husband, and drives him to carry out their own goals.

Lady Macbeth behaves like a man and governs her husband through her powerful eloquent speech. Her behaviour is against the ideology of an ideal wife in patriarchal society. She is neither silent nor obedient to her husband, and this destroys them in the end.

Desdemona in *Othello* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* are both beyond the gender boundary imposed on women in patriarchal society, that is, the idea that the man is master of the woman.⁷⁶ Consequently, not only the married lives of those two women but also their own individual lives are tragically destroyed in the end. On the other hand, Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* salvages her marriage by making a pretence to be tamed and obedient to her husband, as I have described in the first chapter. This might be where Shakespeare thinks tragedies are different from comedies.

⁷⁶ Like Juliet, Desdemona, and Lady Macbeth, Goneril and Regan, the elder daughters of Lear in *King Lear* go beyond the gender boundary in patriarchy, and destroy the whole family in the end.