
Love, gender, and sexuality in regard to the literary traditions of the pastoral þý and the sonnet in Shakespeare s As You Like It and R

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**Love, gender, and sexuality in regard to the
literary traditions of the pastoral and the sonnet in
Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Romeo and
Juliet*.**

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Contextualising the plays.....	4
3. <i>As You Like It</i> and the pastoral tradition.....	9
3.1. <i>The idealised shepherd and other characters</i>	10
3.2. <i>The inner workings of love</i>	16
3.3. <i>Sexuality and the pastoral ?</i>	21
3.4. <i>Disguise and masquerade</i>	27
3.5. <i>Gender games and crossdressing</i>	29
3.6. <i>The circular plot in the forest</i>	37
4. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and the sonnet	42
4.1. <i>The sonnets of the play</i>	43
4.2. <i>The Petrarchan lover?</i>	47
4.3. <i>The Petrarchan beloved?</i>	54
4.4. <i>Sexuality at the hands of secondary characters</i>	58
4.5. <i>The importance of love and death</i>	68
5. Endorsement or rejection of the Petrarchan traditions?.....	74
6. Conclusion	78
7. Bibliography	80
7.1. <i>Primary sources</i>	80
7.2. <i>Secondary sources</i>	80

1. Introduction

In Act 1 Scene 1 of *King Lear*, Shakespeare reflected on love by giving Gonerill the following lines: “I love you more than words can wield the matter, Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty” (KL, 1.1.50-1). Love is in this case too grand to conjure words but how does the playwright deal with love in other situations? How does he represent it? How does he express feelings? How does he deal with love’s carnal desires? These questions could be applied to any play from Shakespeare’s corpus but in this case the focus will be on two Elizabethan plays. Love and its sub-themes dominate the stage of his comedy *As You Like It* and his tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, but how does Shakespeare represent them?

The star-crossed lovers’ story of feuding families and love at first sight has been at centre of quarrel for decades to determine if it is the ‘greatest love story of all time’. Some agree while others point out the youthfulness of the lovers and the pace at which the story progresses as signs of the impossibility of true love, but no matter the opinion all agree that the quest for love drives the narrative to its tragic end. The play features multiple full-size sonnets and incorporates the Petrarchan themes, such as the lovesick lover or the unattainable beloved, but to some extent Shakespeare also distanced himself from the Italian tradition.

In *As You Like It*, the independent Rosaline is exiled to the forest where she masquerades as a man and provides guidance to her lover Orlando on the matters of love. The rural setting of the forest places the play in the pastoral tradition but the presence of idealised shepherds such as Silvius strengthens the association. The last act features four weddings, supporting the relevance of love in the play, but once again the playwright takes some liberties.

Since both plays can be associated with a literary tradition, it is worth wondering how their depiction of love and its sub-themes relate to the conventions they represent. To what extent are love, gender, and sexuality present in *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet* and most importantly how do they influence the implementation of the pastoral and sonnet traditions?

This research will first contextualise the plays by identifying their sources before proceeding to analyse each text individually. Each work will be studied with the conventions they can be associated to, to determine whether Shakespeare implemented

these rules and how. Through textual analysis, I will prove the endorsement, or lack thereof, of the pastoral and sonnet traditions in the plays. Once the position of each play is established, the last part will compare the findings of each to provide an answer to the research question: ‘How does Shakespeare use love, sexuality, and gender to question the tradition of pastoral literature and the sonnet?’

2. Contextualising the plays

Both *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*’s main plotlines were not originally created by Shakespeare, but rather adapted from existing materials and folk stories. Before analysing the plays themselves, it is important to establish their background to properly place them on an historical and literary timeline. Both the tragedy and the comedy can be traced back to the English Renaissance, around the 1590s, coinciding with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England. While defining precise dates for texts from this era can be tricky, for both *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*, scholars have agreed on some rough dates linking them to the Renaissance. In her introduction to the Arden Edition of *As You Like It*, Juliet Dusinberre dates the play with the following suppositions: “probably written at the end of 1598, perhaps first performed early in 1599, and first printed in the First Folio in 1623, [the comedy] marks the culmination of the golden decade of Shakespeare’s plays in the 1590s” (2006, 1). Dating *Romeo and Juliet* required for John W. Draper to compare the historical and temporal clues present in the play with astrological data, finally reaching the following conclusion:

This definite fixing of the plot by year and day suggests that the tragedy was written, or at least extensively revised, in 1596; for Shakespeare would naturally consult a current almanac: he would hardly trouble to compute—even if he knew how—the week-days and lunations of a year ahead; and the quarto of 1597 precludes a later date. Possibly a version of the play existed in 1591; but the evidence scattered up and down the text points to 1595-6; and the astronomy clearly implies the latter year—about the time when we learn from the titlepage of the first quarto that it was actually on the stage. (1949, 57)

Both plays, although belonging to different genres, originated around the same period, at the end of a particularly successful era for Shakespeare. Once placed on a literary timeline and in order to understand the plays, it is interesting to compose a general summary of the stories but most importantly the source materials and the changes made to them regarding

the literary traditions and the themes of love, gender and sexuality need to be highlighted. Only with an established background can the plays be considered in their entirety.

As You Like It is a comedy portraying some courtly characters exiled to the forest of Arden to live in the company of shepherds. The heroine Rosalind joins her father in exile, but for her and her cousin Celia's safety, she masquerades as a man called Ganymede while wandering the countryside. Her lover Orlando also finds refuge in the forest and his beloved Rosalind disguised as her male alter-ego helps cure him of his love for the young lady. The heroine abandons her male apparel at the end to marry her lover Orlando in a group wedding before returning to the court. This is undoubtedly an oversimplified rendering of the story which contains many more details and multiple love stories, but this brief summary is composed of the main events structuring the story, from the departure from the court to the life in the forest and culminating with the weddings and the restoration of order. The details will be presented when relevant for the analysis of the play, providing the contexts as to where and when the events take place.

Scholars agree that Shakespeare found his main inspiration for this play from "the euphuistic pastoral romance of Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde*, which appeared in 1590" (Tolman 1922, 65). Lodge's text, described as a "prose novella" (2006, 2) by Dusinger in her introductory materials of the Arden edition, was transformed into a theatre play with some alterations. Albert Tolman, citing A. Thorndike, mentions the popularity of pastoral plays in the late sixteenth century and elaborates stating that "in dramatizing a popular novel [Shakespeare] introduced scenes presenting a picture of life already familiar on the stage" (1922, 75). Edward Berry however notes in his article comparing Shakespeare's *Rosalind* to Lodge's *Rosalynde* that:

In a broad sense Shakespeare seems to have found in Lodge's *Rosalynde* everything he needed for his own. He alters little in the narrative that directly affects his heroine. [...] The [characterisation] of Lodge's *Rosalynde* is also remarkably similar to Shakespeare's. [...] He changes little but with great effect. (1980, 42)

Exhaustively listing all the changes would be too time-consuming and irrelevant in this context but a great many scholars have centred their research on the topic. Among most pertinent alterations to identify for the analysis of love, gender and sexuality, Berry notes the elevation of Rosalind to the role of protagonist of the play and the introductions of new characters such as Touchstone and Jaques, who "extend the role of the heroine

considerably” (1980, 42-3). The playwright also added Touchstone’s wife-to-be the shepherdess Audrey, while “the love affairs of Orlando and Rosalind, of Oliver and Celia, of Silvius and Phebe, are all borrowed” (Tolman 1922, 66). The departure of Celia was altered as well, since in Lodge’s story she is exiled by her father in an attempt to defend her cousin but in Shakespeare’s version her “unselfish devotions to Rosalind and her voluntary decision to go into banishment” (Tolman 1922, 66) offer the opportunity to portray a young female defying her father and taking charge of her life despite the less-than-ideal consequences.

Whereas scholars have identified one clear source of inspiration for Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, the same cannot so easily be said about his tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*.

In Verona, as the young Romeo Montague infiltrates the rival family’s masquerade ball to forget his beloved Rosaline, he suddenly falls in love with the young Juliet Capulet, the daughter of his father’s enemy. With the help of the young lady’s Nurse, the lovers marry shortly after, but their marriage barely consumed, Romeo finds himself banished for the death of Juliet’s cousin Tybalt in a street fight. Meanwhile Lord Capulet has arranged for his daughter to marry County Paris and in an attempt to escape her father’s control and reunite with her husband, the young woman fakes her own death with an elixir. Rumours of Juliet’s passing reach the young Montague before news of her plan does and believing his beloved to be dead, he takes his own life by her side in Capulet’s tomb. As the elixir wears off, the young woman wakes up to discover what has happened and kills herself with a dagger. The young lovers’ deaths put an end to their families’ rivalry and restores the peace in Verona. These series of events constitute the base structure of the play, although many details and minor events have been omitted. Over the course of the analysis, the plot will be further developed to illustrate the essential elements regarding the object of the research.

The identification of the source of inspiration Shakespeare’s used when composing the play is not as straightforward as it was for *As You Like It*. As Jill Levenson writes in her article “Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare”, “he dramatized a story well-known to his audience through popular sources for at least a generation” (1984, 325). While other scholars are more selective with their potential sources, she highlights five works who provide most of the information present in the play:

da Porto's [*Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti . . .* (c. 1530)]; Matteo Bandello's version in his *Novelle* (1554); Boaistuau's translation of Bandello in his *Histoires tragiques, extraictes des oeuvres italiennes de Bandel, & mises en nostre langue françoise. Les six premieres, par Pierre Boisteau ...* (1559); Brooke's verse translation of Boaistuau, *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet written first in Italian by Bandell, and noue in Englishe by Ar.Br.* (1562; generally accepted as Shakespeare's immediate source); and Painter's prose translation of Boaistuau, "The goodly Hystory of the true, and constant Loue between Rhomeo and Ivlietta . . ." in *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567). (Levenson 1984, 326-7)

Although there are multiple possible sources, most of them relating a similar story, in an attempt to be concise and facilitate the analysis, I will follow the opinion of most scholars and focus only on the largely accepted source of Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* from 1562, as it is said that "Shakespeare [has so closely] followed [his] narrative" (Law 1929, 86). In the same fashion as for *As You Like It*, Brooke's poem was refashioned to become a five-act tragedy. Once again, there is little benefit to identifying all the changes made to the source material, but some of them remain relevant before embarking on the text analysis. Before any change is discussed the most notable one is the "compression of time" (Law 1929, 86), which despite having kept the same structure, impacts the development of the story. When it comes to the characters of the play, there are some notable changes to Juliet and to some minor roles. The young Capulet is nearing her birthday but "not fourteen" (RJ, 1.3.13) yet in Shakespeare's version, which is the youngest she has been portrayed in any of the previous tales. Arthur J. Roberts gives some insight into the evolution of Juliet's age: "Brooke could feel that eighteen was too aged to suit the Elizabethan public, and so made his heroine a couple of years younger. Shakespeare, understanding his public better, put her at fourteen" (1902, 43). It must be noted however that the young lady never reaches her birthday since it was supposed to be another "fortnight and odd days" (RJ, 1.3.16) until "come Lammas at night she shall be fourteen" (RJ, 1.3.18). Shakespeare also altered some minor characters, as Robert Law discusses in his paper, expanding their role such as is the case for Mercutio, Tybalt or Lady Capulet, and simultaneously modifying their functions in the play (1929). Mercutio has experienced an important development, taking up more space in the play with his "boldness in speech" (Law 1929, 89) and changing the motive for "Romeo's slaying of Tybalt" (Law 1929, 89). Speaking of Tybalt, Shakespeare portrays him more than Brooke but always surrounded by violence and fighting. His role expands due to the fighting scene with Mercutio, which is

“Shakespeare’s invention” (Law 1929, 91), and contributes to Romeo’s vengeance leading to his banishment. Just like he did for Mercutio, “Shakespeare owes to Brooke very little [for Lady Capulet]” (Law 1929, 92). He imagined a character that was virtually absent from most of the poem, portraying the cold “twenty-eight-year-old wife of Old Capulet [...] seemingly without affection for her daughter or knowledge of her nature” (Law 1929, 92). On the other hand, the Nurse and Friar Laurence keep their assigned function with mere alterations in Shakespeare’s version.

The lists of changes are for both *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet* non-exhaustive, as it did not contribute to the object of this research. Establishing a historical and textual background remained necessary to approach the in-depth text analysis centring on love, gender, and sexuality.

3. *As You Like It* and the pastoral tradition

It must be noted that when talking about pastoral poetry and drama, the critics can only rely on tendencies to base their analysis and observations on. To quote Paul Alpers:

We find nothing like a coherent account of either its nature or its history. We are told that pastoral "is a double longing after innocence and happiness"; that its universal idea is the Golden Age; that it is based on the antithesis of Art and Nature; that its fundamental motive is hostility to urban life; that its "central tenet" is "the pathetic fallacy"; that it expresses the ideal of otium¹; that it is "the poetic expression par excellence of the cult of aesthetic Platonism" in the Renaissance or of Epicureanism in the Hellenistic world; that it is "that mode of viewing common experience through the medium of the rural world."¹ It sometimes seems as if there are as many versions of pastoral as there are critics who write about it. (Alpers 1982, 437)

The pastoral tradition is heterogenous, but some general common themes and tendencies can be distinguished in this body of literature. It is difficult to speak of a pastoral genre per se as this literary tradition has been identified in drama, poetry, songs, and other types of literary works. There are therefore no established formal elements for pastoral literature but rather a set of tendencies in the plot, themes, and artistic choices. If one were to try to define pastoral literature in a couple of words, it would result in an overly simplistic and generalised definition, overlooking many details and specificities that contribute to the tradition. As previously stated, the better approach in this case is to look at tendencies present, always keeping in mind that a literary work does not need to display all the characteristics to be considered pastoral.

The main themes associated with the pastoral tradition are, to be succinct, love and nature, which allows it to take advantage of the country setting. While the term 'pastoral' itself is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "of, relating to, or composed of shepherds or herdsmen" (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary n.d.), when applied to literature the tradition depicts characters that are "hardly shepherds at all, for their real interests are love and poetry" (Marinelli 1971, 4). While the shepherd is present as a character, he does not act in the way one would imagine a shepherd to, devoting most of his attention to expressing his love through poetry and song. It becomes clear when reading a piece of pastoral literature that the author had little knowledge of the rural world of his

¹ Otium is a Latin word meaning 'leisure, freedom from business, ease'. **Source spécifiée non valide.**

time but rather wrote from a more sophisticated point of view (Marinelli 1971, 9). Marks describes the authors of pastoral literature as “men of the city rather than [...] men of the country, to them the innocence, simplicity and assumed idleness of the shepherd’s life appealed by the force of the ideal” (1908, 30). The shepherd is not chosen for himself but rather for the idealisation that city individuals have made of his existence. There is a sharp contrast made between the city and the countryside, the latter seen as an innocent world where life is simple. Sukanta Chaudhuri revisits the pastoral’s beginnings and synthesises this idealised view as “a distinct universe, implicitly set against the more complex life of court or city to which its exponents belong” (2019, XX). The pastoral also heavily relies on the myth of the Golden Age in which:

Human life is conceived in terms of the contemplative and the recreative rather than the active; it is devoted to pleasure and virtuous idleness rather than motivated by ambition. In a word, life in the golden age is pastoral. [...] Pastoralism and all of its effects are associated with a life anterior to degeneration. (Marinelli 1971, 17)

With this established generic definition of the pastoral literary tradition, the analysis of literary works can highlight the endorsement, or lack thereof, of conventions. Shakespeare notoriously played with literary rules and *As You Like It* is no exception. The play displays some pastoral elements but questions others, especially when it serves love, gender, or sexuality.

3.1. The idealised shepherd and other characters

Going back to the character of the shepherd portrayed in pastoralism, this figure resembles more a poet than a countryman, considering how his daily activities are depicted. Far from the man tending to animals, “he spends much of his time in poetry and song, just like the poet writing about him; and offers love to shepherdesses in terms assimilable to the Petrarchan convention, where such poets often found their theme” (Chaudhuri 2019, XX). This tradition presents country characters whose life has little to do with the reality of such occupations at the time. In addition to the modified perception of the shepherd, it is also interesting to ask oneself why the figure of the shepherd is so central to the pastoral tradition. Logically speaking, pastoral literary works were said to take place in the country which would justify the appearance of rural figures. But as Paul Alpers argues, the shepherd also plays a role as a symbolic figure, believed “to be representative of some other or of all men” (Alpers 1982, 456). He further develops his argument as follows:

The biblical metaphor² of the good shepherd enters pastoral for this reason, and to take a quite different branch of Renaissance pastoral-shepherds are often lovers because their lives seem and are made to represent the nature and course of love as a human experience. Similarly, old shepherds [...] become a [recognisable] character type in the Renaissance because they utter various kinds of moral counsel which are felt to be implicit in accepting that shepherds' lives represent human lives. (Alpers 1982, 456)

Considering these elements, the shepherd figure present in pastoral literature, which as previously stated share only a name with the actual rural herders of the time, was pictured in a way that would allow for its representative power to work. The idea was then not to represent the figure the way it would naturally occur in the real countryside but to use it to depict Everyman's human experience.

Shakespeare's play offers a variety of different characters that coexist in the Forest of Arden, and these can be broken down into various categories. Most characters present in the story are however not shepherds in the pastoral sense of the word. Walter W. Greg summarises the division of the roles as follows:

The pastoral characters of the play may be roughly analysed as follows. Celia and Rosalind, the latter disguised as a youth, are courtly characters; Phebe and Silvius represent the polished Arcadians of pastoral tradition; while Audrey and William combine the character of farcical rustics with the inimitable humanity which distinguishes Shakespeare's creations. (2004, 432)

In this analysis, Orlando, both Dukes as well as the Lords are not taken into account as they stay courtly characters throughout the play and do not masquerade as shepherds like Celia and Rosalind. It must be noted however that in certain situations there is some pastoral aspects in Orlando's behaviour but the rest of the time he is "free from pastoral taint" (Smith 1897, 381). The sonnet-hanging on trees of Act 3 Scene 2, the soliloquies of the same scene and the battle with a lioness of Act 4 Scene 3 are all examples of this transient pastoralism. Lastly with the courtly character belongs Jaques, one of the Duke's noblemen that accompany him in the Forest of Arden. There is, beyond the list of roles, little ambiguity regarding him being a courtly gentleman, as he makes his dislike of the countryside apparent. He parodies Amiens' song expressing his "awareness of this less-than-ideal

² This play and other pastoral works contain a plethora of biblical references. This creates a paradox with their reminiscing of the Golden Age, which predates Christianity. They seem to cultivate a religious symbolic while at the same time glorifying an era devoid of that religion. This is however not the focus of this study and will only be mentioned in more details if relevant to the topic at hand.

pastoral environment [... rebuking] the pastoral sentiment of Amiens's song" (Kang 2015, 98). He must have experienced a change of opinion during the play regarding his appreciation of rural life as he is the only courtly character who does not run back to the court as soon as the banishment is lifted. He is part of Shakespeare's additions to the character lists, described in the latter as "a melancholy gentleman", but most importantly acting as "a 1590s satirist" (Dusinberre 2006, 106), offering another outlet for the author to criticise society. He represents the melancholic man, as Dusinberre further develops in her introduction to the play's Arden Edition:

Jaques is a dissident in Shakespeare's play; a man susceptible neither to the pastoral world nor to the delights of love and marriage, an observer not a participator, the odd man out at a party. Such a man the Elizabethans described as 'melancholic', a fashionable malady in a *fin de siècle* world. (2006, 107)

While representing a contemporary phenomenon of angst and cynicism, the plot entirely survives without the presence of Jaques. That is not to say he plays no role at all but with or without him the main actions of the play would still take place, as he does not contribute to any of them. He is in other words "the only purely contemplative character in Shakespeare. He thinks, and does nothing. His whole occupation is to amuse his mind [...] his only passion is thought. [...] He can 'suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs'" (Hazlitt 1817, 227-228). Hazlitt's quote brings forth an aspect of Jaques' melancholy that is peculiar: he is barely ever portrayed sad. As Cynthia Marshall argues, his melancholy is used as a "role, a set of prescribed [behaviours ...] standing in for the acknowledgment of loss and sadness missing in Arden's merry crew" (1998, 378).

Dusinberre considers Jacques in "partnership" (2006, 106) with the last notable court-related character that has yet to be discussed, namely the fool Touchstone. At the beginning of the play, he finds himself at court and joins the group of exiled characters by following the ladies Celia and Rosalind. Just like Jaques and others, Shakespeare added Touchstone to raise the satirical aspects of the play. As a fool he does not belong to the court per se but does reside there, and he also does not fit in with the country characters, as his complaining in Act 2 Scene 4 or his jest with Corin in Act 3 Scene 2 betray his dislike for life outside of his usual environment. Him and Jaques represent the two sides of the same coin when their roles in the play's satire are discussed. Touchstone is optimistic when the gentleman is pessimistic, one is folly the other is wisdom. They stand as commentators of the actions of the play, each assuming either the role of fool or of the wise man.

Returning to the characters presented as pastoral in the play, the first ones Greg mentions are not shepherds at all but courtly characters at heart in rural attire. This is the case for Celia and Rosalind who assume a herder's appearance for practical and safety reasons. This will be later discussed during the analysis of the meaning of masquerade and disguise in the play but in a few words while both young ladies appear like shepherds on the outside, they do not act nor talk like traditional pastoral characters. As Homer Smith wrote in 1897, "Rosalind, [...] never adopts the pastoral tone, nor does she bear the faintest trace of the Arcadian" (381). Shakespeare diversified his characters by placing courtly characters in a rural setting, but also added with Touchstone and Jaques a channel to examine the pastoral conventions.

That however does not mean that *As You Like It* is devoid of pastoral shepherds in the traditional sense. As Greg mentioned in his excerpt, Phoebe and Silvius both personify "typical pastoral characters" (Smith 1897, 382) and embody the traditional pastoralist traits in their attitudes but also in their love story. The description that Shakespeare makes of them shows the Arcadian and pastoral taint that both characters have. Smith commented on this in regard to the source of *As You Like It*, stating that these were the only characters where Shakespeare maintained all the pastoral characteristics, unlike the case of Corin who was transformed into a realistic shepherd (1897, 381). Elena Dominguez Romero further describes Silvius as an idealised version of a rural herder with good knowledge of the pastoral tradition allowing him to woo his beloved Phoebe (2001, 194). She also qualifies the latter as "an idealized shepherdess" (Dominguez Romero 2001, 194). However, Kang offers another interpretation of this character, emphasising the caricatural dimensions of her pastoral behaviour (2015, 98). He introduces a potential element of parody surrounding her attitude towards Silvius, prejudicing their entire relationship. No matter the position, both agree that Phoebe represents the unrealistic and idealised shepherdess central to the pastoral tradition and with Silvius they portray pastoral love in its truest literary sense.

And lastly there is a last type of rural characters in the story who do not fit either the disguised courtly ladies' category or the idealised pastoral shepherds' group. Greg mentions William and Audrey, but he fails to include Corin in this category, who also belongs with the rural natives of the forest. While Corin existed in the source story, Audrey and William are Shakespeare's additions to the character list, with the purpose of contrasting reality to the utopia of the pastoral tradition. There is little said and to say on William as his role in the story is not particularly noteworthy. Audrey, on the other hand,

plays a bigger role mostly due to her involvement with Touchstone. As a character, she cannot be considered an idealised shepherdess like Phoebe, although they are both natives of the countryside, but she is rather presented as a realistic country woman. Elena Dominguez Romero further stated that the woman was “a real, illiterate goatherd who devotes herself to the care of her flock” (2001, 194). To some extent Shakespeare can be said to have introduced her and William for some realism and to provide some contrast with the idealised shepherds Phoebe and Silvius. The artificiality of pastoralism is therefore emphasised by the contrast with these authentic rural characters. At the time it seemed more probable to find illiterate shepherds roaming the countryside rather than poets well versed in the rules of love.

Corin also offers great contrast with the courtly and pastoral characters through his life philosophy and his attitude. His character is not an addition made by Shakespeare to the story but while an equivalent to Corin existed in the source material, *As You Like It* portrays a transformed version from a “typical Arcadian” (Smith 1897, 381) to a realistic rural man. Kang describes him as “a rustic, a poor man working for his master rather than a traditional shepherd who leans against the beeches piping melancholy to his love” (2015, 96). This is particularly noticeable in a conversation he has with Touchstone in Act 3 Scene 2 where both men are discussing their liking of the shepherd’s way of life. While Touchstone offers his usual puns and absurd ideas, Corin proves himself to be quite philosophical in some of his observations. When asked about philosophy he answers the following:

No more but that I know the more one sickens,
the worse at ease he is, and that he that wants
money, means, and content is without three good
friends; that the property of rain is to wet, and fire
to burn; that good pasture makes fat sheep; and that
a great cause of the night is lack of the sun; that he
that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may
complain of good breeding or comes of a very dull
kindred. (AYLI, 3.2.22-29)

His observations of life are very practical compared to what Touchstone expected, so much so that the latter’s answer makes fun of the former calling him a “natural philosopher” (3.2.30), mocking the idea of ‘uneducated’ wisdom outside of the court. He roots his observations in his natural environment and in what he witnesses on a daily basis, offering a good rendition of what rural people at the time knew to be true. He does not pretend to

know more than the simple things of life such as the property of rain to wet and of fire to burn or that night is caused by the absence of sun. Corin continues sharing his observation of the world and of society by commenting on the court and to be more exact on why court manners fail to be of use in the country.

Those that are good
manners at the court are as ridiculous in the
country as the behaviour of the country is most
mockable at the court. You told me you salute not at
the court but you kiss your hands. That courtesy
would be uncleanly if courtiers were shepherds. [...]
Why, we are still handling our ewes, and their
fells, you know, are greasy. [...]
Besides, our hands are hard. [...]
And they are often tarred over with the surgery
of our sheep; and would you have us kiss tar? The courtier's
hands are perfumed with civet. (AYLI, 3.2.43-61)

He demonstrates to Touchstone why the tradition of kissing someone's hand would be unsuitable for his daily life and the people he meets. He tries to prove that his manners are not "wicked" (AYLI, 3.2.40) because he never went to court but that they are rather based on his needs and occupations. This ties in with the observations made earlier in that scene, proving the shepherd to be a practical man uninterested in matters of the court or in fancy scientific knowledge. His position is historically the most fitting to the rural population of Shakespeare's time and even of before that, who for the most part were illiterate and acquired the knowledge they needed for their daily lives by observing their immediate environment. Later in the same scene, Corin decides to give this conversation a rest, claiming that Touchstone has "too courtly a wit for [him]" (AYLI, 3.2.70), which at first glance might give the impression that Touchstone has won the argument. Juliet Dusinberre, however, argues otherwise, stating that "Corin's retreat paradoxically marks the triumph of the self-respecting and self-sufficient shepherd over the witty but parasitic court jester" (Shakespeare 2006, 240). The rural man finally puts an end to this conversation by re-emphasising that he is content with his life and does not wish to take part in the courtly traditions that Touchstone praises. His final words are the following:

I am a true labourer. I earn that I eat, get that
I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness,
glad of other men's good, content with my harm,
and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze
and my lambs suck. (AYLI, 3.2.70-74)

Corin offers some perspective against the artificial characters in the play, portraying the point of view of real people in real life situation. As Kang phrases it: “He is a real person who makes a sharp contrast with the [idealised] vision of a shepherd in the pastoral tradition” (2015, 98). Corin is Shakespeare’s way of questioning and criticising the considerable idealisation of the pastoral tradition. Corin’s thoughts continue to question his master’s behaviour as the story progresses, especially regarding Silvius’ feelings towards Phoebe and the absurdity of his reactions. By portraying a proper rural character and using him to voice opinions, the author does not disrupt the integrity of the story but still offers food for thoughts on the popular tradition of pastoralism.

In this one aspect Shakespeare’s adaptation of the conventions already comes forth, marking a tendency to be found throughout the play, namely the partial endorsement of pastoral elements with the addition of contrasting details that betray the author’s challenging of the traditions.

3.2. The inner workings of love

Corin’s opinions towards his master’s exaggerated feelings towards his beloved offer a great transition into on the most important part of the story line, namely the inner workings of love and relationships. By the end of the play, four couples are married or engaged and love as a theme occupies the greatest part of some of the characters lines such as Rosalind, Orlando, and Silvius.

Beyond the importance in the plot of these four couples, this display of martial love has historical significance and mirrors the changes in Elizabethan society in the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries (Rose 2018, 13). Mary Beth Rose paints the historical picture of love and relationship, evolving from an arranged alliance to enhance one’s social or economic status with no interest in feelings and little interest in physical love to an evolved ideal involving individual choice and a holier prestige for carnal love (2018, 13, 31). It is precisely this evolution of love and sexuality’s representations that “Shakespeare brought it to fruition with *As You Like It*” (Rose 2018, 14). This shift in literary portrayal stems from the Puritan movement that spread this new and positive depiction of marriage and sexuality. They placed themselves between the pessimistic and purely utilitarian view of matrimony and the modern understanding now known in the 21st century, spreading their word through tracts. They set a societal change in motion which slowly reached literature

and drama and was embraced by Shakespeare in his works. Rose summarises this new ideal as follows:

The Puritans linked happiness inseparably by hope to their ideal of love and marriage. [...] While insisting on the obedience and subordination of women, for example, the Puritans simultaneously stressed woman's importance, both as a companion to her husband and as supervisor of the newly exalted household. Furthermore, the fact that Puritan doctrine gives woman's soul full equality with man's in the sight of God grants woman an undeniable dignity. Similarly, the Puritans continue to express a wholehearted distrust of sexual desire, [...] yet their perception that sex in the context of marriage-when practiced with moderation, of course, and as a solemn religious duty-is a "holy and undefiled action" does grant consummated erotic love a distinct prestige. Further, although the Puritans strongly [emphasise] the importance of individual choice of a mate, deriding "the buying & selling of children among parents ... [and] the forced marriages, " they nevertheless insist on parental consent to a match. (2018, 31)

Their thoughts regarding sexuality contrast with what had reigned for centuries, namely that sexuality, even when used to expand one's family, always bore some element of sin (Rose 2018, 15). The Renaissance continued distrusting sexual desires, valuing female chastity before marriage and "regarding [sexual love] as bitterly degrading, bestial and absurd" (Rose 2018, 18). Even in the Elizabethan age "the imperative, urgent impersonality of sexual desire [...] made it seem both dangerous and ridiculous" (Rose 2018, 41), although due to the Puritan ideas its perception started to change. Some of these societal developments play a significant role in the play, allowing the main plot events to happen and placing them in a context that would have been relevant to the audience. Rose notes as well that these changes in literature took place gradually first with Lyly then Robert Greene but it is Shakespeare who took advantage of it the most (2018, 13-14).

Out of the four couples matched at the end of the play, three of them carry additional significance, namely Touchstone and Audrey, Orlando and Rosalind and Silvius and Phoebe. Although Shakespeare followed the societal changes, he also relied on traditions and well-known tropes, "[allowing] the intended audience to identify each of [the plays'] love relationships with one of the three different conventions of pastoral love which were widely known at the time" (Domínguez Romero 2001, 194). Relying on traditions his contemporaries could [recognise] does not however mean that he meticulously portrayed each of their respective characteristics without taking any liberties. Not all characters

belong to the same social group, and this is especially relevant for the analysis of their love stories. As Elena Dominguez Romero explains it in her paper:

For that reason, while Silvius and Phoebe belong to the group of the [idealised] shepherds who know the pastoral tradition, Rosalind and Orlando would be part of that other group of courtly characters who are disguised as shepherds and live in the forest temporarily. Neither Audrey nor Touchstone are really part of any of the groups already mentioned. Since Audrey is not an [idealised] shepherdess and Touchstone is not a nobleman who keeps his courtly manners in spite of living in the forest, they can be said to conform a third group of characters on their own. (2001, 194)

The social position of the group will define which pastoral model their relationship emulates and which behaviour the audience would have expected from them. Shakespeare illustrated in *As You Like It* three types of love based on the models of Virgil, Mantuan, and Sannazaro and Montemayor (Domínguez Romero 2001, 194). These different conventions of pastoral love stem from Richard Jenkyns' *The Legacy of Rome*, which Elena Domínguez Romero applied to this particular part of Shakespeare's corpus. In some of his *Eclogues*, Virgil is said to have brought "a realistic touch [characterising peasants and shepherds' real lives]" (Domínguez Romero 2001, 195). This aspect of his depiction of pastoral characters allows a connection between *As You Like It*'s relationship between Silvius and Phoebe and Virgil's *Eclogues II* and *VII* to be drawn. The essence of a love by Petrarch's terms portrays an unattainable beloved idealised by a lover "oscillating between restrained wooing and distant adoration", "[experiencing] love as dual, as interpenetration of pleasure and pain" and where the realisation of this love through a wedding is merely a dream for the lover (Rose 2018, 20-21). The pastoral essence of both Phoebe and Silvius has already been established, but their relationship offers an extra dimension to the pastoral love ideal. As Domínguez Romero developed in her article, Silvius and Phoebe initially experience a rather traditional pastoral love story where Silvius suffers at the hand of his cruel love interest (2001, 195). But Shakespeare follows Virgil and breaks away from the pastoral model by portraying these shepherds in "a happy ending consisting of marriage" (Domínguez Romero 2001, 195).

Continuing with Jenkyns analysis of pastoral love, he introduces Mantuan's take on the tradition. Still in Domínguez Romero's article, she summarises the idea by relating it to Touchstone and Audrey's relationship, which she considers an embodiment of a convention known as "the strong tendency" (2001, 195). The particularity of this love affair is the characters "[rejection of] a highly artificial love discourse that they do not even manage to

understand” (DomÍnguez Romero 2001, 195), as they are simple individuals who do not share the noble or pastoral manners of some other characters. For them it is no question of the man pinning for his beloved as they always see their relationship as “perfectly physical and possible from the very beginning and till the end of the play, when they finally get married” (DomÍnguez Romero 2001, 195). This is particularly noticeable in their conversations, namely in Act 3 Scene 3, when the clown tells his beloved “Come, sweet Audrey. / We must be married, or we must live in bawdry” (AYLI, 3.3.88-9). By using ‘bawdry’, he refers to the status of their sexual relations if they are not married.

And finally, Rosalind and Orlando portray Jenkyns’ third convention in which disguise plays a key role. *As You Like It*’s plot draws characteristics from two influential pastoral literary works. First of all, the idea of noblemen fleeing in disguise to the forest to hide but keeping their courtly manners stems from Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*, the first work that merged the “royalty of the court and the simplicity of the country” (DomÍnguez Romero 2001, 195). And secondly, Orlando and Rosalind mirror another pastoral work, namely Montemayor’s *Diana*, by the plot line of Rosalind’s disguise. In both cases women find themselves at the service of their beloved in disguise to get closer to him. Both Rosalind and Felismena, *Diana*’s disguised character, manage to succeed in winning their love interest over. It is worth noting that in the play each couple plays a significant role in the type of love they represent. While “the other couples in the procession at the end of *As You Like It* suggest the less attractive aspects of sexuality, [...] the Rosalind-Orlando union [is left] relatively free of ironic qualification” (Rose 2018, 40). This concludes the three successful love stories present in *As You Like it* and the conventions they represent, but also how they differ from the traditional pastoral, showing Shakespeare’s research for modernism or his rejection of some of pastoral traditional features. Through the endorsement, or lack thereof, of conventions and social change, Shakespeare managed to portray this evolved vision of love and marriage “with neither awkwardness or sentimentality” (Rose 2018, 41). He managed to provide the characters with “an enhanced sense of their individuality and self-knowledge”, emphasising the change and allowing “a greater respect for the human dignity of sexual experience” (Rose 2018, 41). Elizabethan comedy however “seems to support patriarchy and the order of things, since it necessarily requires marriage and perpetuation of this order” (Durin 2018, 16). *As You Like It*, with its four weddings before returning to court life and ending the characters’ country interlude, follows comedy’s assumed structure, “[reinforcing] patriarchy more than it challenges it” (Durin 2018, 16).

While most characters embrace the forest as a place for love, Jaques does not lean into it whatsoever, staying distant from feelings. If affection there should be, he displays more homosexual feelings towards some men of the play such as his satirical partner Touchstone, Orlando or even the young Ganymede (Dusinberre 2006, 109). In the opening dialogue of Act 4, he refers to Ganymede as a “pretty youth” (AYLI, 4.1.1), seemingly captivated by his looks. He also displays a disregard and disinterest towards women as romantic partners, strengthening the homosexual tendencies hypothesis further. There are however no strong textual elements to certify this claim, but the interpretations above raise the question. Whether it comes to sexuality or to love, Jaques does not seem eager to partake so much so that he leaves before the wedding dance. His position as “an aggressively single man surrounded by couples coming to the ark to mate [...] without ever wanting to be coupled himself” (Dusinberre 2006, 109) allows him to remain undistracted by love’s torments and to satirically comment on what happens in the play. His convictions and his behaviour echo the satirists of the time and he “looms large in the pastoral play as a symbol of the classical chauvinistic attitude toward sexual love” (Scoufos 1988, 220). By representing the ideas refusing the societal changes Shakespeare is portraying in the play, namely as it has been presented above the perception of love, especially directed towards children and women as a type of madness, he “rejects generations of minds that had rejected human love as a foolish a degrading emotion” (Scoufos 1988, 220). He remains on the sidelines of this evolving society until the very end of the play, where just before leaving the merry to celebrate, he bestows upon his forest companions some benedictions.

[to Duke Senior] You to your former honour I bequeath:
 Your patience and your virtue well deserves it.
 [to Orlando] You to a love that your true faith doth merit;
 [to Oliver] You to your land and love and great allies;
 [to Silvius] You to a long and well-deserved bed;
 [to Touchstone] And you to wrangling, for thy loving voyage
 Is but for two months victualled. – So to your pleasures,
 I am for other than for dancing measures. (AYLI, 5.4.182-91)

Such positivity does not suit the cynic love-disdaining gentleman present since the beginning of the play. Could he have been won over by the happy ending of the play and decided to join the others in “the harmonic and symbolic circle forming at the end of the comedy” (Scoufos 1988, 225)? The last line proves that he does not wish to part with his melancholy and his convictions to follow the others in the festivities. By leaving he also symbolically gives up on trying to spread his ideas to a group of people that have embraced

social change. Is it a way for the playwright to show that this change has taken roots and thus cannot be undone? Jaques sudden benedictions echo those of the god of marriage, which blessed the four couples earlier in the scene. While the sincerity of his sentiments is debatable, when both blessings are compared, it is striking to notice how Jaques' classical attitude influences his words. While Hymen addresses the couples as a pair, Jaques focuses only on the men. This is yet again another unequivocal instance of his contempt and disinterest towards women, so much so that he does not value addressing them before parting company.

While the pastoral centred on love, marriage was not a common occurrence, as Petrarchan infatuation never ended happily. By not only portraying a pastoral happy ending but also involving social change to the play, Shakespeare created a story with recognisable traits for his audience but all the while exploring the implementation of modernity.

3.3. Sexuality and the pastoral?

Beyond its depiction of love, the pastoral poet distances himself from sexuality and desire in his works. Human nature is viewed as “innocent and sinless in its desire for pleasure flowering in its lost elaborate form in the poetry of love” (Marinelli 1971, 24). What is striking in this depiction of sinless desire is the lack of any mention of sexuality or lust in any shape or form. Although love is a central topic, what it focuses on is its platonic contemplative side purely based on innocent feelings (in a way like the ones of a child). Petrarch's influence in matters of love during the English Renaissance goes hand in hand with the representation of sexuality. Rose stresses the idea that intimate and carnal desires were not recognised as positive or “good in [themselves]” (2018, 21). The lover's infatuation for his beloved remains immaterial, leaving the woman “exalted, remote and untouched” (Rose 2018, 21). Women were idealised in poems but in real life were met with misogyny and contempt, especially when it concerned sexuality, as “[their] entrance into the sexual world [...was] equivalent to sin” (Rose 2018, 18,21). However, during the Renaissance, similarly to the changing perceptions of love, this contrasting binary vision of female sexuality started to come apart, allowing different views to emerge. In this context of “burgeoning awareness of a more complex, problematic moral and emotional reality [and of] changing moral atmosphere [did] romantic comedy, with its celebration of married love, [come] into its own as a dramatic form” (Rose 2018, 21-22).

Shakespeare's play illustrated this change by taking a different approach to the topic of sexuality and introducing characters who are anything but innocent. Using the contemporary changes allowing more freedom when discussing love, the playwright created a satire of the overly pure and virtuous depiction of the idealised pastoral characters. According to the Elizabethan custom, these sexual comments stem from double meaning and allusions as it was not allowed at the time to be straightforward with such topics without risking censure. Some characters in the play take on more of the sexually promiscuous comments than others, the most notable example being the fool Touchstone who often takes liberties with his language to express innuendos and sexual desires. The clever fool even manages to put words and puns in another character's mouth in the last scene of Act 2, where Jaques tells the Duke of his encounter with "a motley fool" (AYLI, 2.7.13) in the forest. In his report of the conversation, the melancholic gentleman explains how Touchstone referred to his sundial to illustrate time passing by:

And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock.
Thus we may see', quoth he, 'how the world wags.
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven.
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.' (AYLI, 2.7.20-28)

According to Garrison and Pivetti this moment echoes Jaques famous lines in his "All the world's a stage" (AYLI, 7.7.140) monologue that have yet to be spoken around the end of this scene (2018, 302). Both men focus on the inevitable passing of time and on Everyman's end in death. But Touchstone being "a clever fool who never means exactly what he says [includes in his] description of the day [...] plenty of sex puns" (Garrison and Pivetti 2018, 303). Behind this seemingly pessimistic depiction of time passing the fool hides bawdy references that can be rephrased as follows: "Hour by hour – or 'whore by whore' – people get older, more experienced and more depleted until the 'tale' hangs limply" (Garrison and Pivetti 2018, 303). Where some, like Jaques in his monologue later in the play, view the different phases of life as loss, he pictures it all as the accumulation of sexual experience until the body tires and can no more.

Touchstone makes a series of comments in Act 3 and 5 centred around the lips and the allusions that can be made about them. In Act 3 Scene 2, in his conversation with Corin

about the differences between courtly and country practices, Touchstone makes a lewd comment about hard hands and lips:

CORIN Besides, our hands are hard.
TOUCHSTONE Your lips will feel them the sooner. (AYLI, 3.2.56-57)

While this can be understood simply as someone kissing somebody else's hand and feeling the callouses, Juliet Dusinberre notes the possibility of a "bawdy double entendre on the female 'labia'" (Shakespeare 2006, 239). In this case Touchstone would not be referring to the lips around the mouth but rather to the lips of the female genitalia, which would feel the calloused hands of the shepherd during intercourse. In Act 5 Scene 1, he reiterates his comment on lips with the following reflection:

The heathen philosopher, when he had a desire to eat a grape, would open his lips when he put it into his mouth, meaning thereby that grapes were made to eat and lips to open. (AYLI, 5.1.32-35)

What in this case looks like a simple philosophical reflection on the purpose of grapes and lips also hides a sexual double meaning. The previous excerpt already illustrated the sexual connotation of 'lips' when referring to the female labia. With that in mind one could twist Touchstone's words and change the topic of the observation to intercourse, which would result in this train of thought: when one has the desire for intercourse, one opens its lips to make it possible. This can be compared to the modern idiom 'to open (one's) legs' meaning to have intercourse with someone, more often directed at women. Lips became legs but the concept stays the same, namely that a woman must open herself to render intercourse possible.

In Act 3, as Rosalind, Celia and the others are in the Forest, they come across the poem that Orlando hung on trees in the previous scenes. While the ladies are reading it and marvelling at the verses, Touchstone decides to parody the poem in an untasteful and inappropriate manner:

For a taste:
If a hart do lack a hind,
Let him seek out Rosalind.
If the cat will after kind,
So be sure will Rosalind.
Winter garments must be lined;
So must slender Rosalind.
They that reap must sheaf and bind;
Then to cart with Rosalind.
Sweetest nut hath sourest rind;

Such a nut is Rosalind.
He that sweetest rose will find
Must find love's prick, and Rosalind. (AYLI, 3.2.97-109)

In this instance Touchstone makes fun of the pastoral tradition of love poetry in his sexualised version. He uses word play and double meanings to make bawdy references. He starts his parody in line 98 by directly imitating poets by using the homonym 'hart' to replace the word 'heart' and then relating it to 'hind'. He transforms the courtship of lovers acting on the matters of the heart to the mating of deers in the forest. This introduces a reproductive aspect, not sexual per se but still quite estranged from the innocence of the pastoral tradition. This echoes one of Rosalind's lines in Act 1 Scene 2 when she refers to Orlando as "my child's father" (AYLI, 1.2.11), showing that the maid has imagined a future with him already, a future with children and thus containing some sort of sexuality. Touchstone continues his poem by twisting the meaning of 'lined' used in Orlando's original poem. The lover introduces the word in line 89-90 in the following sentence: "All the pictures fairest lined / Are but black to Rosalind" (AYLI, 3.2.89-90). In this context the meaning of the term has to do with drawing the lines and outlines of a picture, but the fool manages to turn it into a less appropriate concept. Juliet Dusinberre dedicated a footnote to this change of meaning, arguing that Touchstone "[prompts] a bawdy change of meaning in 103 from 'lined' (89), meaning 'draw'. The female sheath provided a lining for the male sword" (Shakespeare 2006, 243). What she means by the last sentence is that 'line' in this case hints at sexual intercourse, to be more precise to the act of penetration in which the female genitalia provide a cover for the male 'sword'. He compares the lining of winter clothing to the lining of Rosalind's vagina, completely distorting Orlando's words. Touchstone continues his allusions in line 105 when referring to the practice of carting. In her article "Crime and Punishment in Elizabethan England" published in 2016 on the British Library's website, Liza Picard describes the custom as follows: "Fornication and incest were punishable by 'carting': being carried through the city in a cart, or riding backwards on a horse, wearing a placard describing the offence – an Elizabethan version of naming and shaming" (Picard 2016). This suggests that Rosalind would suffer that treatment to punish her "sexual misdemeanours" (Shakespeare 2006, 243), to humiliate her for her transgressions. Again, Touchstone suggests a situation in which Rosalind transgressed the abstinence rules and therefore must be punished for it. In the last line of the excerpt, he refers to 'love's prick' which at first glance innocently refers to one being pierced by the thorn of a rose, an expression often used when talking about falling in love

(Shakespeare 2006, 243). But the Merriam Webster Online dictionary suggests a different, bawdier, and less appropriate meaning to the noun ‘prick’, namely stating that it also vulgarly refers to the male sexual organ (Prick n.d.).

Touchstone continues his bawdy comments in Act 3 Scene 3 when he initially means to get married with Audrey. The priest is present in this scene and asks the traditional question about the identity of the giver, relying on the tradition of giving women to their husband on their wedding day. To that Touchstone answer: “I will not take her on gift of any man” (AYLI, 3.3.64). This line can be understood as a feminist remark concerning the tradition of giving away women as if they were objects but regarding the character saying this phrase this interpretation is not as likely as the second option. Juliet Dusinberre introduces a second analysis for this line, namely a conscious misunderstanding of the priest’s question alluding to Audrey’s past sexual experiences. What Touchstone means in this case would be that he will not take her as his wife if she has already ‘given’ herself to another, in other words if she has had intercourse in the past and is thus no virgin anymore. Only a couple lines later in the same scene, Jaques and Touchstone are discussing marriage and the latter reflects on faithfulness with the following words: “As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires; and as pigeons bill, so wedlock would be nibbling.” (AYLI, 3.3.73-75). Here Touchstone explains that men have by default a high sex drive and thus feel attracted to marriage to constrain their sexual appetite into a socially accepted relationship.

Shakespeare uses sexuality in the play to shatter the image of the innocent chaste lady, by portraying respectable well-bred women having bawdy and lewd conversations. There is an example of this phenomenon in Act 3 Scene 2 in an exchange between Celia and Rosalind:

ROSALIND I would thou couldst stammer, that thou might’st pour this concealed man out of thy mouth as wine comes out of a narrow-mouthed bottle—either too much at once, or none at all. I prithee take the cork out of thy mouth, that I may drink thy tidings.

CELIA So you may put a man in your belly. (AYLI, 3.2.193-198)

In this instance Celia makes a lewd joke by twisting Rosalind’s comment about the wine bottle and sexualising it. As Juliet Dusinberre explained in her footnote, “the shape of the wine bottle and the wine coming out of it led inevitable to Celia’s bawdy joke” (Shakespeare 2006, 251). With the phrase ‘put a man in your belly’ the young woman

alludes to intercourse by focusing on the penetrative aspect of the act. Rosalind's initial comment mentions a wine bottle, in which Celia sees a phallic shape, and the image of wine coming out of said bottle, which in the other young woman's eyes represents the idea of male ejaculation. This one-liner questions the assumed sexual innocence of high-class young ladies and brings some humanity back into that perfected idealised character.

The playwright continues his portrayal of female sexual thoughts by displaying Phoebe's lack of innocence. She represents the idealised shepherdess of the pastoral tradition and is by default understood to be an innocent character devoid of all sexual thoughts. In Act 3 Scene 5 however, the audience witnesses Phoebe lusting for Ganymede and admiring his physical and mental attributes. She is filled with wonder at his appearance, his complexion, his pride, and other traits of the young man. She finds herself attracted to him despite not loving him, which dissociates love and desire. In this scene she notes in particular the "pretty redness in his lip, a little riper and more lusty red, than that mixed in his cheek" (AYLI, 3.5.121-123). In her observation she uses the word 'lusty' which betrays that she feels some sexual energy coming from Ganymede and that she is not insensitive to it. For the audience this is of course ironic since Ganymede is actually a woman and therefore should not emit the same kind of sexual energy. This could mean that this energy that she feels is the product of her own attraction towards Ganymede and the projection of her own thoughts about the young shepherd. Taking this into account it becomes clear that Phoebe is not entirely sexually innocent, though chaste, which distances her from the idealised pastoral shepherdess.

When it comes to sexual double meanings, the analysis is evidently non-exhaustive as many more lines can be interpreted with some ambiguous connotation. The present discussion offered a broad picture of the characters who used innuendos, simultaneously highlighting the ones who do not. As a Petrarchan lover, Silvius does not partake although his beloved does desire Ganymede. Celia and Rosalind, despite the social etiquette they must abide to, also engage in female chitchat that include some elements of sexual double meanings, all the while Orlando fails to participate and remains the righteous enamoured lover. The most notable promiscuous role is Touchstone's, who takes advantage of his status of fool to take liberties with his words.

3.4. Disguise and masquerade

Keen to exploit the idea of disguise and costumes, the pastoral tradition tends to use elements of masquerade as part of its texts. While masquerade has a couple of different meanings, the one that is relevant in this context refers to the idea of assuming a disguise, “to assume the appearance of something one is not” (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary n.d.). Shakespeare cultivated that aspect of the pastoral etiquette by bringing the idea of disguise to the forefront of the story line.

In the play, a set of courtly characters flee to the Forest of Arden and take refuge in the country to protect themselves from Duke Frederik’s threats. At the beginning of Act 2, we are introduced to the banished Duke Senior and some Lords who left the court with him. In the stage direction they are described as “dressed as foresters” (Shakespeare 2006, 189) which implies that their appearance differed from their usual court attire. Given the limits of the Elizabethan theatre, a different costume provided the illusion of a change of location, namely their presence in the forest, and reinforced the contrast between court and country on a tangible level. Plotwise, this transformed appearance attempts to blend them into their surroundings, to avoid looking suspicious and out of place. Later in Act 2, the Duke and his Lords are presented again, but this time dressed as “outlaws” (Shakespeare 2006, 215), which according to Juliet Dusinberre’s footnote would “have been indistinguishable [from ‘forester’] in the theatre” (Shakespeare 2006, 215). The interchangeability of these two terms with significantly different meanings highlights Shakespeare’s depiction of the Forest of Arden as a lawless place, contrasting with the pastoral traditional idealisation of the rural environment. While ‘forester’ refers to men “employed to keep the forest game [...] tend to the woodland [...], and [assist] in the formal hunt” (Shakespeare 2006, 189), ‘outlaws’ on the other hand refers to people either as “excluded from the benefit or protection of the law” (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary n.d.) or as “rebellious [...] lawless [...] or fugitive[s]” (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary n.d.). In this context and given the historical background of the word, ‘outlaw’ is used in the first sense of the term, namely outside of the realm of the law, as it is a well-established idea in the pastoral world that the country is a place where the rules of the court do not apply, which negates the law as well. To a certain extent, one could argue that the other Duke, Duke Frederik, is also masquerading as he banishes and takes over his brother’s title and position. While this fails to represent the concept of ‘masquerade’ in its literal sense of physical appearance, the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary does state that this term can also refer to “an action

[...] that is mere disguise or show” (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary n.d.). This is particularly relevant when discussing Duke Frederik’s actions and attitude in the play. At certain points of the play, there is this impression of artificiality surrounding the character of Celia’s father. In Act 1 Scene 3 for example, he proceeds to banish Rosalind but the reasoning behind this decision is empty and unconvincing. It gives the impression of a rash decision taken only for the sake of demonstrating one’s power and gain fear and respect. When Rosalind enquires about the rationale behind this sudden change of mind, he finds himself devoid of a reasonable explanation and concludes by saying: “Thou art thy father’s daughter, there’s enough” (AYLI, 1.3.55). This follows the ‘the apple does not fall far from the tree’ reasoning, believing in a parent’s ability to transfer their negative traits to their children by the way of blood.

Rosalind and Celia also disguise themselves before entering the Forest of Arden. Upon Rosalind’s and her own banishment, Celia decides to join her cousin in her exile but as a young woman she cannot travel as safely as her male counterparts would in the same situation. In that moment Rosalind raises the question of their safety for this journey:

ROSALIND Alas, what danger will it be to us,
Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!
Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.
CELIA I’ll put myself in poor and mean attire,
And with a kind of umber smirch my face -
The like do you; So shall we pass along
And never stir assailants.
ROSALIND Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man? (AYLI, 1.3. 105-113)

Beyond the fear of robbery of their money and possessions, Rosalind’s lines inform the reader or spectator of another fear related to travelling as a young woman alone. Already at the time of Shakespeare, there seems to have been the threat of sexual assault lingering around just like it is still the case in modern society. ‘Maids’ could not travel alone, as their beauty would lead to unwanted and inappropriate advances from men they could meet along the way. Celia’s solution is to diminish their good looks with shabby clothing and an unkept appearance, as a way to avoid the attentions of “assailants” (AYLI, 1.3.111). But Rosalind suggests a better proposition, namely assuming the appearance of a man due to her above average height. Fang Kang further develops the utility of this disguise, stating that “[the] intelligent idea of being disguised as a man can help avoid at first the difficulties they will meet on their journey to the forest” (Kang 2015, 98). Her disguised identity as

Ganymede is central to the development of the plot and to the story itself. The case of Rosalind-Ganymede becomes particularly interesting as well when one considers the reality of Elizabethan theatre. Women were not allowed to play so all part had to be taken by male actors. Men would play men's parts and boys would take the women's roles. At the beginning of the play Rosalind was a boy dressed up as a young woman but at the end of Act 1 this actor becomes a boy dressed as a girl disguised as a boy. Theatrically speaking this was already quite complex but the playwright goes even further in Act 4 introducing the idea of Ganymede's role-play as Orlando's beloved. At this point, the spectator is left with a boy actor dressed as "Rosalind playing Ganymede playing Rosalind" (Tablot Van den Berg 1975, 891). On top of the theatrical complexity, the crossdressing feature also provides interesting gender reflexions due to the dual identity of the Rosalind-Ganymede character. While she assumes a masculine apparel, she does not however dress like a courtly man but rather like a shepherd, which follows the pastoral tradition of portraying artificial shepherds instead of the actual rural character. Celia assumes a rural appearance as well but "neither by word nor action reveals that she is a shepherdess, or desires to become one. She buys a sheep-fold simply to elude pursuits" (Smith 1897, 381). Rosalind becomes "the shepherd Ganymede" (Kang 2015, 98) but she does not lose her courtly manners, so much so that upon Ganymede's first meeting with Orlando, the latter is intrigued by the shepherd's accent. According to the young man's observations, Ganymede's accent "is something finer than you could purchase in so removed a dwelling" (AYLI, 3.2.329-330), showing that the courtly upbringing betrays the young woman's disguise. Her excuse to this seemingly good education, namely the existence of a an "old religious uncle of [hers ...], who was in his youth an inland man" (AYLI, 3.2.332-333) allows her to connect with Orlando in her disguised form but also to introduce her relevance as a love tutor, claiming to have been lectured by this same uncle on all things love and chivalry. With that it becomes clear that the pastoral tradition of masquerade and disguise is central to the play and its plotline, allowing the characters to connect in order to render the story possible.

3.5. Gender games and crossdressing

As You Like It also portrays a character with a double identity, both female and male, creating the perfect environment to question gender roles and stereotypes. Once Rosalind becomes Ganymede, she has the perfect role to experience what it means to be male and compare it to her experiences as a woman. The Rosalind/Ganymede duo represents the leading role of the play, keeping in with Shakespeare's habit to bestow upon comedic

female characters some heroic roles. Mary Beth Rose associate this phenomenon with the social changes of the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries that have been discussed regarding love (2018, 13). As she argues that:

The increasing moral prestige of love and marriage in the Renaissance was accompanied by a wider acknowledgment of the social, emotional, and spiritual dignity of women, whose freedoms of action and influence were nevertheless explicitly and severely limited. Shakespeare seems to have assimilated these paradoxical facts imaginatively by giving women the heroic roles in many of his major comedies; their heroism consists, however, in choosing to preserve the status quo by wisely and lovingly assimilating themselves to it. (Rose 2018, 39)

Throughout the play an attentive reader or spectator notices easily all the gender comments made by the different characters, but mostly by Rosalind and Ganymede due to the duality of the role. It must however be noted that the question of sexuality and gender is present just for the name of Rosalind's male alter ego itself. The name Ganymede is as Juliet Dusinberre notes "conventional to classical pastoral" but she further elaborates on the potential "homoerotic as well as [...] heterosexual" aspects Shakespeare could have exploited, given that the "corrupted form of [the name] is 'catamine', a boy hired for this sexual services" (2006, 10). She however concludes that in this given context, the association remains only "playful" (2006, 10). The gendered comments begin before the actual cross-dressing happens, hinting at what is to come later in the play. In Act 1 Scene 2, during a display of wit with the fool Touchstone, Celia refers to their beards "if [they] had them" (AYLI, 1.2.72). It is indeed the fool who instructed them to "stroke [their] chin and swear by [their] beards that [he is] a knave" (AYLI, 1.2.70-71). The girls play with their lack of manhood, stroking their chins devoid of hair. In the historical context of female characters in the theatre, this gesture takes on an additional significance, "[drawing] attention to the bodies of the boys playing them" (Dusinberre 2006, 11). While hairless chins reinforce the womanhood of the two characters, it also emphasises the lack of manhood of the actors, who if they had a beard would not be able to play these parts anymore. This self-awareness of the realities of gender in the theatre is a recurrent theme in the play and its gender games mostly centred around Rosalind/Ganymede.

The questioning of gender continues with the wrestling match taking place in Act 1. In this instance, Touchstone is the culprit of relying on gender stereotypes when discussing activities suitable for each gender. In a conversation with Le Beau in which the

courtier tells the ladies that they have lost good entertainment by their late arrival, the fool is at first confused by the amusement the former is talking about:

TOUCHSTONE But what is the sport, monsieur, that the ladies have lost?

LE BEAU Why, this that I speak of.

TOUCHSTONE Thus men may grow wiser every day. It is the first time that ever I heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies. (AYLI, 1.2.129-132)

In Touchstone's opinion, wrestling matches are no place for Rosalind and Celia. The comment however in this case does not only refer to the ladies' gender. As Dusinberre explains in her footnote, the last two lines of the excerpt refer to the ladies' gender as well as class (Shakespeare, AYLI 2006, 168). A wrestling match is thus too barbaric for the sensitivity of the ladies, but also for their courtly upbringing. Rosalind and Celia's social rank is according to Touchstone too respectable to "be entertained by the suffering of others" (Shakespeare 2006, 168) and their gender bestowed them with a sensitive soul too weak for such offenses.

When deciding how to safely leave the court, as their positions as young women didn't not allow them to do so without risks, Rosalind comes up with the idea of assuming a man's apparel, as she is "more than common tall" (AYLI, 1.3.113). This simple remark brings forth again the gender expectations they had, namely of men being taller than their female counterparts. Rosalind's above average height for a woman would allow for her to not be discovered so easily. But her next few lines offer more insight on her position on this man-woman dilemma.:

In my heart,
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will,
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances. (AYLI, 1.3.115-119)

As Juliet Dusinberre paraphrases "her heart will remain a woman's while her outside brags of manhood" (2006, 11). This seemingly simple idea of putting on a manly show would have been recognised by the intended audience as a play on "Elizabeth[s ...] famous speech at Tilbury before the Spanish Armada" where the Queen admitted to "[having] the body but of a feeble woman but [...] the heart and stomach of a king" (Dusinberre 2006, 11). The word choice of the playwright in this instance also shows linguistic creativity to replace the word 'effeminate'. This would have been the standard term to express Rosalind's idea but the use of 'mannish' is particularly significant. As Dusinberre explains,

the word ‘mannish’ has only been used on rare occasions, either to refer to a masculine woman or to a man “[who] apes manhood as much as does a woman dressed in man’s clothes” (2006, 12). Where she could have felt self-conscious upon her impending new role, she decides not to settle for feelings of inferiority, reassuring herself by thinking she would be no different than these men lacking manhood.

As Rosalind and her group enter the forest, she displays her own internalisation of gender stereotypes. At this point she is disguised as Ganymede, but the difficulty of their situation pushes her to her limits, testing her manhood and courage. She is tempted to resort to tears, but she does not want to “disgrace [her] man’s apparel and cry like a woman” (AYLI, 2.4.4-5). This shows on the one hand that crying was seen at the time as a sign of weakness and thus incompatible with the manhood and virility she is channelling. But on the other hand, Juliet Dusinberre adds that this was a way for Shakespeare to introduce the “gendered games of the Forest scenes, enhanced in his theatre by boy actors playing women’s parts” (Shakespeare 2006, 203). This gender reflexive comment reflects on society by also on theatre itself. Rosalind continues in that same scene, adding that she must reassure the “weaker vessel” (Shakespeare 2006, 2.4.6) when referring to her cousin Celia. Again, the words uttered by the young woman betray a strong gender bias established by society itself. One could argue that the comment was designed to intensify her manly behaviour but in the context of this scene, all the people present, namely Touchstone and Celia, were already aware of her masquerade. There was thus no need to put on a show to justify her manhood. Rosalind’s internalisation of the gender politics of the play’s era appears to be the likeliest of both possibilities. The comment proceeds to introduce the idea of courage as a manly virtue with the following remark: “doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat” (AYLI, 2.4.6-7). Here again she relies on physical markers of gender to share her opinion. ‘Doublet and hose’ as well as ‘petticoat’ refer to courtly attire for men and women respectively, signifying that by wearing a manly apparel she feels at the same time obliged to carry male duties and virtues such as showing courage and comforting ladies. The reliance on clothing, together with Rosalind’s new assumed traits and expectations while masquerading as Ganymede, invokes the idea that “the social and cultural constructions of gender in *As You Like It* are the equivalent of a wardrobe of garments to be put on and off at will” (Dusinberre 2006, 12). This reliance on clothing also refers to theatre itself, where the audience assumes the character’s gender through the choice of clothing, since all actors were males. In the field of gender studies, Judith Butler

introduced the idea of “gender as ‘performative’, which means that it is more about acting than being, though it is not reduced to a role one plays” (Durin 2018, 4). While Butler’s definition does not refer to theatre itself and is much more complex than the simplified version quoted above, it bears some significance to theatre and especially to *As You Like It*’s Ganymede. The play emphasises the choice of clothing as a physical marker of gender, highlighting its performative aspect. For most of the play, Rosalind slips on men’s clothes to assume a masculine gender, for her safety but also to pursue love. Beyond the willing suspension of disbelief occurring on the Elizabethan stage regarding the male actors, the story presents a young woman manipulating her gender identity, “[reminding] the audience that gender is ‘a performative accomplishment’ rather than something they were born with” (Durin 2018, 11). Considering the time period the play was written in and its sources, Shakespeare hinted at ideas ahead of his time by picturing a witty and independent crossdressing heroine in *As You Like It*. Ideas who will later be part of gender debates and social changes.

Celia, dressed as Aliena, mocks the crying-comment in Act 3 Scene 4 with the following remark: “Do, I prithee, but yet have the grace to consider that tears do not become a man” (AYLI, 3.4.2-3). She refers to Ganymede’s first chauvinistic utterance two acts earlier about not wanting to disgrace his masculinity by crying. In this instance Celia makes fun of Rosalind’s pretended manhood when masquerading as Ganymede. This highlights the artificiality of the character’s disguised identity that only relies on stereotypes, such as courage and tearlessness, to represent masculinity. Moreover, Celia does not at first glance play an important or significant role in the play, her love story is indeed more of a sub-plot and happens accidentally when Oliver joins the exiled group. She however assumes an important task while wandering in the forest with the disguised Rosalind. Throughout the play “Celia’s role remains [...] vital [...] in reminding both the heroine and the audience of the girl Rosalind beneath the disguise of the boy Ganymede – a reminder even more important in Shakespeare’s theatre when the girl dressed as a boy was really a boy “ (Dusinberre 2006, 28). Celia’s comments spread his hyper-awareness of the realities of Elizabethan theatre and constant reminding of it. She constantly teases her cousin and puts her back in her place when the latter gets a little too much into character. Since Orlando calls Ganymede ‘Rosalind’ for a part of the play, these metatheatrical commentaries also serve the purpose of keeping up with the story and avoid confusions as to who is who. In

Act 4 for instance, after the mock marriage between Ganymede and Orlando, where Celia played the officiant, the young lady confronts her cousin to the extent of their masquerade:

You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate! We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest. (AYLI, 4.1.189-92)

The ‘doublet and hose’ keep being mentioned as Rosalind’s male apparel, but Celia’s remark is on the bawdier side, especially for a young lady of her class. She means to have her cousin’s clothing pulled up to let everyone see what truly lies underneath. In other words, she compels the audience to imagine the nest hidden under the costume. “And which set of genitals are we – or certainly an Elizabethan audience – imagining” (Dusinberre 2006, 28)? This plays with the genders of both character and actor. If understood strictly in the context of the storyline, this would mean exposing Rosalind’s womanhood but if it were to be understood as a metatheatrical comment, the outcome would be much different, this time expecting the nether regions of a young boy.

Simultaneously, Celia’s constant reminder of Rosalind’s female position reinforces the traditional gender studies concept of ‘otherness’. This idea stems from Simone De Beauvoir’s idea of gender binarity, which distinguishes the “Self” from the “Other”:

And she is simply what a man decrees; thus she is called ‘the sex’, by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she if the Other. The category of the Other is a primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality – that of the Self and the Other. This duality was not originally attached to the division of the sexes; it was not dependent upon any empirical facts. (1956, 16)

Strictly speaking, “the feminine is what the masculine is not and conversely” (Durin 2018, 4). She also highlights the importance of “‘hierarchical distinctions’ and ‘normative status’ [...] since it proves that gender defines someone’s identity as being part of a power relationship. It is about who someone is and who s/he is in relation to others” (Durin 2018, 4). This concept of otherness offers an interesting point of view to consider the crossdressing element of the play. As the Rosalind/Ganymede role portrays both genders with one single actor, it blurs the line of what the character is and is not, making defining its gender more intricate. Rosalind is by definition ‘Other’ since she is female but as she masquerades as Ganymede, she becomes, at least to the eyes of the other characters, part

of the “Self”. Assuming this male role, she is by default offered a position of power until she abandons the disguise to return to her female existence. She stands somewhere in the middle of this duality, creating in Ganymede a conflicting figure assuming a combination of masculine and feminine traits. This ambiguity as to her gender, even as Ganymede, would place the character as ‘Other’, since she is not male. ‘Other’ includes what is not part of the ‘Self’ and in the eyes of the audience, as a disguised woman, Rosalind is not allowed to enter the ‘Self’. Whereas Celia’s repetitive reminders structure the play and stress the masquerade to the audience, it can also be interpreted as a reminder to the young Rosalind not to get too comfortable in this position of power since it is not the place she usually holds in society.

Rosalind dressed as Ganymede remains a voice for the playwright to question gender roles and stereotypes throughout the entire play. There is another instance of that phenomenon in Act 3 Scene 2 in a conversation between the two cousins discussing Orlando’s poems. Celia is complaining about Rosalind’s interruptions as she tries to explain her story. To that the other young woman, still dressed as a shepherd, retorts that because she is a woman “when [she] think[s], [she] must speak” (AYLI, 3.2.242-243). This comment mocks women’s stereotypical loquacity and their tendency to speak more than needed and sometimes without thinking. This echoes a line later in the play in Act 4 Scene 1 (160-162) that Rosalind says to Orlando, where the young woman blames “female importunacy” (Shakespeare 2006, 254) on their talkative trait. Shakespeare links both sides of the same character with this mocking line that Ganymede retorts to Celia. This comment coming out of his mouth, considering that he does not manage to erase some of Rosalind’s feminine traits, is ironic but stating “do you not know I am a woman?” (AYLI, 3.2.242) strengthens the irony of it all. As Dusinberre notes, the comment “comically reminds Shakespeare’s audience of the boy who plays her” (Shakespeare 2006, 254). There is again this metatheatrical side to the gendered comments, as if the author wanted to make fun of the custom of forbidding acting to women. A few lines later in the same act and scene, Rosalind is again the voice of gender questioning when explaining to Orlando the lectures on the mechanisms of love that she/he apparently had from an uncle. In this example, Ganymede utters the opposite of what we just analysed from Act 3 Scene 2 lines 242, admitting to the thankfulness of not being a woman : “I have heard him read many lectures against it, and thank God I am not a woman, to be touched with so many giddy offences as he hath generally taxed their whole sex withal” (AYLI, 3.2.335-8). With about a hundred

lines' difference the character reverses its gender identity, from declaring himself to be a woman to being thankful not to be one. The irony of the characters real identity is really what the comment is all about, but it also shows how Ganymede plays with the ambiguity of this double status. What comes after this gender identity change betrays again Ganymede's gender bias and stereotypes. When discussing love with Orlando, the disguised shepherd emphasises women's assumed "giddy offences" (AYLI, 3.2.336-337) in situations of love. Juliet Dusinberre develops in her footnote that 'giddy' means "frivolous, irresponsible [but that] the word can also imply 'lecherous'" (Shakespeare, AYLI 2006, 260). The last option would introduce a notion of sexuality, which has been until then absent from the gendered commentary of Ganymede.

On one last instance does Rosalind in her Ganymede disguise play with gender stereotypes and pushes chauvinism to the point of mockery. In Act 4, Rosalind receives a letter from Phoebe in which the young lady complains about her love for Ganymede. Rosalind's reacts to the letter Silvius brings her directly from the shepherdess in the following lines:

I saw her hand - she has a leathern hand,
A freestone-coloured hand - I verily did think
That her old gloves were on, but 'twas her hands.
She has a housewife's hand—but that's no matter.
I say she never did invent this letter.
This is a man's invention, and his hand. [...]
Why, 'tis a boisterous and a cruel style,
A style for challengers. Why, she defies me,
Like Turk to Christian. Women's gentle brain
Could not drop forth such giant-rude invention. (AYLI, 4.3.24-33)

In this passage Rosalind has trouble believing that Phoebe wrote the letter, for the writing and the cruelty of the words cannot, in her eyes, come from a woman. Phoebe represents the idealised pastoral shepherdess which would justify her knowledge of poetry and writing, contrasting with Audrey's rural illiteracy. A letter coming from this young pastoral woman is in this context not impossible but according to Rosalind-Ganymede the contents of the message force the character to think of a "man's invention" (AYLI, 4.3.29). The reason that allegedly point towards this theory is the style of the letter, apparently too cruel for a "woman's gentle brain" (AYLI, 4.3.33). This assumption leans on the assumption that pastoral shepherdesses are gentle, pretty, and devoid of any bad traits. With that idea in mind, it seems impossible for Rosalind to imagine a lady writing such rude and cruel words usually associated with men. Juliet Dusinberre writes in her footnote on the word

‘boisterous’ the existence of an alternative spelling as ‘boysterous’, that would further emphasise the idea of manhood but that would also remind the audience of the boy actor playing Phoebe (Shakespeare 2006, 304).

The storyline and its specificities regarding Rosalind’s masquerade allowed Shakespeare many opportunities to question gender stereotypes. By portraying Rosalind both as a man and a woman, the mirroring of ideas and lines in each half of the character created irony, mocking the absurdity of some stereotypes. If the same person can do it by just changing clothes, how legitimate are those ideas?

3.6. The circular plot in the forest

During the English Renaissance, the pastoral tradition was particularly popular in the form of romances and/or dramas displaying certain specificities plot-wise. These works featured a circular storyline or “plot in which courtly characters leave their accustomed haunts, spend time in the country so as to effect a change in their state, and finally return to a [revitalised] court” (Chaudhuri 2019, xxii).

In this context, the main characters are noble members of the court who escape to the country for a brief period of time before returning to their city life. This contrast between city and country life highlights the authority and predominance of the court. As these courtly characters escape the city for a little while, they keep some of their courtly habits such as the practice of poetry and courtship. These pastoral romances also often portray a shepherdess-like heroine who is actually a noble “foundling” (Chaudhuri 2019, xxii) hidden in a shepherd’s disguise. Plot-wise this comes rather close to the general order of events in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. Courtly characters like Duke Senior and his Lords, Orlando and Adam or the cousins and Touchstone all take refuge in the Forest of Arden, spend some time with the local rural residents and when their situations are magically bettered practically all of them decide to regain the court and leave the country. While living in the forest however, they come across Silvius and Phoebe, two shepherds in the traditional sense of the pastoral tradition, namely an idealised and educated version of rural individuals devoted to love and poetry. Shakespeare exploits this circular happy-ending story by picturing a resolution of the tale’s main problems by the end of the play. Orlando and Rosalind as well as Oliver and Celia are happily married. Duke Frederik realised his mistake and being converted decided to forsake the “pompous court” (AYLI, 5.4.180). Lands, possessions, and the crown have been restored to their rightful owner and

the merry lot can regain the civilised court cured from its perversions. The circular plot also serves another purpose for legitimising the love stories of the characters. During their country retreat, they find themselves in a different environment, far away from the court and its rules. In that context, love flourishes and climaxes in the joined weddings at the end of the play. As it has previously been stated, Shakespeare took advantage of some societal changes to offer happy endings to his characters. The change of perception regarding marriage and sexuality allowed for their literary depictions to evolve but by taking most of the plot outside of a courtly context, the playwright benefited from more freedom to develop his love stories. Through “the movement out of the forest and back into court [he] dramatizes the harmonious alliance between sexual and social life” (Rose 2018, 37), highlighting the undergoing changes and their entry into courtly life.

As You Like It differs strongly from traditional pastoral simply by the portrayal of the forest. The pastoral tradition depicts the countryside as utopian, beautiful and devoid of anything negative or bad. However, the forest of Arden does not get the same treatment and escapes this idealisation. At the beginning of Act 2, when the audience is introduced to the exiled Duke, this same character describes the place to his Lords, and while he is happy to have found safe refuge, his portrayal of the place shows that he is aware of the dangers present in it. He describes the forest of Arden as follows:

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
“This is no flattery. These are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.”
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. (AYLI, 2.1.1-17)

He first insists on the safety of the forest compared to the court, as he is free from the threats of his brother Duke Frederik. But Duke Senior stays aware of the harshness of nature, mentioning the winter's cold and the biting wind. His attitude however shows some

optimism that betrays some idealisation of the place. He refers to the elements as “counsellors” (AYLI, 2.1.10) and pretends to find “good in everything” (AYLI, 2.1.17). Kang quoted Gardner when discussing the idealisation or lack thereof of the forest. Gardner stated that while Duke Senior stayed positive against the adversity of the forest, “Arden [did] not seem very attractive at first sight to the weary escapers from the tyranny of the world [and] Arden [was] not a place where the laws of nature [were] abrogated and roses [were] without their thorns” (Kang 2015, 96). This is the case of Orlando and of the group of disguised shepherds Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone. In both cases, and mostly by Touchstone and Orlando, the image that the Duke has of the forest is questioned and the difficulty of leaving the court for such a hard place is pictured. On their journey in the forest, the two cousins and Touchstone suffer from exhaustion and complain about their desolate states in Act 2 Scene 4. Touchstone goes on to compare both places, declaring “now am I in Arden, the more fool I. When I was at home I was in a better place, but travellers must be content” (AYLI, 2.4.15-17). Unlike the Duke’s positive acceptance of adversity, “[for] the exhausted escapers Rosalind, Touchstone and Celia, it does not look like a welcoming forest and Touchstone even goes to say that the court life is better than that of in the forest” (Kang 2015, 96). The feeling is shared by Orlando and his servant Adam whose experiences upon entering the forest are not pleasant either. The former describes the place as a “desert” (AYLI, 2.7.17), suggesting that up to that point they have met neither human nor animal. Later in the same scene, when Orlando finds Duke Senior’s banquet, he is surprised to be met with civilised courtly men for he had “thought that all things had been savage here” (AYLI, 2.7.108). These text excerpts show that “even if Shakespeare means to create an ideali[s]ed pastoral existence, the unpleasant experience such as danger, poverty, hunger and damage still exist in the forest” (Kang 2015, 96) contrasting with the complete idealisation of the rural environment in the pastoral tradition.

It has been established that the forest represents a pastoral motif and allows the story to unfold. The Forest of Arden has been analysed under different angles, finding metaphors and symbolism to relate to the place. Paul Alpers referred to the biblical aspect present in pastoral literature, despite the paradox of the Golden Age (see footnote page 10). When discussing the forest, the religious motif becomes relevant, as Arden “stems from Judeo-Christian legends, the ‘paradisio terrestre’” (Scoufos 1988, 215). This myth of the “earthly paradise” (Scoufos 1988, 215) is no invention of the pastoral tradition and has been present in literature since its beginnings. This idea of paradisiacal garden has evolved over time

and its pastoral depiction stems from Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, which originally took place in Virgil's idealised pastoral Greece called the golden world (Scoufos 1988, 216). Sannazaro however draws inspiration from other sources such as Dante's *Inferno* to change the mood and introduce the themes of death and frustration, his idea being that "the paradisiacal Arcadia is [...] a hell for the sensitive lover" (Scoufos 1988, 216). The earthly paradise took on a binary representation: "a place of perfection and love or [...] a mental hell" (Scoufos 1988, 216). Shakespeare balances between these two extremes in his depiction of Arden as a place that can become or the other depending on love's influence (Scoufos 1988, 216). If the myth of the 'paradisio terrestre' stems from religion, it bears thus a link with the garden of Eden, which is the bible's interpretation of this earthly paradise. However, "in Shakespeare's Arden we find an Eden made harsh by post-lapsarian³ Nature. The wind is cold, and the deer must be slaughtered to provide food for the inhabitants" (Scoufos 1988, 218) This contrasts with the depiction of the Bible, presenting Eden as follows:

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden (Ryle 1921, 30-32)

Despite the harsher nature of Arden, parallels can be drawn with the original garden of Eden, developing the biblical metaphors of the pastoral tradition. In Act 4 scene 3, Orlando's eldest brother Oliver brings news of his adventures to Rosalind and Celia. He tells the hero story of how his brother saved him in the forest from a lioness.

Under an oak, whose boughs were mossed with age
And high top bald with dry antiquity
A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back; about his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself, (AYLI, 4.3.103-7)

In his retelling of the events that happened offstage, Oliver mentions the presence of a snake under an old dry oak, intensifying the biblical metaphor, "for when a Renaissance poet placed a tree and a snake in the centre of a garden or woods, the Edenic reference was automatically created for his reader or audience" (Scoufos 1988, 221). The oak can be seen as a representation of the Tree of Knowledge, but its state of dryness however is significant, portraying Arden as a harsh and postlapsarian place where the beauty of Eden has been

³ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the term as "of, relating to, or characteristic of the time or state after the fall of humankind described in the Bible" **Source spécifiée non valide.**

disturbed (Scoufos 1988, 216). This echoes the harsh conditions some characters have noticed or complained about at different moments of the play. The snake simultaneously strengthens the Edenic allusion of the setting and calls forth another biblical reference. In the Bible, the animal tempts Adam and Eve disobey God and taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, thus committing the original sin leading to their banishment from the garden of Eden. Orlando meeting a snake under a big oak tree brings strong symbolic images of this temptation in the Bible, signifying that Orlando himself “is approaching severe testing of his moral nature” (Scoufos 1988, 221). In rescuing his brother from both the snake and the lioness despite their issues, he proves his virtue and can then proceed to triumph over love’s games to marry Rosalind. The snake does not however play the same role with Orlando that he did with Adam and Eve.

A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself,
Who with her head, nimble in threats, approached
The opening of his mouth. But suddenly
Seeing Orlando, it unlinked itself
And with intended glides did it slip away
Into a bush (AYLI, 4.3.107-12)

On top of the Edenic reference, the snake bears “all the sexual overtones that the medieval churchmen associated with Satan in the original temptation” (Scoufos 1988, 221). It must also be noted that the playwright refers to the animal as female, alluding to the idea that women were the perpetrators of temptation. As Orlando approaches, the animal flees, pointing towards the real temptress the lioness hidden under a bush. This spontaneous retreat signifies that while “the snake [helped] identify the setting [...] sensual temptation is not the character of this confrontation” (Scoufos 1988, 222). Love is indeed being tested but not in its carnal and sexual sense but rather as the love of all men, including his hateful brother.

4. *Romeo and Juliet* and the sonnet

Simply put, the sonnet is a love poem, but that simplistic definition overlooks the specificities of sonnet-worthy love. The main theme around which the entire tradition of the sonnet is built is love, but the kind of love represented in those poems is quite specific. It takes its roots in Petrarch's poems, who were themselves based on the mediaeval tradition of courtly love. The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines the concept as "a late mediaeval [conventionalised] code prescribing conduct and emotions of ladies and their lovers" (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary). This is undoubtedly a simplified rendering of this formalised love without any mentions to the specific rules and conventions, but it provides context as to the roots of the adorative and obsessive love found in the sonnet. What characterises the sonnet's love is the level of adoration (or even at times obsession) that the poet expresses towards an unattainable, perfect, and beautiful beloved. Nicola Glaubitz writes in his chapter in the *Handbook of English Renaissance Literature*:

Sixteenth-century sonneteers encountered Petrarchism as a tradition of courtly love poetry that sublimated erotic attraction into a spiritual, Neoplatonic and quasi-religious praise of beauty, virtue and truth. The idea of Petrarchism (rather than Petrarch's individual poems) posits a specific constellation of poet, poetic language and an adored woman within an axiological framework. In praising a lady, the poet admires a social and moral superior: her beauty and integrity still ranks below the divine, but directs the poet's vision beyond earthly beauty, kindness and sincerity, and beyond sensual, erotic love towards a transcendental, spiritual and philosophical level. (2019, 447)

The love depicted in sonnets is not the love most people experience in their everyday life but rather a type of devotion. Rémi Vuillemin noted in one article that the names of the praised ladies of the sonnets such as Diana, Stella or Delia implied the pedestal on which these women were placed (2014, 101). There is a quasi-perfect image depicted of those chaste, intelligent, beautiful ladies that are at the centre of the poet's hopes and dreams, but this beloved woman remains unattainable. The Elizabethan sonnet added however a dimension to this adoration that its Italian model failed to depict. The English sonneteers explored though the lover's thoughts the darkness that can be associated to love but that was overlooked in the Petrarchan tradition. The lovesick lover experiences melancholy, frustration, jealousy or going as dark as despair when infatuated with his beloved. The English depiction of love provides a more comprehensive, less idealised, and more

psychologically realistic understanding than the Italian example, as is apparent in Romeo's behaviour.

4.1. The sonnets of the play

While the pastoral tradition did not feature any formal elements, the same cannot be said about the sonnet, which is a genre that displays clear and strict formal constraints. Firstly, a sonnet is a type of poem, which means it must be written in verse. On top of that, as Gascoigne explains in the first printed evidence of the particularities of the English sonnet, the genre demands “fourtene lynes, every line conteyning tenne syllables. The first twelve do ryme in staves of four lines by cross meetre, and the last two ryming together do conclude the whole” (Shrank 2008, 30). The English or Shakespearean sonnet then consists of fourteen lines of ten syllables written in iambic pentameters – string of five iambs each consisting of an unstressed and a stressed syllable - organised in three quatrains (group of four verses) and a couplet (group of two verses). The rhyming pattern differs in the English tradition of the sonnet compared to the Italian roots that originated with Petrarch. As explained in the quote, the pattern is as follows: abab cdcd efef gg, featuring cross rhymes in the quatrains and then the couplet rhyming together. This variant in the rhyming pattern was pioneered by the Earl of Surrey and “became the staple late-Elizabethan sonnet-form, which Shakespeare too was to adopt” (Lever 1956, 46). Formally speaking, in order for a poem to qualify as a sonnet, it must feature the four main characteristics aforementioned, that is fourteen lines of 5 iambic pentameters each, organised in three cross rhyming quatrains and a rhyming couplet.

It is now established that the sonnet is a form of poetry, so the question remains on how it relates to Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. The sonnet has transcended genres and entered the realm of drama in the 16th century, thanks to the revival of Sir Philip Sydney and to the “formative stage [that] the English stage was in” (Barry 1983, 14) at that time. Incorporating sonnets, as well as sonnet themes, to the dramatic stage “offered the fledging drama characters, attitudes and poses for the ‘love game’, as well as a rough kind of plot which moved from the initial wounding by the shaft of the ‘blind god’ through the painful joy of courtship” (Barry 1983, 15). On top of developing the character and their stories, the fixed form of the sonnet presented the perfect syntactic elements to ensure the ideal rhythm of speeches (Barry 1983, 15). Jackson Barry further argues that in the Renaissance a literary genre comprised of a specific form but also of the themes and tropes appropriate to use with

it (1983, 16). This phenomenon was especially relevant in the case of the sonnet and with that in mind it only seems fitting for traditional sonnet personas and stories to incorporate their poetry in their new literary surroundings. This aspect of genre portrayal led to the emergence of plays incorporating references to the sonnet tradition to their texts and plot lines, hybridising two well established literary traditions into a well-balanced piece of drama. In the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth centuries, Shakespeare was about or had already published his Sonnets and was hence familiar with the genre. As Glaubitz notes, “plays and sonnets comment on each other: several Shakespeare plays contain or literally stage sonnets – frequently mocking sonneteering as an aspect of delusionary, unreciprocated infatuation, and poking fun at inept amateur poets” (2019, 446). Barry hints at the relevance of *Romeo and Juliet* as one of those hybrid play, stating that the young Montague “speaks the language of the sonneteer” (Barry 1983, 15) and commenting on the importance of love in the play, especially in the context of the ‘love tragedy’ (Barry 1983, 28).

The ending in death categorises the play undoubtedly as a tragedy but some scholars argue that there is in *Romeo and Juliet* both a comedy and a tragedy. The wedding scene acts as a turning point, “it closes a scene, an act, and maybe an actual genre inside of the play to open up on a new scene in which Mercutio is killed, starting the tragedy” (Durin 2018, 52). It follows the tendency to use “a wedding [as] suitable to close comedies because: ‘it focuses primarily on the experience of the group, as opposed to the individualist, isolationist emphasis of tragedy.’” (Durin 2018, 52).

The significance of the sonnet as a source for the play is however made clear in its first few lines through the poem sung by the chorus as the prologue. The story opens to a traditional fourteen lines sonnet with the traditional English rhyming pattern *abab cdcd efef gg* and the ten syllables per verse relating a summary of what will take place on stage thereafter. Unlike the traditional love sonnet, this one takes a narrative stance and acts as a prologue, setting the scene for the play to come and already hinting at the tragic aspect of the story’s end. The audience is made aware of the ‘grudge’ between Montagues and Capulets, how it affects the city of Verona and how the ‘star-crossed’ lovers’ death will bring this war to an end. Brian Gibbons reflected on the role of this first sonnet in his introduction to the 1980 Arden Edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, concluding that “Shakespeare’s Prologue has the same purpose, attuning the audience to the play’s verbal music and, subliminally, to its sonnet-like symmetries and intensities of feeling and design”

(42-43). It presents the audience with a condensed version of the events to take place, introducing the key themes of love, hate, violence, and death. It provides the setting and the background of the plot but fails to convey the specifics of the play which stay a mystery to be discovered as it unfolds. By summarising the events in this manner, it also overlooks the symbolism and the more avant-garde portrayal of sexuality, love or gender that is present in the play by narrating on a first-degree level the story about to be presented on stage.

Both Gibbons and Barry note the presence of “small-scale, compressed sonnets” (Shakespeare 1980, 43) or of poems lengthwise similar to sonnets in the play but in this analysis only the full-size compositions will be discussed. In the last scene of Act 1 both lovers meet for the first time at the Capulet ball and share a sonnet leading up to their first kiss. This conversation between the young soon-to-be lovers is the second out of the three full-size sonnets in the play and the only with no narrative function. What is particular about this piece compared to the two other full ones recited by the Chorus is its dialogue structure, distributing the verses to two voices without disrupting the poetic harmony.

ROMEO If I profane with my unwortheiest 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.
JULIET 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.
ROMEO Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
JULIET Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
ROMEO O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.
They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
JULIET Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
ROMEO Then move not while my prayer's effect I take. (RJ, 1.5.92-105)

Just like the first full sonnet, this one presents the traditional structure of fourteen lines, English rhyming pattern and the correct number of syllables per verse. This is a notable example of the perfect harmony of the sonnet and the drama, as the structure of the poem also offers the structure for the action and progressive closeness between Romeo and Juliet, from taking her hand at the beginning of the sonnet to the climax of the kiss after the last verse. The lines are shared by both lovers, Romeo taking the first quatrain and Juliet the second. They then proceed to share the last quatrain and the couplet, although the young man speaks more than his beloved by two lines. The reciprocity of their attraction and desire

between the teenagers is represented by this back-and-forth distribution of the verses. Contrary to the usual single voice of the sonnet, this one displays a dialogue-like conversation and some flirtation between the teenagers who crave physical touch. Compared to other sometimes unintentional sonnets, or sonnet-like poems present in drama, the striking aspect of the ‘pilgrim sonnet’ as scholars call it is the intentionality behind it. Jackson Barry notes that this passage “is probably the most daring and effective use of the form in dialogue. [...] It is not merely a speech the length and construction of which was unconsciously influenced by immersion in that genre” (1983, 35). On the contents of this sonnet, there seems to be a strong religious theme, that Barry links to the potential pilgrim attire that the young man would have worn to the masquerade ball (1983, 33). The verses contain a lot of wordplay around ‘hands’ and ‘lips’ indicating Romeo’s “desire to progress from holding her hand to kissing her” (Barry 1983, 33). The young lovers establish a question-and-answer dynamic, reacting to or twisting what the other has said. Romeo flirtatiously transforms the young woman’s “palm to palm is holy palmer’s kiss” (RJ, 1.5.99) by asking to “let lips to what hands do” (RJ, 1.5.102), really making his desire to kiss her crystal clear. Juliet also shows her wit in this ‘match’, inverting his “grant thou” (RJ, 1.5.103) into “though grant” (RJ, 1.5.104), “[teasing] out the opposite conclusion from his saintly metaphor, that saints can give without surrendering themselves” (Shakespeare 2012, 174). She shows some resistance to test him, in accordance with the rules of courtship, but at the end of this sonnet the lovers have kissed, and the storyline has significantly progressed, thriving on the structure that the sonnet provided their dialogue, allowing the action to build up to the climax of the kiss.

The chorus is given one last sonnet at the beginning of Act 2, with again a narrative function, setting the scenes for the new events to come. It reminds the audience of what has happened and what is to come, as it did in the first act. Apart from strengthening the importance of the lyric in the play, René Weis quotes Johnson in his footnote stating that this last sonnet plays little to no role in the story line as it fails to make the story progress and only reiterates what the audience has already seen or what is to be discovered in the coming scenes (Shakespeare 2012, 179). The full-size perfectly rhymed sonnets do not represent the only influence of the genre noticeable in *Romeo and Juliet*. Some traditional sonnet elements have been incorporated in various aspects of the story, whether to endorse or to parody them.

4.2. *The Petrarchan lover?*

The poet in the sonnet takes the role of the lover, enamoured of an unattainable perfect God-like lady, but due to the excessive nature of his infatuation the lover-figure does not appear to have mental stability. This attitude even led to satire and parody in the late sixteenth century, as Rémi Vuillemin explains in his 2014 article “Love with Excess of Heat’: The Sonnet and Petrarchan Excess in the Late Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Periods.”

Coming back to the unstable state of the lover, Vuillemin further describes him as “excessively choleric (hot and dry) or melancholic (cold and dry)” (2014, 102). The lover’s emotions are ever changing, going from one extreme to the other with no sense of balance to be found. One moment he is feeling extreme melancholy regarding the object of his desires, something close to lovesickness, the other he changes his mood completely going to the opposite end of the spectrum, expressing infatuation and admiration for his beloved. As Brian Gibbons explains in his introduction to the 2012 edition of the Arden Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo displays the “appropriate behaviour for lovesick – ‘sick amor’ – young men” (Shakespeare 1980, 9), longing for his beloved in languishing monologues full of melancholy and sadness. This echoes a theory at the time that love was considered an illness, turning the lover pale, weak, feverish et cetera. This has of course since then been discarded by the medical field, but it stays relevant when studying texts from the past. Bill Bynum wrote in 2001 in the British edition of *The Lancet* under the title “Discarded Diagnoses” the following concerning lovesickness:

A diagnosis of lovesickness might conjure up an image of a Victorian teenager, pining on her sofa for a Valentine’s token of love from her prince charming. [...] For doctors since Hippocratic times, lovesickness was not so much about love as about what we would call fixation. Its victims would find themselves unable to rid themselves of obsessive thoughts about some unattainable object. Sleep and appetite would depart, and an accumulation of peccant humours would render the body economy seriously diseased. [...] For the cure for lovesickness was sex. The humoral excesses could be cured by discharge of the reproductive fluids. (2001)

This fixation on the beloved, moodiness and lack of sleep or appetite matches the lover’s state in the sonnet relatively well. The excessive emotions mirrored the excessive use of rhetorical devices to create a perfect environment for parody and satire, which Shakespeare exploited in *Romeo and Juliet*.

When the play opens, the audience meets a melancholic teenager seemingly in love with the unattainable and invisible Rosaline, a young woman of the Capulet's household. Romeo is according to Elizabethan medicine of the sanguine disposition, making him "most capable of love" and [...] therefore most susceptible to the disease" (Cole 1939, 285). He, "moreover, [was] of high birth, [...] young and he [was] given to a life at ease; and such men had a predilection for love-melancholy" (Cole 1939, 285). The young Montague does display some of the physical and psychological signs such as sadness, heaviness, etc. While one might think him enamoured in the young Rosaline to the point of love-sickness, it is worth noting that "unlike many infatuated lovers, he hardly mentions the name of his beloved" (Flaumenhaft 2017, 557). Flaumenhaft argues further that his interest is turned inwards: "He thinks he wants her, but his attention is on Love, on himself, and on his own bad Petrarchan poetry" (Flaumenhaft 2017, 557). By centring on himself and his suffering he accentuates the distance between him and Rosaline which already symbolised by her absence from the stage. His lack of consideration towards her as a human being sets her up further on that God-like pedestal, offering his friends and the playwright many opportunities to comment upon his ridiculously excessive behaviour. The first lines uttered by the young Montague in a conversation with his cousin Benvolio summarise his state of mind quite well.

BENVOLIO: Good morrow, cousin.

ROMEO: Is the day so young? [...]

ROMEO: Ay me, sad hours seem long. [...]

BENVOLIO: What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO: Not having that which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO: In love? [...]

ROMEO: Out of her favour where I am in love. (RJ, 1.1.158-66)

By not knowing the time of day, the audience can assume the sleepless night he just had, and he admits to finding the hours go by slowly. He suffers from his love not being reciprocated by the young Rosaline, to the point of finding no purpose in his life, wandering alone helplessly in his melancholy. According to Cole's symptoms of lovesickness, Romeo displays in this excerpt "sadness, [...] loss of sleep, [...] and sighs" (1939, 286), which are all psychological signs of the disease. Throughout this first conversation, he mentions the presence of "grief" (RJ, 1.1.187), but he also refers to himself as a "sick man" (RJ, 1.1.200), further strengthening the severity of his melancholy. He is described in Act 2 Scene 3 as having "shallow cheeks" (RJ, 2.3.66), matching the paleness associated with lovesick lovers and potentially caused by the lack of appetite they experience. Earlier in the play, as

the Montague men are about to enter the Capulet's house for the masquerade ball, Romeo describes himself as "heavy" (RJ, 1.4.12) and with a "soul of lead" (RJ, 1.4.15), thus justifying his lack of will to dance. To him, carrying his weighted down heart and soul due to his pinning for Rosaline impacts his physical state. This behaviour characterises the beginning of the play, where Romeo is in love with Juliet's cousin. As a matter of fact, "such melancholy as Romeo's was supposed to belong among the accompanying conventions of courtly love; and Romeo's love-sickness suggests that his affair with Rosaline might belong in this tradition" (Cole 1939, 287). As Nicola Glaubitz's quote previously established, the sonnet used some codes of courtly love, "creating a productive tense between the ritualised formality of courtly love poetry, philosophical contemplation and the exploration of inwardness" (2019, 445). However, "the antithetical nature of Petrarchism is critiqued by Shakespeare's poetics in *Romeo and Juliet*, as the play frames Petrarchan love as archaic, occasionally hyperbolic, and ultimately doomed to the machinations of fate" (Ruzic 2013, 43).

Although Romeo displays some self-reflexiveness, Benvolio and Mercutio contribute the most to the questioning of Petrarch's and the sonnet's portrayal of love by "[exposing] the conventionality of Romeo's motivations" (Ruzic 2013, 45). By exposing the absurdity of his behaviour, Romeo's entourage establishes the archaism of Petrarchan love in its strictest sense. Benvolio and Mercutio's roles in regard to Romeo's position as a lover are summarised in the following passage:

As the roles of the play's fictional critics emphasise the disparity between Petrarchan and actualised (that is, requited and consummated) desire, they also help acknowledge, through their use of love-as-sickness metaphor, how love's progress is threatened by illness, decay, and ultimately, death. (Ruzic 2013, 46)

This artificial portrayal of Romeo's feelings ends as he meets Juliet. When discussing love-sickness, Cole indicated that the treatment was "to show the victim that his beloved [was] ugly" (1939, 287) and by bringing him to the masquerade ball, Romeo's friends tried to have him "examine other beauties" (RJ, 1.1.226). Their plan proves successful since he forgets Rosaline as soon as he sees Juliet. In many ways do both young ladies differ in their behaviour but also in their presence on stage, which contributed to Romeo's swift change of heart. Juliet's role in Romeo's character development is introduced in the following passage:

Romeo's gravitation towards Juliet signals his 'enlightenment'; that is, his progression from mere Petrarchan embodiment, to fully-realised character. Juliet enables this transformation by breaking down the most prohibitive barrier of Petrarchism, distance, by urging Romeo to touch her. (Ruzic 2013, 50)

The defining element of the Petrarchan love is distance, which disappears in Romeo's relationship with Juliet, thus curing him of his adoration for Rosaline but also making him evolve as a character. In the changes he experiences after meeting the young Capulet, he abandons the unrequited artificial love he has for Rosaline in pursuit of another kind of love with Juliet. Petrarchism is not however totally absent from the star-crossed lovers' story, since "Romeo encounters Juliet only through Petrarchan device; he is lured to the ball by Rosaline's presence, and though he transfers his affections to Juliet, she too is initially a 'strange' or distant figure, Romeo referring to her as 'Yonder lady' [I, v, 46]" (Ruzic 2013, 50). This sudden change of feelings offers the possibility to analyse the lover figure on an emotional and textual level. From an emotional standpoint, Iben Englehardt Andersen comments the young Montague's behaviour in the following excerpt:

It might be unnecessarily cynical to point out that Romeo, with the emotional gravity and inconstancy of any lecherous teenager, has just been convinced about the incurability of his love for Rosaline. Before he meets Juliet, Romeo is absorbed in his unrequited desire for Rosaline, whom, he says, no one can 'teach [him] to forget'. His suffering, however, proves exaggerated as he immediately falls for Juliet. (2020, 1704)

There is indeed a noticeable change in the young man's behaviour after meeting Juliet, as if suddenly cured of all sadness. The Friar comments on these changes, noting the rapidity of it all:

Is Rosaline, that thou love so dear,
So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts but in their eyes.[...]
Lo, here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit
Of an old tear that is not washed off yet. (RJ, 2.3.62-72)

He notes that some tears are not washed yet, and he already loves another. To him it shows the inconsistency of men and how they love what they can see, thus Romeo casting the invisible Rosaline out in favour of the beautiful Juliet he has kissed. In Friar Laurence and Romeo's argument, the young man refers to "burying love" to which the priest answers "Not in a grave / To lay one in, another out to have" (RJ, 2.3.79-80). Despite strengthening the idea that the young lover changes his affections quickly, it also refers to the tragic

ending where both Romeo and Juliet's corpses lay in Capulet's tomb. These lines offer another example of the association made between death and love in the play, in this case referring to "burying one's love interest" in the sense of forgetting the person and the relationship.

Beyond the behavioural and emotional changes after the masquerade ball, René Weis argues the textual differences in his pre- and post-Juliet lines:

Up to the moment where he sees Juliet, Romeo's language of love consists of strings of self-conscious oxymorons, lifeless clichés incapable of expressing true emotion, mere verbiage of melancholy suitable for moping in groves or sycamores (appropriate behaviour for lovesick – 'sick amor' – young men). (2012, 9)

These two distinct love affairs offer the possibility to stage the lover's behaviour in two different ways, a traditional courtly and melancholic version and a "more 'natural' passion" (Cole 1939, 288).

On top of assuming the sonneteer's lovesick behaviour, the young Montague assumes other traits of the sonnet such as its intricate use of language. Once he has made his sadness known to his cousin in Act 1 Scene 1, he goes on complaining about love and its cruelty. For that he usurps the language of sonneteers and overloads his lines with intricate rhetorical structures.

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,
Should without eyes see pathways to his will. [...]
Here's much to do with hate, but more to do with love.
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything of nothing first create,
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep that is not what it is.
This love feel I that feel no love in this. (RJ, 1.1.169-80)

The excerpt feels artificial, with its overuse of oxymorons, and proves highly unlikely to convey real feelings. He uses themes that already play a role in the play such as "feather of lead [and] sick health" (RJ, 1.1.178), echoing heavy lovesick state, or "heavy lightness" (RJ, 1.1.176) and "still-waking sleep" (RJ, 1.1.179) referring to his sensitive eyes after yet another sleepless night pinning for his beloved Rosaline. In this passage of ten lines discussing his feelings for Rosaline, he uses over ten oxymorons, averaging at minimum one per verse, which overdoes it and undermines its emotional potential. Rémi Vuillemin

notes however that “what allows Shakespeare to contrast Romeo’s false love for Rosaline with his true love for Juliet, is precisely the repetition and the combination of the oxymorons, rather than the oxymorons themselves” (2014, 113). The heavy-handed use of these rhetorical devices such as the oxymorons or the apostrophe ‘O’ “is very effective in picturing Romeo’s love at this point in the play – and is therefore a powerful tool of characterisation” (Vuillemin 2014, 113). It places the young Montague inside a literary tradition and allows the audience to easily associate these lines to Rosaline. Furthermore, this excerpt illustrates the Petrarchan poet’s volatility portrayed by changes in his tone and attitude. Ruzic argues that:

The piece exemplifies the cluttered motives of the distant lover through its use of Petrarchan oxymorons [...], helping reflect the illogicality of Romeo’s predicament. His love is characterised by its distance from the object of desire, rather than proximity, and enabled through his idealisation of a character, Rosaline, who is physically absent from the play. Gayle Whittier calls Romeo’s sonnet “misshapen [and] juvenile,” observing that his linguistic excess “reveals emotional deficiency; perhaps his true confession comes last: ‘I...feel no love in this.’” (Whittier, 1989, p.29) Whittier highlights the artifice behind Romeo’s Petrarchan monologue, for it is just that: it is not dialogue with Rosaline. (Ruzic 2013, 47)

Distance created desire and need, giving the young lover ample time to think and imagine his beloved to the point of adoration. The scenario with Juliet is however different, since even though there is the element of secrecy the young lovers’ relationship moves at a fast pace, not allowing him time to fantasise. Stressing the young Montague’s youth as an extenuating circumstance of his over-the-top behaviour further emphasises the absurdity of the Petrarchan lover’s behaviour by comparing it to teenage melodramatic habits.

The parallel between Romeo and Petrarch’s tradition is further strengthened by the text itself comparing the two men. While he already displays for Rosaline attitudes calling forth the sonnet conventions, Mercutio explicitly mentions the Italian sonnet, reinforcing the latent association: “Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was a kitchen wench – marry, she had a better love to berhyme her” (RJ, 2.4.38-41). By mentioning both the poet and his unattainable beloved, Mercutio summons the Petrarchan tradition, causing the audience to interpret Romeo’s love for Rosaline with this framework. The direct reference to Petrarch acknowledges his contribution to the materials of the play, although Shakespeare “transcend[s] the limitations of Petrarchan narrative [by elevating it]

beyond a 'static' [...] representation" (Ruzic 2013, 43). Comparing Romeo to Petrarch and Rosaline to Laura establishes the direct influence of the sonnet tradition on the play but also emphasises all the instances where Shakespeare distanced himself from the Petrarchan tradition. Against the dull, artificial and intricate love complaints for his first beloved associated with the current literary codes, the audience is quickly presented with a different depiction of love "dominated by 'natural' physical passion [with the Juliet material]" (Cole 1939, 285). Cole further develops this argument in the following quote:

But, when he meets Juliet, the bright sun of her beauty dispells his "vapourings" about love, and he plunges into a passion that shakes his very soul. Thus Miss Pearson seems to be correct in her assumption that, in this play, Shakespeare breaks the influence of conventional love and replaces it with a more "natural" passion. (1939, 288)

Juliet cures Romeo of his melancholy but their love story progresses so fast he does not have time to pine for her and "develop the love malady again" (Cole 1939, 287). While the discourse used to adore Rosaline is artificial and extravagant, the conversations he has with and about Juliet do not leave the same impression. While they do play with words and wordiness, as the "pilgrim sonnet" of their first encounter in Act 1 Scene 5 demonstrates, their "communication itself can be read as pubertal, rash, physical, and, indeed, 'unholy'" (Engelhardt Andersen 2020, 1704), contrasting with the idealised and platonic references to Rosaline. In the Arden edition of the play, René Weis further discusses the existence of this adolescent subjectiveness by noting that:

[the] significant role for their bodies [written into the lover's courtship almost from the start]. Eyes, cheeks, hands and above all lips and kissing give physical sustenance to their love and ground the lofty strain of [idealisation] that permeates Romeo's cosmic conceits in particular. (2012, 11)

This importance of the physical presence and of the physical manifestation of love contrast with the relationship Romeo had with Rosaline since their encounters were limited and not remotely physical. In comparison, with Juliet, "their desire is of the moment, and it takes place not before, but in and as their flirty interaction" (Engelhardt Andersen 2020, 1704). Iben Engelhardt Andersen goes on to note that their relationship "does not fit neatly into our romanticising social narrative about true, innocent and reproductive love" (2020, 1704).

Although both love affairs have vastly different effects on Romeo, they are not as diametrically opposed as one would assume at first glance. In both cases, he chooses a girl

from the rival family the Capulets, going against the custom of arranged marriages. Cole elaborates stating that “in Elizabethan England [...] a young man married either for money or to get a legal heir [and] such affairs were arranged by the father or next of kin” (1939, 288). Whether he would have married Rosaline or Juliet, the elephant in the room stays the same. Given the rivalry between the two families, the Montagues would never have approved. These two relationships can also be compared in terms of their endings, which in both cases are unhappy. Cole refers to both as “unconventional” and notes that “although [the second] progresses to the point of marriage, it achieves a yet more unhappy, not to say tragic end” (1939, 288).

In his infatuation for Rosaline, Romeo displays the sonneteer’s behaviour and language but his demeanour changes with his second love interest. By contrasting the excessive and unreal infatuation to a more natural, although very fast-paced love, Shakespeare allows the audience to notice the artificiality and excess of the Petrarchan tradition.

4.3. The Petrarchan beloved?

In the previously quoted excerpt from Nicola Glaubitz, he mentions the platonic quality of the sonnet, striving to move beyond the erotic aspect of love. This is however a feature that Shakespeare used in *Romeo and Juliet* to question the sonnet convention. At the beginning of the play, Romeo displays the traditional lovesickness for his unattainable beloved Rosaline, a character that never appears on stage, but his entire behaviour changes when he meets Juliet and falls immediately in love with the young Capulet. The two young women allow the playwright to contrast two different versions of love and of the lover’s behaviour.

The striking point when analysing *Romeo and Juliet* is the significant presence of sexual innuendos and allusions. Considering the era in which the play was written and its association with the platonic sonnet tradition, it comes as rather unexpected, although the Bard is known to test the limits of censure. Iben Engelhardt Andersen described the play as “replete with sex talk” (2020, 1699) and designated Mercutio and the Nurse as two particularly suggestive characters but other roles in the play are also given bawdy lines. As there are so many instances of suggestive language, this analysis is a non-exhaustive list with the sole purpose of highlighting the trend of sexuality around main characters of the play. In the story, the young Montague falls in love with two young ladies, both related to his family’s sworn enemies the Capulets.

While Juliet is one of the two main characters, Rosaline is never seen nor heard and plays only a minor role as Romeo becomes enamoured with her cousin Juliet quite early in the play. The absent young woman is said to display significantly different attitudes than the daughter of Lord Capulet, especially when it comes to love and sexuality. Rosaline upholds the Petrarchan tradition of the perfect unattainable beloved while Juliet is presented as a lover as well as a beloved, breaking with the sonnet's tradition of a woman as a desirable object. As Romeo moves on to love Juliet, the play also shifts, distancing itself with some aspects of the Petrarchan tradition. Metaphorically, the young Montague's choice of a more modern and more invested beloved represents Shakespeare's critic of some traditional aspects of the sonnet in favour of newer representations of love. The young women's vision of sexuality is also unquestionably different. Clayton G. MacKenzie says of Rosaline that she "correlates romantic engagement with danger or, perhaps more precisely, she correlates sex with danger" (2007, 24). When Romeo describes her to his cousin Benvolio, he states that she will "not be hit with Cupid's arrow", that she has "Dian's wit" and in her chastity she "lives uncharmed [from love's weak childish bow]" (RJ, 1.1.206-209). From this image that he paints of her it becomes clear that she is not interested in taking part in the games of love and the reference to Diana further strengthens the idea of chastity. The goddess Diana, as MacKenzie explained, "was a familiar icon of maidenhood in Renaissance art and literature" (2007, 24). She really represents the beautiful but beyond reach love interest of the Petrarchan sonneteers, whereas Juliet's character takes a different approach to the role of the beloved. Juliet as a voice, compared to her cousin and she builds a subjectivity of her own as her love for the Romeo develops.

In their article "Juliet's desire", Laura B. Vogel and Edwina J. Cruise note that "by conceiving Juliet as a desiring young woman, rather than merely a desirable object, Shakespeare deliberately upends the tradition of Petrarchan romance" (2018, 3). Although she is only a teenager of barely thirteen years, she has sexual thoughts and desires that she expresses throughout the play, contrary to Rosaline who rejects sexuality and love altogether. Her active role in the love story is made clear in Act 2 Scene 2 during the balcony scene, when she interrupts Romeo's monologue. The young man is wandering in the Capulet's orchard, talking to himself when suddenly the young woman answers from her balcony. Romeo notices her presences and states that "she speaks" (RJ, 2.2.25), urging her to speak again. Vogel and Cruise note that "his statement underlines Shakespeare's departure from the conventional sonnet dynamic, where the female beloved, the object of

adoration, is a mute recipient” (2018, 3). Juliet assumes from this moment onwards both the roles of lover and beloved, contrasting with the position given to the absent Rosaline.

The contrast in Juliet’s and Rosaline’s depictions highlights the gendering of literature and its efforts to silence women. There are a set of key instances in which Juliet is vocal about her feelings for Romeo and about what she wants to happen between them. She is the most direct about her sexual wants in a soliloquy in her bedroom in Act 3 Scene 2 while waiting for Romeo to consummate their marriage. In about thirty lines “her thoughts are uninhibited and bold and sexual” (MacKenzie 2007, 26). This scene places the young woman as ready for her imminent jump into womanhood, as she is pictured reflecting on her approaching introduction to sexuality. In her soliloquy she informs the audience that she is eager for night to come, characterising it as “love performing” (RJ, 3.2.5) and urging the day to finally end so she can be with her Romeo. MacKenzie argues that to Juliet, “darkness is no more than the veil that allows unseen lovers to fumble their way joyously to sexual coupling” (2007, 27). The importance of night is central to this speech, as the word is featured eleven times in the thirty lines of the monologue. She continues her mental imagination of sex by comparing the loss of one’s virginity with a “match played for a pair of stainless maidenhood” (RJ, 3.2.12-13). Vogel and Cruise explain this metaphor by presenting sex as “a physical contest in which she will lose her maidenhead [and] Romeo will lose [his] as well; and both lovers will win” (2018, 5). Her obsession with night and its association with sexuality lingers in this next part, that in its exuberance betrays her youthfulness:

Come, gentle night; come, loving black-browed night,
Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun. (RJ, 3.2.20-25)

Suggesting the idea of cutting one’s lover into little stars in order to beautify night represents the complex thoughts and ideas travelling through the young woman’s head in this scene. This really shows that a part of the young woman still thinks like a child, unable to clearly express her feelings without resorting to the aggressive imagery of tearing one’s loved one into little pieces. One could also sense an expression of her jealousy and her possessiveness over the young man. She wants him all to herself and if she is not there anymore then no one can have him either. This idea of them being the other one’s one and

only love echoes the tragic ending where metaphorically what Juliet expresses materialises in the form of their double suicide. Line 21 foreshadows the development of the play by mentioning Juliet's death but as Vogel and Cruise pointed out, the verb dying can have a different meaning, a sexual meaning:

This phrase is, in part, a portent of Juliet's death, but Shakespeare's audiences were also familiar with "dying" as a slang metaphor for orgasm. Here, in bursts of light, she imagines the exhilaration and expansiveness of a woman's sexual climax. Juliet's vision that her orgasm will coincide with Romeo being cut into stars anticipates an explosive merger with her lover which contains simultaneously both desire and aggression. (Vogel and Cruise 2018, 5)

The use of 'die' is but one of the many instances where love, sexuality and death are associated in the play. Shakespeare portrays the renewal of "the bonds between sex and morbidity" (MacKenzie 2007, 22) in different forms, which will be discussed once the current aspect is taken care of. Going back to Juliet's soliloquy her childlike innocence is further reinforced by the last lines but paradoxically she also underlines her eager desire for her forthcoming discovery of sexuality:

O, I have bought the mansion of a love
But not possessed it, and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoyed. So tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them. (RJ, 3.2.26-31)

She compares a desire for sexuality to the eagerness of a child waiting to wear new clothes, in a way merging both halves of her identity, the budding desirous young woman and the child she was until she met Romeo. This comparison with an eager child simultaneously symbolises the transition into adulthood that the young woman of thirteen experiences as the story unfolds. The innocence she still possesses is what sets her apart from other young heroines. Her youth is what makes her relationship with Romeo possible, as "she has not yet been carefully taught her culture's patriarchal dictates about female behaviour in courtship sex and marriage" (Vogel and Cruise 2018, 1). Had she been following the rules of dating and romance the storyline would have gone differently and she would have probably ended up marrying County Paris like her parents wished her to. In this new-found identity, she finds the confidence to defy her father, rejecting the idea that he can make decisions for her and taking it upon herself to ensure that she is satisfied with her future.

4.4. *Sexuality at the hands of secondary characters*

The vestige of Juliet's childishness contrasting with her new identity as a sexually active young woman offers the perfect transition to discuss a bawdy character directly in the young Capulet's entourage, her Nurse. This woman, having lost her child in infancy, became Juliet's wetnurse and as her young protégé aged, her confidante. When looking at Shakespeare's heroines one notices that they very often have another young woman to confide in, however Juliet has no one and thus her Nurse takes on that role as well.

Regarding sexuality this character makes a lot of allusions and plays an active role in the realisation of the young lovers' relationship. Even though she is female, she does not shy away from bawdy jokes, an attitude probably more accepted as she is part of the lower classes and thus does not follow the same rules of respectability. In a conversation with Lady Capulet about Juliet's age and the courtship of County Paris who wishes to marry her, the Nurse tells a story about the young woman's childhood, in which sexuality was already talked about. As Juliet was only three years old, she toppled over and bumped her forehead, to which the Nurse's husband jokingly added:

NURSE "Yea," quoth my husband. "Fall'st upon thy face?
Thou wilt fall backward when thou comest to age,
Wilt thou not, Jule?" It stinted and said "Ay." (RJ, 1.3.60-63)

What he means by this is that when she is all grown up, she will have learned that to have sex a woman must lay on her back, or as he put it 'fall backwards'. Iben Engelhardt Andersen commented on the last line of this excerpt, in which the Nurse mentions that "Juliet unknowingly answered 'yes' to the joke about her future as a sexually mature and submitting woman" (2020, 1695). This couple thinks a lot about sex and in this case in a way sexualised the behaviour of a three-year-old, but this also shows "the pleasurable view of sexuality that she and her husband imparted to young Juliet" (Vogel and Cruise 2018, 2). The Nurse ends this conversation at the end of Act 1 Scene 3 by strengthening this positive image of sexuality that she passes down to her young protégée, encouraging her to "seek happy nights to happy days" (RJ, 1.3.106), or as Vogel and Cruise translated it, "[urging] her to find sexual bliss" (2018, 3). This also creates a strong contrast with Juliet's mother, who in this conversation paints a different picture of marriage, paying no attention to happiness and focusing only on "economic self-advancement" (Vogel and Cruise 2018, 3). This echoes the evolution of the perception of love and marriage discussed in the analysis of *As You Like It*. In the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries the view of marriage

evolved, leading to “a more realistic, multifaceted sensibility, which, while retaining much of the scepticism about erotic love [...], nevertheless begins to conceive of affectionate marriage with great respect as the basis of an ordered society” (Rose 2018, 13). Shakespeare portrayed these social changes less prominently in *Romeo and Juliet* compared to the role they play in *As You Like It*, but nonetheless at least for a fleeting moment the young heroes engage in a love marriage.

In a way Juliet has two mothers in the story, a biological one and a surrogate one, who have different life philosophies and opinions, especially when love is concerned. One portrays the old view of marriage as “a collective decision of family and kin, not an individual one [where] property and power were the predominant issues [to be negotiated]” (Rose 2018, 16), in this case the arranged union of young Juliet to County Paris, while the other celebrates the importance of individual choice in this matter. The choice Juliet makes is however tainted with a tragic element, as going against her parents’ wishes and marrying the enemy leads to the young lovers’ deaths. Was it the playwright’s way to emphasise the everlasting importance of “parental consent to a match” (Rose 2018, 31), in other words to warn young people of the limits of these social changes? When it comes to her love life, Lady Capulet is not supportive of her love for Romeo whereas the Nurse helps make this relationship possible, as the next paragraphs will illustrate.

Later in the play, after the two lovers have met, the Nurse is sent to deliver a message to the young Montague: She leaves the security of the female confinement of the house and “penetrates a male space, which is the street” (Durin 2018, 83), as her young protégée cannot leave without permission. She stumbles upon him and his friends Benvolio and Mercutio, the latter of the two wounding her up with this allusion, leading to her retaliating as soon as he left the scene.

NURSE I pray you, sir, what saucy merchant was this that was so full of his ropery?

ROMEO A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month.

NURSE An ‘a speak anything against me, I’ll take him down, an ‘a were lustier than he is, and twenty such jacks. [...] (*She turns to Peter, her man*). And thou must stand by too and suffer every knave to use me at his pleasure.

PETER I saw no man use you at his pleasure. If I had, my weapon should quickly have been out. [...]

NURSE Now, afore God, I am so vexed that every part about me quivers. Scurvy knave! Pray you, sir, a word. And, as I told you, my young lady bid me inquire you out. (RJ, 2.4.139-158)

Most of the sexually allusive comments in this excerpt are directed at Mercutio, as a response to his bawdy behaviour towards the nurse. She first calls him a 'saucy merchant', meaning "imprudent fellow" (Shakespeare 2012, 220) but the adjective 'saucy' has in modern informal British English a meaning like 'bawdy', namely humorously sexually suggestive. Whether this meaning existed already at the time of writing the play is difficult to say but to a modern audience this word for sure strengthens the suggestiveness of the conversation. She continues with the term 'ropery' which according to René Weis is based on rope, a slang word for penis and may in this case mean intercourse (2012, 220). 'So full of his ropery' can thus mean sexually suggestive or even proud to have had intercourse recently. Romeo follows the Nurse in her bawdy attitude by using ambiguous terms such as 'stand', which suggestively refers to an erection. This ambiguity is not missed by the Nurse who exploits it in her next mockery. In lines 144-145 she implies that she would be able to make him lose his erection by more vigorous sex than he bargained for" (Shakespeare 2012, 220), placing herself openly and without shame as a very sexual woman. The excerpt continues with the same words understood and meant differently by two different characters. Both the Nurse and Peter utter the expression 'use at someone's pleasure' but their understandings of this phrase are vastly different. While the Nurse means it as 'making fun of someone', Peter on the other hand exploits the bawdy double meanings of 'use' and 'pleasure', the latter being heavily associated with sex. The sexual meaning of the expression is further emphasised by the use the word of 'weapon' in his reply, another term with a bawdy double meaning. As René Weis explains in his footnotes of the Third Series Arden Edition of the play, Peter understood the Nurse's "use me at his pleasure" as "[having or attempting to] have intercourse with [someone]" (2012, 221), to which he talks about his weapon as a way to tell her that he would have protected her had that been the case. In the context of this conversation however the use of 'weapon' takes on another meaning, namely the one of penis, turning Peter's attempt at being nice into a funny sexually suggestive comment.

In Act 2 Scene 5, as her Nurse finally return from her errand to the young Montague, the young woman cannot contain her excitement and her caretaker really plays with this eagerness. The older woman comments on the girl's palpable desire, asking about her 'hotness', hinting and teasing her protégée about her sexual feelings. In Line 63 and after letting the young girl stew a little bit, she finally announces what is to come for Juliet, namely her union with Romeo at Friar Laurence's cell. In her typical fashion the Nurse

adds a sexual dimension to her words, stating that young Juliet “shall bear the burden soon at night” (RJ, 2.5.76), not only implying taking responsibility for her decision but also, as René Weis notes, “[experiencing] the weight of Romeo’s body during love-making” (Shakespeare 2012, 229). In that same speech she further strengthens her role as accomplice by stating that she will “fetch a ladder by the which [Romeo] must climb [in Juliet’s bedroom] when it is dark” (RJ, 2.5.73-74). The Nurse offers to Shakespeare a great opportunity to break the gendered stigma around sexuality and women by portraying her as proud and unashamed of her sexual desire, an attitude she seems to have passed down to Juliet, as the young woman appears to have no issues sharing her desires and wants for her relationship with Romeo. The contrast between Lady Capulet and the Nurse when it comes to love, relationships and sexuality forces the questioning of social class. Is the Nurse more inclined to play with innuendos since she is from the lower classes? Pauline Durin comments on this idea by relating it to the influence of patriarchy on what women are allowed to express and how they should behave. She argues the following:

Knowing that patriarchy is about hierarchy, based mostly on sexist content, but also on class or race differences, it is particularly relevant that the Nurse, whose mere status indicates class-difference, who is a woman, should be the only one who voices her opinions and enjoys freedom of movement. One may argue that her lower class status leads her to have more liberty, but I would rather say that she takes that freedom herself (2018, 82)

She leaves room for debate, but it does seem possible that due to their positions, women of the higher classes had their behaviour carefully controlled by rules and customs. Working women or women of the lower classes lived a different life that could make such guidelines obsolete. Whether she draws her confidence and cheekiness from her position or from another source, the Nurse remains an undoubtedly significant character in Juliet’s development but on a larger level as the depiction of a sexually freed und unashamed lady.

At this point, the only significant character left to discuss when it comes to sexuality is a friend of Romeo’s, Mercutio his best friend. This man is among others loyal and witty, but he is also extremely sexually suggestive, at times on the verge of obscene. He uses his wit to turn other people’s words into erotic comments and pokes fun at his friend Romeo for his platonic one-sided love for Rosaline. In Mercutio’s first appearance in Act 1 Scene 4, the audience witnesses a conversation where Romeo’s friends attempt to convince him to go to the Capulet’s masquerade where he might catch a glimpse of his beloved Rosaline. Little did he know at the time that he would soon forget her in favour of the young Juliet.

In his dialogue with Romeo, Mercutio manages as he usually does, to turn the innocent infatuated remarks of his friend into inappropriate images and ideas.

MERCUTIO You are a lover. Borrow Cupid's wings
And soar with them above a common bound.
ROMEO I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.
MERCUTIO And to sink in it should you burden love—
Too great oppression for a tender thing.
ROMEO Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
Too rude, too boist'rous, and it pricks like thorn.
MERCUTIO If love be rough with you, be rough with love.
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down. — (RJ, 1.4.17-28)

Clayton MacKenzie explains this excerpt as follows:

When Mercutio urges Romeo to borrow Cupid's wings he has in mind the sexual fulfilment of Romeo's amorous ambitions. Romeo, in contrast, expresses a wariness of love: an acknowledgement of his own wounded state as one "too sore enpierced with [Cupid's] shaft", and a generalised fear of love's brutal demeanour. His misgivings are all too readily punned into sexual innuendo by his companion. The burden of love becomes the burden of the lover on top of his tender partner; the thorns of love are reconfigured into an image of erection finding satisfaction in rough sexual union. (2007, 25)

This really shows the quality of wit that Shakespeare wrote into this character, making him use his repartee to incorporate more suggestiveness and innuendos in the play, thus further distancing himself from the platonic quality of the traditional sonnet convention. But Mercutio does not stop at this scene, his sexualising wit follows him throughout the play.

His next instance of suggestive talk happens in the same act as part of his 'Queen Mab speech', a monologue of about forty lines, in which he talks about the little fairy Queen Mab who fills lover's brains with wild fantasies. According to Mercutio she plays a role in the making of love and sexuality:

O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes [...]
Over men's noses as they lie asleep. [...]
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love; [...]
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are. [...]
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.
This is she— (RJ, 1.4.53-94)

As he explains to his friends, this fairy, as reported by Mercutio, plants the seeds of love in lovers' minds at night and inspires virgins to think of sexuality, preparing them for their lives as wives. The changes in young ladies due to Queen Mab's intervention that he portrays echoes the behaviour of young Juliet later in the play. In her soliloquy in Act 3 Scene 2 Juliet expresses her readiness to partake in love's amorous rites, betraying the fairy's involvement in preparing her for married life. Mercutio himself notices her work in Romeo when the love-sick lover talks about having "dreamt a dream tonight" (RJ, 1.4.49) and that he believes that dreamers "in bed asleep [...] they do dream things true" (RJ, 1.4.53). René Weis comments in his footnote that "we never learn what Romeo's dream was about other than that it was a foreboding of things to come, hence his anxiety about the Capulet's party" (2012, 161).

Mercutio continues his lewd comments, this time at the expense of Rosaline in Act 2 Scene 1. In this instance Romeo is absent and thus cannot defend his beloved, or former beloved at this point, from the obscene jokes his friend makes. Romeo's cousin Benvolio and Mercutio are discussing the young lover's behaviour, noting that Romeo is gone and mistakenly thinking he discretely decided to head home. In an attempt to force him out of his hiding place, Mercutio proceeds to "conjure" (RJ, 2.1.7) him by invoking his beloved Rosaline. He describes her physical appearance but also mentions her sexuality by progressively moving his description up from the foot to the thigh and finally to her "demesnes" (RJ, 2.1.20), in other words to her genitals. This description contrasts with "Romeo's sacralised rhetoric regarding his 'chaste' saint [in Act 1 Scene 1]" (Ruzic 2013, 48) by creating a bodily description of the invisible Rosaline. This echoes the importance of the physical presence that will develop between the young Montague and his second love interest. By rejecting the lyric description of the unattainable beloved of Act 1, Rosaline is viewed from a different angle, away from Romeo's devotion:

Mercutio's description undermines Petrarchism's spiritual elevation of the beloved figure, and produces a woman of flesh, the target of Romeo's profane lust and blind Cupid's arrow. Mercutio does not represent the unification of Rosaline's material existence and Romeo's idealisation; rather, his language thwarts Romeo's desire for reciprocation and consummation with the beloved. Mercutio produces a dismembered account of the beloved's individual parts, which Whittier observes,

“intended to reclaim Romeo to himself and the "real" world, [and] exposes a poetry that has forgotten the flesh”. (Ruzic 2013, 48)

As Mercutio overtly plays with innuendos and desires, teasing Romeo on his lack of them matches the character perfectly well. The importance of the body as a tool for love will later become a central part of the discourse surrounding Romeo and Juliet’s relationship since they express and act on their physical desires. By returning Rosaline to a body the way Juliet will be represented, it brings the unattainable beloved down from her pedestal and restore her to her original condition of young woman of age to marry. By destituting her of her adorative privileges, Romeo’s discourse towards the young woman loses its relevance, further highlighting the archaic Petrarchan presence hovering over him. Benvolio’s answer to Mercutio’s sexualising of Rosaline, “An if he hear thee thou wilt anger him” (RJ, 2.1.22) says a lot about Romeo’s attitude towards obscene comments and the expression of sexual desire. Throughout the play, while Juliet is vocal about her wants and needs, the young Montague does not partake much in the sexual aspect of their love discourse.

Coming back to the excerpt in question, Romeo’s best friend refers to “my gossip Venus” (RJ, 2.1.11), revealing a form of intimacy with the goddess of love. René Weis first explains the meaning of ‘gossip’ in this context as ‘familiar friend’ quoting the Oxford English Dictionary and then argues that “the playful intimate reference to Venus implies that Mercutio excels at venery” (2012, 182).

He continues his lewd mocking of Romeo and Rosaline with the following words, acting as an answer to Benvolio’s comment on line 22:

This cannot anger him. ’Twould anger him
To raise a spirit in his mistress’ circle
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had laid it and conjured it down.
That were some spite. My invocation
Is fair and honest. In his mistress’ name,
I conjure only but to raise up him. (RJ, 2.1.23-29)

René Weis (2012, 183) offers the explanation and glossaries to reveal the suggestiveness of Mercutio’s words. He argues that what would anger Romeo is not what he previously said but what he is about to say in lines 23 to 27. The verbs ‘raise’ and ‘stand’ both refer to the male erection. With the words ‘mistress’ circle’ Mercutio alludes to Rosaline’s vagina. With the first three lines of the excerpt, he explains that what would anger Romeo is if they

were to conjure someone else's erection in his beloved's genitals and letting it stay erect until "she had laid it and conjured it down" (RJ, 2.1.26), in other words until the young woman managed to make the penis shrink by way of ejaculation. As the scholar wrote in his footnote "for somebody else to possess Rosaline would cause Romeo upset" (2012, 183). Mercutio believes that his comment is unproblematic as with his words he only wants to bring Romeo forth from his hiding place, but he at the same time alludes to the young man's erection in the presence of his beloved. His lewds allusions continue in the following excerpt from the same scene:

Now will he sit under a medlar tree
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.
O Romeo, that she were, O, that she were
An open-arse, thou a poperin pear ! (RJ, 2.1.34-38)

He refers multiple times to the 'medlar' which is "a tart-tasting apple-like fruit with a gaping tip [but is also] slang for the female genitals, derived from the medlar fruit's appearance" (Shakespeare 2012, 183). Brian Gibbons adds to the explanation of 'medlar' the "additional quibble on *medlar/meddle* [with] *meddle* [meaning] to have sexual intercourse with" (1980, 126). René Weis continues his commentary on the excerpt by defining the two terms 'open-arse' and 'poperin pear.' He defines 'open-arse' as a slang word for the medlar fruit that has just been discussed. However, he adds Stanley Wells idea developed in his 2010 book *Shakespeare, Sex and Love* where he suspects that Mercutio hints at the fact that Romeo would want to have anal sex with Rosaline. (2012, 184). For the other term he offers the following definition: "an allusion to the resemblance of a pear to male genitals. The pear's name derives from the Flemish town of Poperinghe near Ypres, while the triple *p* alliteration of *poperin pear* entails a thrusting onomatopoeia obvious from the sexual play on 'pop 'er in'" (2012, 184). The last two lines of this passage are part of Mercutio's "most salacious innuendo in the play", as René Weis writes, "[it] invites us to imagine Romeo as a pear to Rosaline's medlar" (2012, 184).

Mercutio and Benvolio are presented at the beginning of Act 2 Scene 4 wondering about Romeo's whereabouts since he left them the night before at the Capulet ball. When the young Montague finally enters the scene, he is welcomed by Mercutio's typical sexually suggestive antics:

BENVOLIO Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo!
MERCUTIO Without his roe, like a dried herring.

O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified ! (RJ, 2.4.36-38)

The analysis and interpretation of Mercutio's comment present some debate in the scholar who have studied the play, especially with the angle of sexuality and innuendos. Brian Gibbons mentions in his footnotes of the play a sexually suggestive meaning for 'without his roe', interpreted as "the illustration of roe as the milt or sperm of a male fish" (1980, 144). He adds another wordplay with the name of Romeo's supposed beloved Roe-saline (Shakespeare 1980, 144). René Weis offers an interpretation of 'dried herring' that goes in the direction of Mercutio's usual bawdy comment and jokes:

in Romeo's case, a young man without his sperm (*roe*), hence dry. [The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of] *roe* cites this line and notes that hard roe is the spawn of the female and the soft roe the sperm of the male. Since Romeo has been out all night, Mercutio suggests that he must have been having intercourse with Rosaline and is therefore a lesser man, reduced, post-coital, spermless and exhausted, a mere *herring*, usually a term of contempt in Shakespeare. (2012, 211)

Lastly the interpretation of 'fishified' contributes to the initial analysis of one of Mercutio's lewd jests. René Weis explains it following Shakespeare's habit of associating fish with sex, thus the verb would represent the fact that intercourse turned Romeo, and his flesh, to fish, most specially to 'dried herring' (2012, 211). Gibbons on the other hand provides a different understanding of the word, interpreting it as "a quibbling on the senses 'turned into a herring', 'become obsessed with sex', 'become pale and bloodless'" (1980, 144).

All these interpretations converge into Mercutio's attitude already noted earlier in the play. John McGee however presents a different understanding of these lines in his paper "A set of wit well-played in *Romeo and Juliet* Act 2, scene 3?". He starts by mentioning another editor who took the same approach as Weis and Gibbons to interpret 'without his roe,' namely the reference to the sexual exhaustion of a supposed night with Rosaline. He then proceeds to point out all the problems with that interpretation, all of this according to him and his understanding of the text before offering an alternative analysis of the three words 'without his roe.' His first argument against Gibbons' approach lies in Mercutio's attitude. McGee point out that in the rest of this scene, the jokes directed at Romeo "revolve around Romeo's desire for sex, not his exhaustion from it" (2014, 4). There would then be a lack of continuity in the suggestive meaning of Mercutio's comments, most of them focusing on his desire while lines 37 and 38 imply the opposite, namely that he has satisfied his desire during the night. The second inaccuracy McGee mentions in his paper centres on the

meaning of 'flesh', a word used by Mercutio in line 38, which according to the scholar means to opposite of sexual exhaustion. He adds that "Shakespeare often uses this term to signify arousal, and while examples could be cited from a number of works, one need not look outside of Romeo and Juliet itself, for this play opens with an exchange of quips in which flesh is used in its sexual sense" (McGee 2014, 4). During the first scene of the play, where Samson and Gregory are sexually making fun of the Montague maids, Samson refers to having intercourse with said young ladies, assuring that were that the case "Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh." (RJ, 1.1.27-28) He refers to himself as 'a pretty piece of flesh' which Brian Gibbons interprets as "a quibbling on the senses (i) pretty fellow, (ii) one sexually well endowed" (1980, 83). In other words, Samson points attentions towards the size of his aroused penis which he finds to be rather impressive. With that association between 'flesh' and sexuality already present in the play, it only seems logical for the term to keep the same suggestive meaning later in the play, which contradicts the aforementioned interpretation of Mercutio's jokes of line 37 and 38. His last argument to disprove Weis' and Gibbons', among many others, understanding Romeo's best friend's suggestive banter requires us to expand the excerpt from the play for another couple of lines: "Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was a kitchen wench - marry, she had a better love to berhyme her" (RJ, 2.4.38-41). The direct reference to Petrarch inspired McGee's third and last argument to disprove the sexual exhaustion interpretation that scholars have of Mercutio's lines in Act 2, Scene 4. Before moving on to his explanation it must be noted that 'numbers' in this case refers to composing poetry which makes the reference to Petrarch and his beloved Laura fit better in this context. McGee explains the relevance of this mention to disprove the sexually exhausted double meaning of Mercutio's words as follows:

Would Petrarch be composing "numbers" - that is, writing love poetry - in such a state of exhaustion? Clearly not. The typical Petrarchan dynamic involves a male tormented with intense, unrelieved desire for some lady. Often, he composes his lines precisely in the hope that she will read his poems, take pity on him, and relieve his anguish. (McGee 2014, 4)

He believes that sonnet writing is incompatible with the exhausted state of someone that has satisfied their desire with their lady as it goes against the idea that the poet channels his longing and feelings for this unattainable lady to write said poetry.

Considering the three aforementioned arguments, which is the lack of continuity with the following jokes, the sexual meaning of 'flesh' as a sign of arousal and the reference to

writing poetry by channelling unsatisfied desires, McGee offers a different interpretation of this scene but keeping with the bawdy motif that characterises Mercutio. However, no matter the understanding the sexual double-meaning remains an undeniable aspect of Mercutio's lines, further distancing the play from the sonneteer's platonic vision of love.

Through Juliet, her Nurse and Mercutio, Shakespeare's fills his lines with innuendos and double meanings, representing a newer vision of love's portrayal in drama while also questioning the relevance of the Petrarchan tradition in Elizabethan literature.

4.5. The importance of love and death

As previously established, the Elizabethan sonnet centres on love but all the while mentioning its darker side such as frustration or despair. In this context the association of love with death only seems fitting, as it represents the darkest materialisation of those feelings. As said during the analysis of Juliet's desire and sexuality, Shakespeare incorporated the "bonds of sex and morbidity" (MacKenzie 2007, 22) that were going through a revival around his time.

The treatment of love and death in *Romeo and Juliet* is complex and is present throughout the play, from the very beginning to the tragic end. In the Prologue, the chorus presents the story that will unfold on stage, where "a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life" (RJ, Prologue 6). It is made clear that for these two lovers, this very love will lead them to their doom. The sonnet "does not suggest that love is fatal, per se, merely that the love of Romeo and Juliet, arising in a context of two feuding houses, signals death" (MacKenzie 2007, 24). This idea of love leading to one's demise is further strengthened by Romeo's first beloved and her attitude towards amorous relationships. She indeed believes that "by avoiding Cupid and preserving her chastity, like the virginal hunter-goddess Diana, Rosaline lives unharmed" (MacKenzie 2007, 24). In the Renaissance, Cupid was believed to be friends with Death, "even [its] bedfellow" (MacKenzie 2007, 22), thus leading young women like Rosaline to abstain for love for fear of its consequences. In this rejection of love however, Rosaline leads Romeo into an impossible relationship, making him even more attracted to young Juliet who finally reciprocates his advances.

After portraying the overly cautious woman, the playwright proves her right in a way when "[picturing how] the desire for sexuality proves lethal for other characters" (MacKenzie 2007, 25). Mercutio suffers from Romeo's desire to be with Juliet since he

dies at the hand of the Capulet feud, slayed by Tybalt. In Romeo's refusal to fight, Mercutio stepped in in his place, leading first to his own death, then to Tybalt's, to Romeo's banishment and finally to the tragic ending of the play. Wanting to love Juliet he decided against engaging with Tybalt, but it failed to save the young lovers from their fatal destiny, as if Cupid and Death had conspired against them.

Regarding the vocabulary associating love and death, there are some significant instances where the intentionality of the words highlights the relationship between them. In Act 2 Scene 5, Juliet finds herself alone in her bedroom, impatiently awaiting news of the Nurse's meeting with her lover Romeo. While wondering if her message has been delivered, she reflects on love:

Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glides than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over louring hills.
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love,
And therefore hath the wind -swift Cupid wings. (RJ, 2.5.4-8)

She waits anxiously and impatiently, "[demanding] that those who announce the arrival of love should be like Love itself— swift and all-conquering, dispersing darkness as they rush towards their target" (MacKenzie 2007, 26). The association of Cupid with doves, an animal known to represent peace and purity "would have resonated [to Elizabethan literati] with ironic undertones" (MacKenzie 2007, 26). While it might seem ironic, she is in that moment blind to the realities of her future with Romeo and does not consider how the grudge between Montagues and Capulets could complicate matters. Unlike Rosaline, she does not fear the dangers of Cupid, too focused on how "[her] dream of marrying the man she loves" (MacKenzie 2007, 26) is getting closer. MacKenzie further develops how "her Cupid brings the possibility of marriage, sex, children, a home together—all the things that the institutions of a culture like Verona's would encourage young women to value. Why should not Juliet hope for the same?" (2007, 26).

But love's association with Death takes all its significance when the young woman is found 'dead' in her bedroom. The audience of course know that she is only pretending thanks to Friar Laurence's pharmaceutical trick, but it is real to the Capulets. In death, the young woman will be surrounded by allusions to her new relationship with death. On the cusp of his daughter's wedding, Juliet's father discovers that she has passed and "old Capulet construes her 'demise' in terms of a sexual liaison with death" (MacKenzie 2007, 29):

O son the night before thy wedding day
Hath death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
Flower as she was, deflowered by him,
Death is my son-in-law, death is my heir,
My daughter he hath wedded. I will die
And leave him all; life, living, all is death's. (RJ, 4.5.35-40)

In his eyes, a young woman's death means she has been claimed by death himself. He pictures all of the elements of a mortal marriage, but with death as his son-in-law: "a sexual deflowering; a marital consummation; a revised contract of inheritance; a statement of fatality's regrettable omnipotence" (MacKenzie 2007, 29). There is a particular feeling of irony for the audience since they know of Juliet's recent endeavours with Romeo and of her marital status change in Act 2 Scene 6. The public knows her deflowering and the consummation of her marriage to be true but not at the hands of death but rather of Capulet's sworn enemy's son, the young Montague. The groom County Paris is equally in shock, but he lacks the countenance and self-control to express his feelings properly:

Beguiled, divorced, wronged, spited, slain!
Most detestable death, by thee beguiled,
By cruel, cruel thee quite overthrown.
O love, O life, not life but love in death. (RJ, 4.5.55-58)

He expresses his grief for the situation but given their lack of contact and amicable relationship, it is highly unlikely he feels actual sadness for the loss of the young woman. His lines convey his anger towards death for having wronged him on the eve of his wedding and for having "divorced' his bride-to-be from mortal marriage and life, [...] presumably [substituting her to] a deathly nuptial [instead]" (MacKenzie 2007, 29). He feels death has stolen his future wife, leaving him resentful and alone the morning of his nuptials. The word choice of the last line is particularly significant when discussing the association of life and death in the play as Paris uses them both in the same construction. To him, one finds their life taken in death, but the beautiful young Juliet will instead find "love in death" (RJ, 4.5.58), in the way he presumes she had not in life. He can only be presuming that to be true since she was to most people's knowledge still unmarried and untouched by the influence of love. Both Capulet and Paris express the idea that "the end of mortal life is the end of bliss" (MacKenzie 2007, 29), believing the fate of young Juliet to be the satisfaction of death's desires.

Under the influence of Friar Laurence's elixir, the young lady is brought into the Capulet's tomb after the parting rituals have been performed. In there she awaits the arrival

of her lover, who has supposedly been informed of her trick and is returning from his banishment in Mantua. As he arrives in Act 5 Scene 3, he finds his beloved lying still, but as the audience know, he has not been made aware of the manoeuvre the young lady has devised with Friar Laurence to escape marrying Paris. He believes her to have actually passed and expresses his grief accordingly. However just like Lord Capulet, he also refers to death as Juliet's new lover:

Shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous
And that the elan abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour? (RJ, 5.3.102-5)

MacKenzie analyses the young lover's words as follows:

Romeo colours Juliet's demise with a sexual hue. The term "paramour", deriving out of Middle English usage, held distinctly sexual connotations in Shakespeare's day in much the same way that "mistress" does in our own[.] This state of death has nothing to recommend it. Juliet's postmortal fate, it is supposed, has been crudely ordered to satisfy the carnal pleasures of her jailer. Any possibilities of joy disappeared when Juliet supposedly crossed the borderline that separates life and death. (2007, 30)

He perpetuates the personification of death as a lover and the depiction of what they believe to be Juliet's afterlife as the mistress of death. Only men have assumed the absence of an afterlife in some sort of paradise, which according the MacKenzie "also functions to aggrandise the patriarchal institutions of Verona" (2007, 32). By denying the possibility of the influences of one's earthly life on the hereafter, it denies any implication of the religious and places her death as a secular event. But how does the absence of an afterlife strengthen the patriarchal bonds of society?

[By] suppressing, if not denying, the possibilities of a fruitful afterlife, the malegazers look upon Juliet's corpse and implicitly celebrate their own creation even as they mourn the loss of one they love. In announcing that Juliet has left their world, they articulate her deathly degradations as a sign of how much she, too, has lost. What a pity that she must grub now to satisfy the lust of Death when, in more favourable circumstances, she might have served to satisfy the lust of a mortal husband. (MacKenzie 2007, 32)

In their eyes, since she has left the realm of the living, her chances at bliss are non-existent, especially when they picture her as death's concubine. There is however a strong presence of irony when Juliet's death is concerned since she has tricked them all and is only

pretending to be dead but also when it comes to her relationship with death, another irony is invoked. As MacKenzie argues, the men believe her to have lost since she must now serve death but considering she was trying to escape marrying Paris, was she really robbed of a happy life? (MacKenzie 2007, 32) Since they care little about women's ideas and opinions, Capulet and Paris most likely deem their choices the most suitable and most likely to bring happiness, strengthening the idea that death robbed Juliet of her future. But considering the young woman's defiance to follow her father's orders and her pretended death, the audience can only chuckle at how oblivious the men are to the situation.

Juliet does indeed play with the "marriage to death" trope established by the men upon her corpse by invoking it under her own terms. When discussing and reflecting on her love for Romeo and her situation, she calls on death:

If he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding bed. (RJ, 1.5.133-4)

But I, a maid, die maiden-widowed.
Come, cords, come, Nurse, I'll to my wedding bed
And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead. (RJ, 3.2.135-7)

Delay this marriage for a month, a week,
Or if you do not, make the bridal bed
In that dim monument where Tybald lies. (RJ, 3.5.200-2)

Or hide me nightly in a charnel-house,
O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;
Or bid me go into a new-made grave,
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud, (RJ, 4.1.81-5)

In these four instances, the young woman wishes to depart with death instead of continuing living her life, going as far as menacing her mother in the excerpt from Act 3 Scene 5. Every time she calls upon death to take her away, she shows a sense of agency and independence for her life choices. There is however some over exaggeration or dramatic flair to some of her lines, betraying the teenager with bubbling feelings she is. Upon meeting Romeo for the first time, she sends her Nurse to gather information about him and despite their new acquaintance already finds death more favourable than giving him up due to a previous marriage. René Weis comments on the line further in her footnote, stating that it also represents "a dark premonition, shared by the audience who remember the Chorus' reference to the young lovers 'death-marked love'" (2012, 178). The second excerpt

happens as Juliet learns of the tragic events that have transpired between Tybalt and Romeo and of her husband's banishment. Once again, she would rather "die maiden-widowed" (RJ, 3.2.135) or have her virginity taken by death if she cannot have her Romeo. The idea of "death [taking her] maidenhead" (RJ, 3.2.137) echoes the previous discussion of her father and her husband both interpreting her passing as a wedding to death himself. The last two passages refer to the scenes prior to Juliet and Paris' nuptials, when the young lady is devising a plan to escape this unwanted union. She first tries to convince her mother to push the wedding, thus giving her time to reach Romeo in Mantua, and resorting to the menaces of ending her own life, thus requiring the bridal bed to be placed in the Capulet's tomb. Her mother proves unsupportive, so the young Juliet seeks the Friar's help, begging him to hide her among the dead. In those four instances:

Juliet's thoughts of a "marriage with Death" as an escape from life's turmoil would have struck a recognisable but disharmonious chord with an Elizabethan audience. [...] As a positive emblem it was restricted to the ambit of the elderly. It was entirely acceptable for old people to wish for a marriage with death, an escape from the moral spinsterhood of mortal life. [...] Juliet's summoning of deathly nuptials thus represents an untypical approbation of youthful marriage with Death, a symbolic affirmation, perhaps, that the male values that so compellingly have controlled and ordered her world are not the only arbiters of her actions and destination. Her choices may be limited but she asserts, with repeated vigour, that she has a choice and that its consequences are less uncomfortable than a host of masculine voices would have us believe. (MacKenzie 2007, 33)

Going to such extreme measures to escape one's future is, and would have been at the time, uncommon but she values her freedom of choice, no matter the situation. The extremeness of it bears particular significance, as it can be associated with the impulsiveness and stubbornness of a teenager in love but in the context of the play, it echoes the love-sick behaviour of sonneteers with their excessive emotions without relief. She rebels against the patriarchal society by not submitting to their orders and taking control of her life, even if it means death. She willingly calls upon death to free her. Despite her limited options she pulls her destiny back from the hands of her father and does not submit to the future society had expected her to have.

5. Endorsement or rejection of the Petrarchan traditions?

In the two previous chapters, the plays as single entities have been analysed regarding the literary conventions they represent. It has been established that even though Shakespeare applied some conventions, he also took liberties with the rules and questioned them through his portrayal. With that in mind it raises the question as to what do *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet* have in common, since it has been identified in the chapters above that they respectively belong to the pastoral and sonnet tradition? Beyond the different plot lines, endings, and key motifs, these two literary genres, as previously established, can be traced back to Petrarch and his works, offering another way to interpret the aforementioned results. Petrarch's poetry and legacy experienced great popularity in Shakespeare's time, thus justifying its preponderance in plays like the ones discussed in this context. With the help of examples from the text, the endorsement, or lack thereof, of the guidelines from the conventions, a set of themes have emerged, by which Shakespeare tests the limits of Petrarch's legacy. These motifs also highlight the differences between the plays and their respective genres. Adjunct to the detailed analysis of *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*, this last part will connect the dots and tie in both texts to answer the initial question, namely "How does Shakespeare use love, sexuality and genre to question the literary tradition of pastoral literature and of the sonnet?"

In both plays the key motif is love but its portrayal differs in the tragedy from the comedy's perspective on it. Love is however a vast topic and can encompass a multitude of sub-themes such as genre, sexuality, and marriage. In both the sonnet and the pastoral, the inner workings of love contribute greatly to the plot, since each depicts at least one lovesick man enamoured in an unattainable beloved. Romeo, Orlando, and Silvius all present signs of lovesickness for Rosaline, Phoebe and Rosalind. While Romeo abandons his infatuation in favour of more natural feelings for Juliet, the two lovers of *As You Like It* remain in love with their respective ladies. Regarding Romeo it must however be noted that even as a lovesick lover, his behaviour contrasts with the others, namely Orlando's, since his beloved is barely mentioned. In all his complaining and pining she remains absent while Orlando is portrayed thinking and talking about her often such as writing her poems as in Act 3 Scene 3 for example. This detail sets Romeo apart from the other but he remains a fitting example of the lovesick lover with his exaggerated pining and complaining. Shakespeare does however distance himself from the Petrarchan tradition

since all three eventually get married. *As You Like It* centres not only on one couple but on four, portraying three types of relationships, from the typical Petrarchan pastoral coupling of Silvius and Phoebe to the realistic country one of Audrey and Touchstone. The last two relationships marry courtly characters together but fails to do so under the strictest of courtly love rules. *Romeo and Juliet* also stages two distinct love stories, although one is more detailed than the other. The play opens on a pining lovesick Romeo for his unattainable and invisible Rosaline until he meets the young Juliet, who will become his wife and share his tragic fate. In each of the play he presents a relationship which fits the codes of the genre, but he also offers the opportunity to contrast it with, questioning its relevance and feasibility in his current society. It is particularly significant for Orlando and Silvius since they experience a happy conclusion by marrying the object of their infatuation. Romeo's situation is more complex due to his double relationship. He technically follows the sonnet's tradition since his Petrarchan beloved Rosaline does not reciprocate and this love affair does not progress any further. With Juliet, even though the young lovers develop their relationship beyond marriage, their premature death also concludes their story with an unhappy ending. Through Orlando and Silvius' marriages, Shakespeare distances himself from the Petrarchan idea of unsuccessful and unrequited love, while simultaneously representing the changing perception of marriage. The Puritans influenced the attitudes towards marriage by distancing themselves from the customs of arranged marriages for a purpose and promoting more individual power in the choice of partner. As *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy, it justifies the unhappy ending but regarding the Petrarchan lover, although his first relationship expires early in the play, it is for he has found a new love interest that reciprocates his feelings. This can thus also be considered to challenge the doomed Petrarchan love story by allowing the young Montague, even for a brief moment, to experience happiness and love. For the melancholic Romeo and the poet Silvius, Shakespeare uses their surroundings to emphasise the extravagance and the artificiality of their feelings by picturing on the opposite side realer and more conceivable depictions of love that do not consume the lover's entire being for an unattainable beloved.

Whereas the men stayed closer to the traditions, even if only to parody them, the women were offered a lot of opportunities for change in both plays discussed here. The young Rosalind and Juliet assume a significant role in each story, as the main female character and an active lover. In *As You Like It*, the young Rosalind and Celia take control of their lives when they decide to leave the court in a disguise for their banishment to the

forest. In doing so not only do they ensure their own safety and survival, a traditionally male role, but by masquerading as a man and offering counsel to Orlando, Rosalind also breaks the rules of distance during courtship, even if the young man is not aware of it. Young Juliet on the other hand takes charge of her future by rebelling against her father and marrying Romeo behind his back, devising an entire plan to escape his wrath forcing her to marry Paris. They depart the passive female part and assume a more active role in their lives by all means necessary. Both Juliet and Rosalind participate actively to the development of their love stories, although in Rosalind's case it does happen without Orlando's knowledge as she is disguised as Ganymede. In any case the audience knows, and it is them who are there to notice the little quirks differentiating Shakespeare's work from reality. Rosalind and Juliet behaviour contrasts with the unreciprocating Rosaline and Phoebe, who pay little attention to their admirers. Beyond simply responding to the advances made to them, they assume more active role by partaking fully to love's games. By picturing confident and involved young women, Shakespeare separates them from the legacy of Laura that Rosaline embodies. Their eagerness to love and be loved sets them apart from the Petrarchan tradition, especially due to the immediate comparison with embodiments of the convention.

As it has been highlighted in the analysis above, sexuality represents a significant component of Shakespeare's questioning of the rules of both literary traditions. While both pastoral and sonnet love viewed love as a platonic and adorative, Shakespeare strayed from the convention in both plays. The referencing of Petrarch's rejection of sexuality could seldom be clearer. Not only did he modify the love stories, but he also accommodated the characters to fit with the adjusted plot lines. On top of taking charge of their love lives, the young female lovers and Celia display an interesting liberty when discussing sexuality. Through puns and innuendos, the young women manage to shatter the innocent God-like image of Petrarch's ladies and make their desires known to the audience. Juliet is particularly vocal about her eagerness to enter the sexual world with her husband, benefitting from the good influence of the Nurse. Once again when it comes to sexuality, Shakespeare contrasts the sexually freed Nurse with Lady Capulet who represents the conservative and conventional view of his contemporaries. Beyond allowing more freedom to the female characters, he also introduced new roles or expanded them to provide more opportunities to play with the limits of sexuality. The notable addition when it comes to sexuality is *As You Like It's* Touchstone, who embraces the sexual ambiguity the most. He

is unapologetic regarding the existence and unavoidability of Man's sexual desires, even when faced with infatuated lovers who fail to accept the fact. In Act 3 Scene 2 for example, he is staged mocking Orlando's poem for Rosalind by finding inappropriate ways to twist his words. The power to criticise by contrasting the immaculate and chaste love discourse is shared by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*. In this case Shakespeare expanded the functions of a character that was already present in the source materials, granting him the potential to satirise and highlight the absurdity of Romeo's behaviour. He accomplishes this most notably by attempting to provoke Romeo through inappropriate comments toward Rosaline in Act 2 Scene 1. He brings the young woman down from her pedestal and restores her female condition.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this research was to determine whether Shakespeare implemented the pastoral and sonnet conventions in *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*, with a focus on the role of love, gender, and sexuality. As the individual analysis of the plays confirmed, *As You Like It* does display some pastoral rules and the same phenomenon occurs in *Romeo and Juliet* with the sonnet. Shakespeare does not however blindly apply all the guidelines but rather distances himself from some of them, especially when love, gender and sexuality are concerned. In the analysis of the plays, the association of both the pastoral and the sonnet traditions with the legacy of Petrarch introduced an element linking the comedy and the tragedy together.

In order to critique and highlight the absurdity of some pastoral and sonnet rules, he not only portrayed characters whose behaviour did not conform, but he also provided contrast by still implementing the traditional figures. The Petrarchan Rosaline contrasts with the desirous and active Juliet, just like the promiscuous fool Touchstone contradicts the innocent infatuated Silvius. Shakespeare shatters the image of the innocent unattainable beloved by portraying young ladies who take charge of their love lives as well as expressing their desires and sexual thoughts, unlike the passive Rosaline who embodies Petrarch's Laura. The portrayal of these independent young women as main characters also resists the passivity of the figure of the beloved, shifting the focus from the miserable infatuated love to the beloved, finally giving her a voice. The sexual double meanings are strengthened by other characters who question the innocence of the Petrarchan tradition by vocally voicing carnal desires and feelings as an undeniable part of love. Allowing a happy end in marriage for some couples rejected the Petrarchan idea of preventing the lovers from a successful relationship, only valuing the distance between them and the misery of the infatuated admirer.

The limited corpus only allows to conclude that these two plays seem to reject pastoral and sonnet conventions using love, gender, and sexuality. Despite its limited scope, the selected texts offer a comedic as well as a tragic perspective on love and belong to two distinct literary traditions from Petrarch's legacy. As these traditions are linked to Petrarch, the conclusions can be reconsidered regarding his work, assuming that by rejecting the sonnet and the pastoral conventions Shakespeare also questioned the legacy of the Italian poet and his revival in the English Renaissance. Further research on these works and on

other plays from Shakespeare's corpus is necessary to rule out anecdotal conclusions as to whether the playwright meant to challenge the Petrarchan traditions with his portrayal of love, sexuality, and gender.

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