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Diplomová práce

Different representations of Love in the Works of William Shakespeare

**Různá pojetí lásky v dílech Williama
Shakespeara**

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Abstract

This diploma thesis is concerned with different representations of the theme of love in William Shakespeare's works. The first part of the thesis deals with Shakespeare's biography and it points out the author's most prominent career and literary accomplishments in order to establish a context and time frame of his poetic and dramatic works. Consequently, there are explored different ways how the theme of love was approached throughout various historical and literary eras with particular attention to the development of English literature and the evolution of love poetry. In the main part of the theses, there are explored different ways how Shakespeare portrayed and understood the nature of love in his literary works. The concept of love in Shakespeare's repertoire is analysed with regard to the genres of his poetic works, namely narrative poems and sonnets, and his plays, specifically comedies, tragedies, and romances. For each of the genres there are chosen several individual plays or poems, which are then interpreted in connection to how they portray and relate to the theme of love.

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá různými způsoby, jak William Shakespeare pojímal téma lásky ve svých dílech. První část diplomové práce se zaměřuje na Shakespearovu biografii a zdůrazňuje autorovy významné kariérní a literární úspěchy za účelem vytvoření kontextu a časového ukotvení jeho básnických a divadelních děl. Dále se práce zabývá způsoby, jak bylo k tématu lásku přistupováno z hlediska historického a literárního, a to zejména v kontextu vývoje anglické literatury a rozvoje poezie o lásce. V hlavní části práce jsou zkoumány rozličné způsoby, jak Shakespeare ztvárňoval a chápal téma lásky v jeho dílech. Pojetí lásky v Shakespearově repertoáru je nahlíženo v kontextu žánrů jeho básnických děl – výpravných básní a sonetů, a divadelních her – komedií, tragédií a romancí. U každého jednotlivého žánru je vybráno několik konkrétních děl, které jsou následně interpretovány v návaznosti na to, jakým způsobem se vztahují k tématu lásky a jak toto téma pojímají.

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Introduction

It is without a doubt that William Shakespeare is a persona of unprecedented acclaim and recognition. His masterpieces have no parallel across the whole literary tradition and the universality of his themes makes him essentially a contemporary author, even though we are no longer in Renaissance but many years ahead. Shakespeare's extraordinary literary repertoire is unrivalled, and it includes a plethora of different themes, motives and it draws on countless sources and inspirations. Shakespeare is regarded as the master of depicting the realities of life and of portraying raw human emotions. He is known to be able to capture the essence of interpersonal relationships and psychological dilemmas of people, whose nature does not alter with time and thus audiences can easily identify with his plays even now. His verses are abundantly cited at weddings and some of his sonnets even treated as synonyms of love professions. Similarly, Shakespeare's romantic couples are so well-known that they are now essentially archetypal lovers, either good or bad examples of romantic pairings. Though the complexity and extent of his literary creations may be intimidating, it is at the same time a challenge to at least partially unravel the way how Shakespeare treated love, what made him to be understood as one of the greatest love poets of all times, as well as to discover what were Shakespeare's tendencies and patterns in portraying the greatest human emotion. This thesis is going to attempt to shed some light on how Shakespeare approached love, exclusively focusing on romantic love between a man and a woman. There will be explored ways how the connection between lovers comes into existence, what are the impediments of romantic love as well as what is the strength, stability and defining force of the love itself. There will be examined ways how heroes and heroines in love treat each other, what are the fates of the characters in love and what is the ultimate conclusion of their romantic relationships.

The structure of the thesis will follow a chronological developmental timeline. Apart from establishing the author's creative and personal roots, and introducing the context of writing about love, it is going to copy the transformation of the author's genius in that it will proceed from early works to his later ones. The chief method of the thesis is going to be analysis of secondary literature from the field of literary criticism focused on Shakespeare's plays and poems. In particular, various academic articles dealing with the development of literature about love, Shakespeare's biography, or the interpretation of Shakespeare's literary works.

1. The life and career of William Shakespeare

1.1 Early life

William Shakespeare's life began on the 23rd of April 1564. Born as the third child of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden he commenced his life journey in a small market town called Stratford-upon-Avon. His father, particularly owing to his craftsmanship as a glover, acquired renown amongst the town elite and was in charge of local property and finance. However, despite John's successful career, the family situation was by no means easy. Virtually, the whole of England was at the half of the 16th century beset by the plague. During these troubled times Shakespeare's mother - Mary Arden, delivered her son. Mary, who had already lost two of her infant children, was under a great pressure to keep her son alive and she must have taken sensible care for her new-born baby. After the outbreak was averted much of the town was burnt to the ground and people were left devastated. Yet the educational principles of Shakespeare's parents remained discipline oriented. Drawing from her noble family background, Mary wanted for the little William to be taught moral qualities fitting for a young gentleman such as obedience, courtesy, and manners. Nevertheless, she also encouraged his interest in nature and music and endorsed his ability to understand emotions (Honan,1998).

By the time William was about to start his schooling, his father's position amongst Stratford townsmen had already been elevated. Due to the fact that John Shakespeare was a trusted alderman employed as a bailiff, his son was automatically granted the privilege of attending a local grammar school - King's New School. Elizabethan ways of teaching placed emphasis chiefly upon memory and rhetoric. The school subjects were comprised of Latin grammar and literature, classical history, or the study of classical tragedies. As well as of the Bible, which was also one of the main focuses in Shakespeare's early years of studying (Baker,2009). Narrow focus upon the Latin language has affected Shakespeare's future style of writing immensely and the strict school discipline shaped his character. Whereas his knowledge of the Bible helped to impart that strong religious and moral sense so typical of his works. However, as a pupil in the King's New School, he learned nothing whatsoever about modern history, crafts, or his nation in general. English language, though not completely left out, was considered secondary and remained mainly in the realms of everyday basic communication (Honan,1998).

When William was a teenager, in the 1580's, throughout England was taking place a major social revolution. Social rank was no longer the only defining point in one's career and

life. Stiff social barriers were violated, which actually played into the hands of William as his family was now, due to his father's misfortunes, far from being affluent or esteemed. Once a privileged grammar-school scholar now more than ever felt the urge to escape the conservative ways of his family as well as of his educational background. His desire for experience together with his curiosity to discover the world as it is, may have directed his attention just towards the profession of the stage. Yet the historical records of Shakespeare's immediate post-school years continue to be full of speculation. He may have worked as an unlicensed schoolmaster up the north of England or he might have been a servant to some countryside noblemen at that time (Honan, 1998).

Anyhow, what is known for a fact is that by the time he was 18 years old he had been back in his hometown and that shortly after his arrival he got romantically involved with his acquaintance Anne Hathaway. Anne was eight years older than him and of superior lineage and they got married in 1582, when she had already been several months pregnant (Baker, 2009). The wedding itself was very hasty as the young couple surely feared the disgrace of bastardy and public scandal. Therefore, young William was virtually forced to become a husband as well as a father and even had to pay a surety of 40 pounds for marrying a woman of a more exalted rank than his own. Not having enough wherewithal, the couple moved in with the Shakespeare family in Henley Street in Stratford. There William served as a clerk and helped in his father's business, however he even then had higher ambitions and did not quite appreciate the routine of provincial life. His parents as well as his wife were semi-literate while William was a young man of intellectual acuity. The diversity and communication gap among William and his family members undoubtedly must have left him feeling isolated, yet his focus was directed chiefly towards raising money and choosing his career path (Honan, 1998). More so, when his wife gave birth to their first-born daughter Susanna and soon after the twins Hamnet and Judith, which made Shakespeare's responsibility to secure his family's future more pressing than ever. Luckily, during that time playing companies were seeking new theatre workers and even though acting was a profession of low prestige, William was forced to take what was available. So, in the mid-1580's he bid farewell to his family and left for London to take up an acting career (Honan, 1998).

1.2. Actor and playwright of the London stage

Elizabethan London was indeed an attractive destination for not only Shakespeare but many other workers from all over the country. The immigration influx at that time kept escalating even though the situation in the capital was alarming due to the plague epidemic and terrifyingly high mortality rate. The city atmosphere was characterized by vast social diversity and high levels of crime and violence. London allies were seethed with prostitutes and vagabonds and the air was filled with the smell of rotting animal corpses and faeces. Yet, in spite of its riotous ambience, London was at the same time an ever-growing and vibrant political, financial, and cultural centre of the country (Baker,2009). “Cosmopolitan London broadened Shakespeare's outlook, and foreign stories and the talk of Europe were to give him dramatic material. “(Honan, 1998, p. 99). Equipped with eloquence and intellect he acquired training in singing and music and was ready to become a versatile actor. In a city where the theatre was on a high level of advancement, having already several well-established venues and numerous playing companies, Shakespeare`s aspirations were to flourish. They were yet confronted with mutual hostility among local theatrical communities, lack of support from the church as well as the financial difficulties inflicted upon the theatres by the outbreaks of the black death (Honan,1998). Shakespeare initially served as a hireling¹ for a troupe and was focused on learning about the organization, repertoires, patrons, and relations amongst English playing companies. Gradually, he established himself a firm position in a troupe succeeding as repertory professional. However, his fascination with poetry was directing him towards higher spheres of influence, that is to say, towards the playwriting profession. More so, due to the fact that at that time playing companies hungered for scripts as a company was in demand for up to about 20 plays a year. Yet still the playbooks were written chiefly by university intellectuals, namely by a group called The University Wits, which included authors such as Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene of John Lyly. Competent and proliferate authors were highly esteemed and Shakespeare was about to enter their circle. To get on the level-playing field with the best, he first started by writing plays for his fellow actors (Honan, 1998).

Due to the close collaboration within the theatrical companies, the authorship of Shakespeare`s plays is often put into question. Also, Elizabethan plays were not always published in order to prevent other companies from poaching into each other`s repertoires and dramatists had only little control over their literary creations once they left their hands. Due to

¹ hireling - the inferior players or novices who did not share in the takings but were paid out of the company funds (Thaler, 1) .

that, the precise chronology of Shakespeare's early works is problematic. Yet the records of Shakespeare's rivals provide authentic testimony to Shakespeare's triumph in the 1590's. The evidence suggests that, while Shakespeare was still in his twenties, he had already executed an ensemble of dramas of such scale and complexity, which was unheard of and unprecedented on the London stage (Schoenbaum,1977). "Shakespeare is considered to have first compiled a collection of historical plays - *Henry VI.* and *Richard III.* as well as comedies *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.*" (Chambers, 1963, p.275).

As far as the historical plays are concerned, he commenced to write them in connection with the publication of various chronicles of English history. The new data about the British past boosted national pride and self-consciousness, however people were at the same time swayed by economic difficulties and doubtful about the ruling authorities. Due to these conflicting attitudes, Shakespeare was to respond imaginatively and satirically to the history portrayed in the chronicles (Honan, 1998). Following the success of his early plays Shakespeare had already been an acclaimed playwright as well as leading actor of the Strange's men troupe. Though he still lived in poor suburban areas of London filled with bordellos and taverns as his status amongst the elite London circles was not yet quite elevated. However, his efforts were about to bear him fruit.

Being an actor-playwright, Shakespeare interlaced his insider's awareness of stage effects and character's psychology with his grammar-school training, and while having been inspired by personas such as Christopher Marlowe or Thomas Kyd, he composed his first ever tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (Honan, 1998). Afterwards, Shakespeare perchance worked for some time as free-lanced dramatist as his plays are included in repertoires of many London's troupes of that time. At least until the whole theatrical industry came to a grinding halt as the plague once again epidemic seized control over the whole city during the years of 1592-1594. Shakespeare probably spent these years of enforced inactivity absorbing Italian culture either from the books or travelling itself as his experience and knowledge of Italian culture is mirrored throughout his extensive artwork (Schoenbaum, 1977).

While the London theatres shut down and troupes were forced to perform in the country, Shakespeare articulated his grievances in his poems. During the plague years, he remained career-focused and enduring. His achievements were though starting to be a thorn in the eye to the overconfident Wits, whose attitude towards Shakespeare only reflected the overall malfunctioning relationships between the poets and the troupes at that time. Nonetheless, Shakespeare managed to perform *The Comedy of Errors* at the most fashionable inn in London during the brief break in the plague in early 1593, by which he put an end to the defamation

and rumours circling around him. But in spite of his success, his allegiance with the theatre kept diminishing just as the plague calamity was subsiding. Shakespeare yearned for social respectability, so he began to look beyond the stage for a new circle and a new audience (Honan, 1998).

1.3. The poet and sonneteer

Shakespeare gradually drew a bit apart from the theatrical industry. To attract the attention of refined social classes such as courtiers, lawyers, or merchants he turned to poetry. In particular, he opted for deep serious topics such as seduction or lust, which were to vanquish omnipresent low-spirits and misery in the plague years. Shakespeare published blatant erotic poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* under the patronage of Earl of Southampton probably around the year 1594. Thanks to his noble maecenas and the great success of the poems he promptly gained popularity amongst high literary circles. At that time, sonnet-writing had come into vogue so to improve his social credentials even more, he chose to re-engage himself with sonnets. Shakespearean sonnets delve into the very mysteries of nature of love and are imbued with bawdry, sexual jokes, and erotic allusions (Honan, 1998). Nevertheless, the exact dating of Shakespeare's all 154 sonnets has been again a subject of much dispute. The entire collection of his sonnets was published in 1609, though he had been probably scribbling them down long before then. Throughout his poems is evident his affiliation to classical culture and his fascination with the ideals of youth and femininity (Baker, 2009). Arguably, in his sonnets can be unravelled numerous autobiographical features, which mirror Shakespeare's relationships with both women, in particular his wife Mary, as well as with men, which questionably point to him having a homosexual affair with his patron, the Earl of Southampton.

By writing sonnets Shakespeare exercises his artistic sensibility. Through the means of verses, he works on developing his style, characters, and lyricism, which he subsequently utilises in his plays. For as the black death epidemic eases off, London's theatres are getting back on track and playwrights are starting to be sought-after again (Honan,1998).

1.4. Comedies and the Globe

In the spring of 1594, the troupes were coming back to London although it was evident that the plague had dealt a heavy blow to the whole entertainment world. The theatrical companies lacked keen patrons and many troupes did not even see the end of the epidemic. Shakespeare himself had to look for patronage as he had lost the support of the Earl of Southampton, who had been imprisoned due to the conspiracy against the Queen. So, when given the opportunity of becoming a shareholder within a newly created playing company, called Lord Chamberlain's men, he did not hesitate. Though juggling hours of rehearsals as an actor, together with his play-writing duties, his position in the midst of the unsparing theatrical scene of London was then, thanks to the Chamberlain's group, firmer than ever (Honan, 1998). Shakespeare's immense dramatic progress in the 1590's began with the publication of his comedies *Love Labour's Lost*, *Midsummer's Night Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In other words, his play-within a play masterpieces full of deception, subplots and reflections on love and relationships, which show Shakespeare's unique skills and complex advancement in the playwriting profession (Baker, 2009). Lord Chamberlain's Men were gradually getting a larger and larger following in the mid 1590's, especially thanks to the love dramas in their repertoire, of the most popular ones being Shakespeare's all time classic *Romeo and Juliet*. In their love plays, the troupe portrayed love in a very subtle and radical way, which attracted, especially the young audience. By the choice of their topics, they also set themselves apart from their utmost rivals the Admiral's men who opted for more conservative motifs. In correspondence with that bold attitude, Shakespeare at that time composed the historical play, *Richard II.*, which responded to the then alarming political situation and the relenting prestige of Queen Elizabeth (Honan, 1998). In this elaborated historical play "Shakespeare demystified monarchy by undercutting its godly sanction and opened a path for his tragedies." (Honan,1998, p. 219).

Though in the midst of his devotion to comedies and completing his history series, Shakespeare found the time to pay a visit to his hometown. In the Midlands this was a time of harvest dearth, starvation crisis and all-embracing social unrest. Therefore, though delighted about his newly acquired financial stability together with the fact that his family was granted the privilege to bear a coat of arms, Shakespeare was confronted with much pessimistic milieu. Not only that, but there also took place a grievous event that casted shadow upon his contentment. In the summer of 1596, he said goodbye to his only son Hamnet, who died in that

year of unknown causes (Baker, 2009). A death of a child was a common occurrence back then and Shakespeare does not directly articulate his bitter loss or grief in his verses. Although it cannot be presumed that he was indifferent to his son's passing as throughout his artwork there can be found several hints reflecting his deep personal loss. Undoubtedly, after his son's death his style of writing and choice of topics began to transform, leaving behind the youthfulness and technical imperfections present in his previous works while smoothing the way for the most powerful and emotionally complex masterpieces of his - the tragedies (Honan, 1998). However, before taking a long-term fancy in tragedies "in the four years following Hamnet's death, the playwright, as many have viciously pointed out, wrote some of his sunniest comedies: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*. "(Greenblatt, 2004, p. 254).

1.5. Maturity of genius

The later 1590's was an exceptionally productive period of Shakespeare's career, with a succession of outstanding plays, frequent performances at court and for the public as well as his increasing renown and riches. Yet, towards the very end of the 16th century Lord Chamberlain's Men were also faced with much inconvenience. At first, they had lost the support of their patron and later on it was made impossible for them to perform in their home theatre - Theater. Subsequent financial exigencies drove them to the act of desperation; they were forced to sell off their most valued playbooks. Eventually, under the guise of a cold snowy night Lord Chamberlain's workers managed to dismantle the old Theater, which resulted in them establishing a new theatre of their own, called the Globe in 1599.

The new theatre was a many-sided wooden polygon, a splendid architectural jewel of London, which could hold around three thousand spectators. This ambitious deed adumbrated Shakespeare's financial independence as he owned the tenth of the Globe and was at that time on his way to become a successful entrepreneur. Chamberlain's group chose to please the crowd with an opening play, which was quite a novelty in itself - Shakespeare's classical tragedy *Julius Caesar* (Greenblatt, 2004). The play paid a tribute to Roman culture and won praise from the general public, yet Shakespeare as one of the chief tenants of the Globe still had to cope with a lot. In particular with the competition from the rivals, such as were children's theatrical companies as well as with the censorship resulting from the Puritan acrimony. Even within the troupe, sharers did not exactly see eye to eye and the company's politics were often on edge.

So, when composing a drama of higher order of art than any before it, the revenge tragedy *Hamlet*, presumably at close of 1600, he indeed had to fret over a lot as far as the business achievements of his company were concerned. The tragedy's complex and quick-witted hero, its fresh and fine wordplay, shrewdly evoked setting, and elegant inner monologues as well as its philosophical richness, all give testimony to the ingenuity of the Globe's public stage (Honan, 1998).

“If Shakespeare had died in 1600, it would have been difficult to think that anything was missing from his achievement and still more difficult to think that anything yet unrealized was brewing in his work.” (Greenblatt, 2004, p.262). Still by composing *Hamlet* Shakespeare proved that he had refined his techniques to represent inwardness and perfected characters' soliloquies. *Hamlet* marks a great breakthrough in Shakespeare's career and kicks off daring transformation both of his sources and of his whole way of writing. Also, in the wake of his son's and father's death, Shakespeare turns away from his preference for the neat, arranged and settled to the stories, which are full of the unresolved, unspoken, and opaque. Shakespeare's late tragedies reflect his experience with the world and mirror his inner life, his scepticism, heartache, and his refusal of easy solace.

As Shakespeare's career progressed, in England grew stronger conspiratory forces. In 1601 Shakespeare and his fellows were asked to dig up the old classics, namely historical play *Richard II*, and to perform it in order to cast a slur upon the Queen. The plotters were meaning to plant the seed of successful rebellion into the minds of Londoners as well as to stimulate the plotters' courage. By agreeing to this, Chamberlain's group ventured onto extremely dangerous ground, which must have encouraged Shakespeare to become more cautious and to focus solely on the path of tragedies (Greenblatt, 2004).

The tragic play that succeeded the immense popularity of *Hamlet* was Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, in which he on the situation of unavailing Trojan War explores the complexity rooted in human abilities and skills, specifically those of intuition and romantic faith on the one hand, and of intellect and logic on the other. At this time i.e., around the year 1602, the playwright's entrepreneurial skill, his creative imagination and hard work had enabled him to purchase, besides his family home New Place in Stratford, which he bought shortly after his son's death, substantial amount of land in the Stratford area. This deed was done probably to convey status and respectability amongst the locals as the Puritan voices were strengthening and the landowner was to be more valued than a poet. More so, when later that year local authorities passed a measure outlawing all plays to be performed on the town's territory. Thankfully, in London no actions against playing companies were yet taken, however

with Queen Elizabeth ageing, no representative at the court and the very debilitated patron, Shakespeare and his fellows were forced to plan for a grim, troublesome future. Due to a costly Spanish war and inflation, extremes of wealth and poverty radiated in London and troupes' fate relied upon something, which was far beyond their control. The preferences and whims of England's next monarch were unknown, and the state politics were on the brink of a major turning point.

James of Scotland, a Protestant monarch, and a politically adroit ruler, replaced Queen Elizabeth on the English throne in 1603 (Honan,1998). Luckily for Shakespeare, soon after his enthronement James I. of England decided to make former Lord Chamberlain's Men his own theatre company. The King together with his spouse Queen Anne demanded performances on frequent occasions, especially in order to have a splendid and lofty court full of masks and stage-plays to charm foreign envoys and impress enemies of the crown. Shakespeare's group, now called the King's men, very much appreciated the kingly patronage and it spoke for a remarkable triumph of theirs. However, the plays needed to be adjusted to the sovereign's taste. (Greenblatt,2004). Though Shakespeare did not directly flatter nor praise King James he surely had to adapt his repertoire to include more 'crown-pleasing' plays. Even more so in the midst of yet another plague epidemic, in which the support of the King was vital. However, when plague was not in the picture, Shakespeare's company was doing just fine as far as the public performances at the Globe were concerned and they offered a substantial source of income on top of the royal benefits. In the first ten years of James's reign about 138 performances at the court were to be given by Shakespeare's group, amongst them the new ones being *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. The plays were basically in accordance with King's stance as they blatantly portray human sexual urges, waywardness in men as well as the delusions connected with atonement (Honan,1998).

At that time even though Shakespeare's handwriting deteriorated, and he took on less and less acting engagements his position within theatrical circles was still illustrious. Shakespeare distinguished himself from other dramatists by incorporating a special kind of social realism into his plays. His characters, unlike the ones of others, were not designed to satirize human society but rather to unravel the public's attitudes and portray social evil. One of the remarkable plays of this sort, which premiered around the year 1604 at the court, was *Othello, The Moor of Venice*. The play is one of the most poignant of his tragedies and it delves into the topics of morality, reputation, or seduction as well as it touches upon racism (Honan, 1998).

As far as Shakespeare's personal life is concerned, around the year 1604 he was just turning forty. In spite of the then short life expectancy, he was not quite in the retirement age, however surely, he knew that touring and acting was such an arduous job that he could not have been doing it forever. He began cogitating on the perils and difficulties of retirement. Namely, the parental anxiety, fear of abandonment, humiliation, and loss of identity, which he articulated in his new tragedy *King Lear*. Though Shakespeare was financially self-sufficient and accumulated enough money to never be dependent on the theatre nor his daughters, he still apparently dreaded withdrawing from work. In *King Lear* he brilliantly masters the art of double plot as well as he expresses the fear of the crisis of authority, which pervaded society in the Jacobean era and reflected transfer of power in the country. Nonetheless, Shakespeare's workload during the frenetic initial years of James's reign must have been staggering as he still juggled acting, playwriting as well as his business duties (Greenblatt,2004).

Interestingly enough, when writing his late tragedies Shakespeare was still lodged and did not own a property of his own in London. It seems that he focused predominantly on establishing family residence in Stratford, but when in London he was prone to saving money and as for his choice of lodgings he opted for wine taverns or tenements. There and also in the theatre he acquainted or even befriended many people of foreign origin, in particular of Dutch, Flemish or French descent, who gave testimony to what Shakespeare was like and what he looked like back then. From their accounts, Shakespeare appears to be rather than a tavern-hunting extroverted philanderer, as he is often portrayed by popular mythology, a writer of great intelligence and wit and a man who is sensitive to the suffering of others and who could have written masterpieces such as *Macbeth* (Honan, 1998).

Macbeth, being probably one of the last tragic literary feats of Shakespeare, was composed around the year 1606 and it was designed virtually as a reaction to the then political atmosphere and as king's flattery. Since on November 4, 1605, took place a major incident for the English crown - the catholic worshipper Guy Fawkes and a small group of his co-plotters made an attempt to assassinate the King and his family by placing a barrel of gunpowder underneath the building of the House of Parliament, where the King was to appear. This desperate conspiracy, which had been planned with the intention to express dissent with the king's putative antipathy towards Roman Catholicism, was thwarted at the very outset. However, it left the king feeling paranoid and highly vigilant and the public disturbed. King's Men, like other theatrical companies, had to come up with a play that would best suit the moment. With *Macbeth*, Shakespeare seems to have intended to write a play which would function as reassurance and comfort for the worrying London audience as well as the court

(Greenblatt,2004). Although *Macbeth* is much more than a tribute to the king and solacement. It is the apotheosis of Shakespeare's career and a proof of his extraordinary imaginativeness as well as the climax of his personal and dramatic experience.

Following *Macbeth*, Shakespeare returned to Roman topics and started to re-incorporate pagan and classical settings. This was done in order to satisfy the audience, however it also reacted to the law imposed upon theatrical companies, which forbade the mention of Jesus, God, and other religious subjects. Shakespeare's Roman tragedies *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens* pointed to the change in dramatist's outlook on questionable popular values, to his self-restoration as well as they showed his affinity to myth and fable. The plays also echoed the political issues of Shakespeare's time. Namely, the disputes between the King and the Parliament in London around the year 1608 and the overall growing hostility to the crown, which was attributed especially to the monarch's spendthrift. James's lavishness was in strong contrast with the inflation-driven anxiety occupatting the minds of ordinary English people. Anyways, in his declining years, Shakespeare left behind realistic plots, abandoned tragedy and it seemed that he had run himself completely dry (Honan, 1998).

1.6. The last phase

Notwithstanding, there were still few goals to be accomplished and some plays to be written before he called it a day. In 1608, Shakespeare together with his long-life friend and colleague James Burbage managed to take on a new time-consuming venture - The Blackfriars playhouse. So then, on top of the already prestigious position as king's favourite entertainers and managers of the Globe, Shakespeare and his colleagues were in charge of yet another stage. Blackfriars theatre was roofed, which was quite convenient considering the English weather and it was also located in one of the most prominent districts of London and therefore it attracted the refined clientele. Though somehow in the midst of this frenzy of business, Shakespeare was able to find the time to write plays. Some of the most noteworthy of his late plays include *Cymbeline* and *Pericles*. These dramas throw some light on how the playwright approached his withdrawal from the theatrical scene or how he reflected upon his personal and professional accomplishments. The prospect of retirement undoubtedly made him reevaluate some previously discussed topics and to take a fresh look at his literary output (Greenblatt, 2004). Shakespeare finished the series of romances by writing dramas *The Winter's Tale* and

the *Tempest* and he once again proved that he could have still been innovative and original. The musicality of his late romantic plays is unique and their magical elements, naive young couples and happy endings take one back to the years of Shakespeare's youth and make oneself realise that by writing the romances Shakespeare was in fact reminiscing about his life.

As a 44-year-old with a wedded daughter and both of his parents deceased, he was probably coming to terms with his life as the themes of reconciliation, forgiveness as well as the effects of one generation upon the other permeate Shakespeare's final plays. Similarly, the author's closing dramatic phase is abundant in self-mockery and frequent allusions to his earlier work. In 1611 all of the above-mentioned plays had already been performed at London's stage, and Shakespeare was steadily approaching the very close of his career (Honan, 1998). Early that year the dramatist decided to move back to his hometown Stratford and although he did not cut all of his ties with the London theatrical scene his presence in the capital was fairly limited. His main focus was now to conduct business and invest as well as to occasionally collaborate on some dramas with his colleague Robert Fletcher. What is interesting is that in 1613 Shakespeare purchased his first ever property in London, near Blackfriars theatre, which was quite ironic as he was not going to actually live in the house. His place was now in Stratford. After such a long time he was back in his family circle and not focusing solely on work. However, still the news he was about to receive was to hit him hard. Few months after he had purchased the dwelling house in London, he learned about a disaster that had struck his fellows in London. The Globe theatre had burnt to the ground. Rather than engaging in the renovation efforts of the new Globe, Shakespeare decided to drop his share within the King's Men company. Shakespeare with his ever-lasting sense of evanescence of things was now given literal declaration of such reality. The fire was only one more impetus for the dramatist to leave his writing career behind (Greenblatt, 2004).

As Shakespeare reached his 50th birthday he had already been, together with his sister Joan, last of the living children of his mother. There was not much of the original Henley Street family left and with other relatives the relationships also were not particularly impeccable. For instance, Shakespeare's daughter Judith got married to an unfaithful man whose adultery scandals eventually disgraced her and left Shakespeare's family besmirched. The public disgrace of his daughter undoubtedly must have troubled Shakespeare and it certainly did not help his physical condition. In March 1616 Shakespeare fell ill and even though he was not quite at his last gasp he certainly had to consider making his final will and testament (Honan, 1998). His last will was both perfunctory and bitter in relation to his wife Anne and for the most part the dramatist bequeathed his assets and estates to his daughter Susanna and her

family. A small portion of his wealth was also received by his daughter Judith and sister Joan as well as by a few of his closest friends and colleagues. Other than that, no-one was taken into account, and it was evident that besides his closest ones there was no extended world of concern for Shakespeare (Greenblatt, 2004). The contemporary records recount Shakespeare's last days as full of anguish. In April 1616, a massive heat struck Stratford and with the warm weather came something much more annihilating. The mortality rates were escalating, yet this time the plague could not be blamed. According to today's knowledge it seems likely that Stratford was afflicted by a typhoid epidemic. To already frail Shakespeare this dealt a final blow and after intense and unrelenting typhoid fever the dramatist passed away from this world (Honan, 1998). William Shakespeare was buried on 25th of April 1616 in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church as befitted such a remarkable personage. Shakespeare's legacy has stood the test of time. His writings are widely alluded to and adapted and his ability to embrace the ordinary as well as to portray universal human feelings make him essentially a forever favourite (Greenblatt, 2004).

2. The understanding of love before Shakespeare

2.1. The birth of love in medieval romances

Naturally, love has always been an inseparable part of people's lives regardless of one's culture or social background. People would fall in love and have relationships, however the portrayal of romantic love in literature dates back only to the 12th century. Before then, in Old English literature, stories and songs had focused predominantly on depicting the lives of warriors and their struggles in battles, the strongest experience of companionship having been the warrior's bond with his fellow comrades-in-arms and his lord. The Old English poetry depicted the celebration of nobility rooted in sacrificing one's individual desires and even one's life in favour of the group. The privilege of pursuit of personal happiness represented by the unconditional and idealized romantic love is nowhere to be found in the Anglo-Saxon heroic and elegiac poetry, which emphasizes above all the piety and devotion to God as well as the affinity of warriors to one another (Ashe, 2014).

In a similar vein, also the characters of the classical epics are rather preoccupied with performing heroic deeds and by no means have the luxury of going after something so selfishly

individual such as romantic love between two human beings. In fact, in most classical Greek and Roman mythology, Gods play with human beings like with chess pieces on a grand gameboard of life leaving no space for free will or individual choice.

Generally speaking, love poetry and the very subject of love was from the very start of literary tradition deliberately belittled by either the Church, ruling authorities or other social institutions in order to eradicate any sort of individualism from people's minds. Gradually, with the rise of Roman Catholicism all love poetry even became condemned as all human feelings were to be channelled into devotion to God. The prime virtue of people was supposed to be obedience to the emperor and societal rules, thus individual desires were to be suppressed. Love poetry had for centuries been solely a tool for worship as well as it was subjected to massive allergisation. Imagination had been channelled from here to hereafter and theological literature annihilated the secular literature of fiction and poetry (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017).

Nonetheless, the deliberate neglect of the subject of love in literature came to a grinding halt together with the Norman conquest, which marked a major religious and cultural breakthrough as well as a great shift in the literary tradition. Not only in England but around the whole Europe was, at least for a while, the theme of love brought into the literary foreground. The English society, which had been previously shaped chiefly around warfare and religion, moved in the 12th century, during the reign of Henry II. and Eleanor Aquitaine, closer to the ideals of humanity and individualism. Medieval writings of that time embraced love, emotions, and imagination as well as they adopted the genre of literary fiction. The genre of choice were medieval romances, in which the notion of romantic love was strongly tied with the idea of chivalry. Knights did heroic deeds, yet this time they did them to win the heart of their beloved rather than to sacrifice themselves for their fellow warriors. The heroes in the medieval romances acted on the basis of self-fulfilment, ready to offer themselves up to the romantic motives. The martial aspect of heroism was replaced by the feminine element of love. Self-sacrifice and suffering for love were glorified and dying for love became the archetypal tragic ending of love stories. The idea of love as life's greatest aim, the belief in the existence of soulmates and the overall consuming power of romantic love was born in the medieval period and it has been permeating literature ever since (Ashe, 2014).

The medieval romances in England initially evolved simultaneously with the French ones as after the Norman conquest both countries practically formed a single cultural unit. It was only after the end of 12th century that the English romances started to develop its own trajectory departing from the Anglo-Norman tradition. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* encapsulated English legends such as Arthurian legends of the Knights

of the Round table, which in combination with the legends of Lancelot or Perceforest, originating in the French culture, created a framework for Middle English romances (Cooper, 2004). Middle English literature was however still directly connected to the tradition of French Troubadours, and it incorporated their chivalric elements into its love stories. Medieval romances portrayed love as an amorous desire, a socially disruptive force and a highly individual and intimate passion, which did not conform to the social interests and rules of the society (O'Donoghue, 2006).

Moreover, troubadour poetry of the 12th century brought about the concept of *fin amor* or in other words courtly love, which was the result of people's dissatisfaction with the institution of arranged marriages and the overall control of people's lives by the Church. The poetry of the Troubadours was passionate, embodied and greatly daring. The basis of their poetry was a longing of a young man for an unattainable woman of a higher rank and the description of their romantic escapades and emotional rollercoasters. Troubadours elevated individual quest for love above law, dogma and even portrayed adulterous or homoerotic relationships. In their poetry they accentuated mutual love between a pair of lovers, erotic desire and the strong unconditional bond between two people, which could not have been denied by any bishop nor a religious authority. Heroes in the troubadour poetry enjoyed life on the earth and they found purpose in life in their one special beloved. They were not gazing towards the heavens, but into the depths of their lover's heart.

Naturally, this individualistic approach towards life set troubadours at odds with the theological authorities of that time and eventually led to the ultimate repression in the domain of love poetry and started the era of continuous spiritualization of the subject of love in literature (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017). Due to that, many of the medieval romances have survived only in fragmentary manuscripts or their stories were retained by the vernacular culture. Still the motifs of the stories and the legacy of troubadour poetry have survived and have served as an inspiration to many authors of love literature in general. Typically, English medieval romances such as *Bevis of Hamtoun* or *Guy of Warwick* were abundantly alluded to during the Renaissance period and the medieval outlook on romantic love has had an unparalleled function in the context of the development of the whole romantic literature and the very understanding of the subject of love (Cooper, 2004). "The eternal question 'What is love?' seems to have no definitive answer." (Johnson et al., 2016, p. 33). However, this very question appears to emerge in the Middle Ages.

Love is so complex of an emotion and such a subjective phenomenon thus its understanding is by no means straightforward or uniform. Love can be understood differently

by different people and various aspects of love can be portrayed diversely and ascribed different importance by different authors. Therefore, there also naturally exist many theories about love, which reflect the varying views on love in its complexity. Apart from the *fin amor* concept, one of the most influential theories originating in the medieval times has been the one of seeing love as a sickness or a malady of the mind, which controls individuals, deprives them of their rational thinking and subdues them to their passionate and unreasonable emotions. This view on love is represented by the so-called *amor heroes*, who are physically and mentally disabled by their strong romantic feelings and whose love must be treated and healed. Love in the stories featuring *amores heroes* expresses itself just like any other sickness, in symptoms such as sleeplessness, incessant flow of tears or unmotivated laughter. Love in the Middle Ages and later on in the Renaissance, was discussed on so many different levels that it had created a theoretical discourse, which corresponded to the overall accentuation of either bodily or spiritual aspects of love by individual literary authors. There existed three mutually exclusive systems of thinking about love. One was the divine or introspective type of love - *amore contemplativo* based on celebrating the idea of perfection and spiritual harmony while being in line with the ideals of Christianity. The second one was the human or candid type of love regarded as *amore morale* or *amore onesto* focusing on the earthly aspect of love, remaining largely physically unfulfilled and rather centred on the mind, and the third philosophical outlook on love was viewing love as purely bodily and erotic desire, celebrating sexuality, and excluding human rationality from its scope - called *amore lascivo*.

This trichotomy of arguing about love as an angelic, human, or animal-like sensation has been present in love literature throughout its existence. These counteracting forces in the discourse on love as well as the utmost complexity of the emotion encompassed late medieval author Geoffrey Chaucer in his Trojan romance *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer described love as uncontrollable passion triggering all sorts of emotions, portrayed the main heroine as a heavenly being as well as illustrated love as a sickness of the mind. By juxtapositioning these concepts he carried on with constructing the plurality of different ways of speaking about love rooted in the literary tradition as a whole (Johnston et al., 2016).

The half of the millennium during which the romances were the principal form of secular literature was a historical era of huge change. When romances first began to be composed England was not even a sovereign cultural entity. However, as the time went by it gradually evolved into a fiercely nationalist body. Manuscript culture with its primary appeal to the wealthy, gave way to the print, with its potential for wide circulation. The ideology of

Roman Catholicism, which accentuated the public displays of faith such as pilgrimages or celibacy, was succeeded by Protestant emphasis on the individual and private.

In spite of the pressure of changes, the influence of medieval romances onto Renaissance culture was exceptionally fierce. It was not only the rediscovery of the Classics that affected Elizabethan writing, but it was particularly the tradition of medieval romances that played a huge part in the inspiration and choice of style of Elizabethan writers. The lasting appeal of romance was rooted partly in its familiarity as well as the infinite adaptability of its motifs. The transmission of medieval romance to the 16th century and beyond was rooted in the fact that romances of the Middle Ages were basically native stories originating in English legends and narrative traditions of the country. Elizabethan authors were raised on medieval romances, and they represented the climax of English national literary tradition as a whole and therefore they could not have been left behind or forgotten (Cooper, 2004).

2.2 Dante, Petrarch, and their influence on love poetry

Yet, the *fin' amor* legacy and the revolutionary understanding of love brought about by the medieval authors, which was characterized by mutual erotic desire between lovers and purely individualistic approach to the emotion, was left behind and seemingly forgotten for a while. As a consequence of the Albigensian crusade, the church was once again gaining power over people's lives and seizing control over the love poetry genre. This religious breakthrough gave rise to the movement of Italian poets, dominant in the 13-14th century, who are regarded as *stilnovisti*. The most prominent of these authors was Dante Alighieri, who in the introduction to his *Divine Comedy* articulated the principal characteristics and tenets of Italian Renaissance. His influence upon the whole love poetry genre in the Renaissance period was immense just like was the impact of his direct successor Francesco Petrarch. Their poetry constituted a separate and very ground-breaking way of understanding love. These Italian authors perceived love as a solely spiritual phenomenon deprived of the individual and bodily aspect. Their outlook on love and beauty was strongly rooted in the philosophical stream called Neoplatonism as well as it was tied with Christian doctrine.

In the context of Italian Renaissance, life of an individual was viewed only as a shadow to the higher realm of divine reality beyond all imagination. The ultimate life mission was not to be achieved in everyday reality, but one was expected to reach towards the heavens, to yearn for the eternal and to desire existence that exceeded his own. This spiritual ascent was to be

realised through love or more specifically through worship of an idealized feminine figure. Beauty of a lady in the Italian Renaissance poetry was likened to the one of an angel, jewel or a star. Women were portrayed as divine principles, dehumanized objects of adoration or steps on the imaginary stairway leading towards the welkin. There was no space for sexual desire or physical passion in love as the reciprocity and mutuality of romantic relationships was excluded and replaced by one-sided devotion of male lovers to their ideal women. Italian sonneteers once again withdrew from individual real human passions and turned to the idealized conceptions of love, which were in line with the Christian teachings and the law. Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura were poetic muses, virtually miraculous goddesses stripped of humanity functioning as angelic sacral forces bringing a poet closer to God.

For Dante, choosing to love over God equalled benighting sin and it consigned lovers to forever torment in hell: to the eternal agony. However, for Petrarch, love caused suffering even during one's earthly life and for that was to be blamed exclusively the beloved woman. Woman's beauty was described as otherworldly, and she was considered haughty for not returning lover's feelings. In contrast to that, men were portrayed as a sort of a martyrs suffering deep anguish of love out of which there was no escape. According to *stilnovisti*, achieving the sublime and spiritual in love was to be realised by the complete refusal of the sensual and emotional in a person and by celebrating the ideal of beauty itself i.e., the idealized image of love. Love in the context of Italian Renaissance evolved around higher purposes of the soul. Men were to admire the moral and intellectual capacities of their ladies and those who gave in to the superficial beauty and bodily needs were to be condemned (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017).

Yet, it was not only the new way of thinking about love but also the way of writing about the emotion itself that distinguished authors of the Italian Renaissance from those before them. *Stilnovisti* introduced the sonnet form into the literary context in the half of the 13th century and Petrarch then adopted it as his primary tool to pay a tribute to his muse Laura in his collection of sonnets called *Il Canzoniere*. In this enormously inspirational piece of literature Petrarch established his own distinct sonnet form consisting of 14 lines i.e., an octave and a sestet, divided by a change in rhyme or syntax, later on entitled as 'Petrarchan sonnet'. Petrarch's love verses are lyrical, musical, and highly suggestive. He tries to describe the inexplicable by likening the internal romantic desire for the beloved to nature, thus the natural world functions as the representation of the internal world of emotions of the lover in Petrarch's poetry. As for their composition Petrarchan sonnets are often fragmentary, they switch between various self-perspectives and feature lofty metaphors and evocative imagery. Surprisingly, for many years after Petrarch, sonnet remained within the realms of Italian culture. However, when

it finally made its way through to other European countries it had an enormous effect, and it virtually seized the whole love poetry genre as it became the typical form to write about love throughout the whole 16th century (Spiller, 1992).

English authors were not excluded from this literary trend despite the fact that the influence of medieval troubadour ethos was stronger in England than for instance in France. The continuators of Petrarchan poetry were in the context of English literature the Tudor sonneteers Henry Howard and Thomas Wyatt. Their love poetry speaks of the impossibility of loving in return, suffering rooted in the emotion as well as of the utmost importance of rank and status as far as romantic relationships are concerned. Their sonnets are, alike the Petrarchan, full of imagery of a woman as a cruel angel with burning eyes who is to be punished for rejecting the man. Love is viewed as a dangerous and painful state of mind from which there is no way out (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017).

Moreover, a distinct contribution to the sonnet form was that Wyatt and Howard expanded on Petrarchan sonnet by adding the final rhyming couplet. Function of the final two verses was to express the conclusive paradox i.e., for instance the fact that the lover goes willingly to what will eventually destroy him - love. Gradually, the couplet takes on the function of a proverb or a witty conclusion that completes the sonnet form. In the collection of sonnets *Totell's Miscellany* Wyatt and Howard constitute a distinct English form of the sonnet in a form 4+4+4+2, which is then imitated by their successors, as well as by Shakespeare, but other than that they more or less stick to the Petrarchan paradigm on love (Spiller, 2017).

2.3. Elizabethan love poetry

For several decades sonnet had disappeared from the foreground of English literature, only to be re-discovered within the environment of the late Elizabethan era. Seemingly all of the sudden, sonnets came into the vogue and became the preferable genre of choice when writing about love, in spite of its formal barriers and structural requirements. The outpouring of sonnet sequences basically flooded the market in the 1590's directly following Philip Sidney's posthumous publication of *Astrophil and Stella* (Marotti, 1982). Sidney in his sonnet sequence described the trappings rooted in desiring an unattainable woman and portrayed the torment connected with unrequited love. By the choice of that theme, he strongly related to the Petrarchan understanding of love as the synonym for suffering, however he also in many ways departed from the traditional Petrarchan model. Apart from the sexual explicitness of his sonnets

he also intertwined his verses with irony and light humour by which he deconstructed the idealized lyrical persona of Petrarchan sonnet and drew reader's attention to the gap between reality and fictional text (Spiller, 1992). "Philip Sidney's sequence of sonnets is often said to have inaugurated a 'craze' for sonnet sequences as after 1591 numerous sequences were printed, including, of course, Shakespeare's own in 1609." (Mayne, 2017).

The popularity of sonnet was growing though the purely spiritual and elevated outlook on love typical of Petrarch was more and more fading away from the writings of the Elizabethan authors. Rather than sticking only with the more conventional motives, such as the worship of a perfect unattainable lady, Elizabethan authors ventured into confronting poetic taboos. Love poetry of the English Renaissance spoke of homoerotic relationships, displayed blatant eroticism and was able to revive the bodily and individualistic aspect of love previously excluded by authors of the Italian Renaissance. Elizabethan poets produced love poetry in diverse forms, besides sonnets they opted mainly for ballads, elegies, songs, or lyrics. As for their inspiration they drew upon medieval romances and classical love poetry such as the one of the Roman poet Ovid.

Nevertheless, the Elizabethan sonnet vogue cannot be attributed to some suddenly emerged and extraordinary need of poets to express their feelings for the beloved, but rather it seems that sonnets functioned as the tool to acquire a position of influence and favour at the court. Poets would produce love poetry to demonstrate their wit and value to their aristocratic patrons, which was of course also the case of Shakespeare (Mayne, 2017). Anyways, superficial intentions were not the only thing responsible for the fashionableness of love poetry at that time. Sonnets were also a major theatrical device within the arenas of courtly and public performances at the stage of Elizabethan Renaissance theatre, which in itself provided for a stage of grand proportions on which the subject of love could be explored and looked at from various perspectives.

Regardless of the sincerity or the true motives behind the production of sonnets, they can still be read simply as direct and honest expressions of basic human emotions and understood as congenial ways how love could have been put into words. Undoubtedly, Elizabethan sonneteers resurrected the individualistic approach to love, stripped it of the pure spirituality assigned to it by Petrarch and once again incorporated the theme of private human desires and passions into their repertoire. The most prominent of authors who captured the intricate dance of passions and eloquence typical of the Elizabethan sensibility were sonneteers Samuel Daniel and Edmund Spenser (Spiller, 1998). Over the course of the 16th century there was taking place gradual departure from the Petrarchan paradigm. To the point that Elizabethan

sonneteers ultimately rejected one of the main pillars of Petrarchan sonnet - the belief that love between lovers continues after death i.e., posthumous love. For Petrarch death could not put an end to his sufferings or bring him heavenly peace as his soul was forever bound to his beloved. In fact, the second part of Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere*, entitled 'in morte' is devoted solely to Laura's death spirit while being full of Petrarch's eternal unreciprocated longing for his deceased muse. This notion of continuity and eternal torment is what is completely missing from the works of Elizabethan sonneteers for whom mortality represents unequivocal detachment of poet's emotional ties and even a way to put an end to the suffering and to enjoy eternal rest. No matter of the religious preferences and visions about the afterlife, death was Elizabethan poets a way to disperse the love sickness and free themselves from chains of love. Within the context of Renaissance English love poetry there is no equivalent for the transcendence of earthly love to its sacred counterpart. Love is mortal and to move from earth to heaven requires not a ladder of love but a leap to the unknown (Targoff, 2014).

The sonnet craze of the 1590's was in reality a very brief event and the whole poetic trend was indeed a mere drop in the ocean in comparison with the dramatic outburst happening during the Elizabethan era. Only a few authors chose to engage with sonnets after the end of the 16th century, the most notable of them being John Donne, John Milton or of course Shakespeare himself (Marotti, 1982).

3. The nature of love in Shakespeare's poetic works

3.1. The nature of love in Shakespeare's sonnets

More than anywhere else in Shakespeare's varied and extensive repertoire, love receives ultimate concentration in his poems. Particularly, in the collection of his 154 sonnets first published in 1609, simply called *The Sonnets*. Shakespeare would write sonnets throughout 1590's and they at first circulated in manuscripts meant for private reading only, therefore its exact dating is problematic. However, it seems that Shakespeare was composing love poetry throughout his whole playwriting career. Due to his occupation as a poet-playwright there exists a fruitful crisscrossing between his poetic and dramatic skills. His sonnets have an theatrical element to them seldom found among the poems of other Elizabethan sonneteers. Many of Shakespeare's verses are so intensely vivid and dramatized as if they were

written to be performed on stage and delivered through dialogue. Simultaneously, his plays are created with an ear to rhyme and full of poetry in various forms. Nevertheless, the outlooks on love in the sonnet collection are very diverse as they evolve and change as the sequence progresses. Shakespeare's sonnets do not establish a unified set of ideas about love but instead, they are full of contradictions as far as the nature of love is concerned (Post, 2017).

In the majority of his sonnet sequence, namely up until the sonnet 127, the understanding of love is in line with the conventional Renaissance outlook on the emotion i.e., in line with *fin' amor* concept. The earlier sonnets revive the troubadour tradition and accept the individualistic approach to the emotion typical within the realms of courtly love poetry. The first 127 poems include preference for spiritual love and carry bright and optimistic undertones. Love in them is viewed as a lofty ennobling force with infinite potential and the beloved is praised and deemed lovely and pure. The spiritual aspect of love is preferred in contrast to the bodily type of love, that is to say lust, which is scorned and considered as a primitive emotion. Yet, the pure Neoplatonic spiritual idealism typical of Petrarch completely fades away from Shakespeare's sonnets and it is replaced by the earthly aspect of love. Shakespeare's poetry accentuates mutuality in love and intimacy between two human beings and departs from the spiritualization of love accentuated by the authors of Italian Renaissance (Ma, 2014).

The nature of love in Shakespeare's early sonnets is described predominantly from the humanistic point of view. Shakespeare passionately glorifies true love and accentuates the aspect of loyalty within the romantic relationship as well as the importance of faithfulness, trust and sustainability in regard to the emotion. Love for Shakespeare is the meaning of life, sunshine on a cloudy day or a power to find joy in the midst of all the sorrows and miseries of life. Eternal true love is a true friendship, which transforms torture into ecstasy. It's an everlasting unquenchable flame who wins in the fight against mutability. However, this light-hearted definition of love is not the only one that Shakespeare presents in his sonnets. He speaks also of the dark counterpart of love, the untruthful love manifesting itself by uncontrollable lust and bringing about great suffering and self-hatred. Lustful love is a torturous disease-like passion, which changes one into madmen and from whose deceits there is no escape. Therefore, love in the sonnet sequence is described quite ambiguously. It can both cure you as well as destroy you, as just as everything in the world it undergoes constant change. Shakespeare's sonnet sequence is multi-layered and multi-meaning yet there can be found a certain developmental timeline (Liu & Shen, 2016).

As was implied beforehand, the first part of the sequence glorifies love and speaks of its positive aspects. It is addressed directly to the 'fair youth', probably a beautiful young man, who is regarded as a narcissistic person with attitudes and of aristocratic descent. Due to that there has been many disputes over who in reality that mysterious young man was, and many historians suggest that it could have been one of the poet's patrons, either Henry Wriotsshley or William Herbert (Martin, 1972). Regardless of the real addressee or their autobiographical foundation, the majority of the sonnets talk of a loving relationship between two men. By choosing to dedicate poems to the male friend, Shakespeare oversteps the boundaries of conventional sonnet, which had been previously focused solely at praising a mistress or a wife and excludes the chivalrous love of a feminine figure completely from his sonnets. The bigger part of his sonnet cycle speaks of an idealized emotional connection between two men of a passionate friendship between two lovers who are inseparable and gushing in their shows of feelings. Their relationship is portrayed as more elevated than any sort of heterosexual bond or at times even marriage. This brotherly affection is depicted as an intense and warm bond between two soulmates, which is unbreakable and irreplaceable.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare in the first part of the sequence depicts universal feelings such as longing, adoration, jealousy, or reconciliation, which can be felt by lovers of all kinds regardless of their gender and thus bequeaths this universal expression of true love to the Romantic authors as well as to today's readers (Atkins,2007). In the first third of the sonnets sequence, addressed to the 'fair youth', the main themes are mutability, passing of time, evanescence of youth and beauty and ways how to fight time, which can be done either through creating immortal poetic lines, by procreation or by finding true love (Martin, 1972).

In contrast to the earlier sonnets, the last part of Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, namely the sonnets 127-154, deal with the negative aspects of love and are dedicated to the 'dark lady'. The late sonnets are imbued with melancholic and pessimistic atmosphere and focus chiefly on the negative aspects and variants of love. The poet describes the Dark lady as a person unworthy of his love and does not miss a chance to point out her falsehoods and imperfections. The power of the dark lady's beauty is hypnotizing, and her influence makes one basically a slave of his own senses and infatuations. A man is described as a victim of the feeling of the heart and his love is portrayed as a sort of a blind sensual obsession of which he is unable to get rid of in spite of being aware of its foolishness. The Dark Lady's mesmerizing influence is likened to the plague or fever, yet the men's despicable lust always seems to prevail and conquer his rational thinking. The dark sonnets in the series are poems full of sexual implications and they are adulterous and deeply passionate. There is articulated a clash between

sense and sensibility, which makes a desiring man loathe himself, though still he cannot escape the consuming power of his erotic love. The ‘dark sonnets’ express the ultimate agony resulting from the dark lady’s betrayal - the fact that she had seduced the fair friend (Ma, 2014).

The shift in the outlook on the nature of love in the sequence corresponds to the overall change in Shakespeare’s works, which gradually more and more depart from light-hearted optimism and move towards the dark pessimistic themes and more serious topics. The destructive intensity of erotic love makes Shakespeare discuss the importance of self-love, which is assigned ultimate value as one is constantly swayed by strong emotions and his self if being eroded by the pressure from the outside. Shakespeare identifies selfhood in love and expresses the idea that love has little meaning if one does not love himself (Martin, 1972). “Shakespeare's sonnet cycle stands the conventional Petrarchan situation on its head, turning the sonnet-lady into a whore and attaching all the idealised emotion to a young man.” (Atkins, 2007, p.16). Shakespeare’s sonnet sequence also includes several poems addressed to an anonymous ‘rival poet’, that are namely sonnets 78-86, and also a few that are completely unrelated to the rest of the poems. The intended structuring of the sonnets as well as the muses behind their creation are uncertain, which however by no means underscores the value and brilliance of the sonnet collection and its influential value (Atkins, 2007).

3.1.1. The theme of love in *Sonnet 1*

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty’s rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed’st thy light’s flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world’s fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak’st waste in niggarding:
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world’s due, by the grave and thee. (Shakespeare, 2018).

Sonnet 1 is the first poem of the collection, yet it seems it was probably composed later and deliberately placed at the start as a sort of a preface. It encompasses many themes and concepts that permeate the whole sequence such as beauty, mortality, or passage of time. The poem to a large extent reflects author's cultural background as it starts with a paradisiacal command that God ordered people to multiply' as well as it features other religious mentions such as the reference to deadly sins, namely gluttony, or it mirrors poet's inspirational roots in medieval romances by choosing 'rose' as the metaphor for beauty. Different images are juxtaposed in the sonnet, and they appear in contrary pairs for instance 'abundance-famine', 'increase-decrease' and so on (Vendler, 1999). The main argument of the sonnet is the importance of procreation for preservation of beauty and its function in maintaining one self's individual heritage immortal. Having an heir is a way to pass on beauty to future generations and how to conquer mutability.

As far as love is concerned, the poem speaks of the negative effects of excessive self-love, which borders narcissism and breeds selfishness. Self-absorbed individuals reject procreation, which may eventually lead to the demise of humankind. The threat of growing old and mortality is omnipresent, and the 'youth' is to be blamed for narcissistically hoarding its beauty for himself while being ignorant to its fleeting nature. The image of rose in the poem functions as the metaphor for beauty, which in youth at first blooms and then it gradually loses its petals as it grows old, it's only hope than being the bud, which transfers the beauty through multiplying i.e., by having children. The hunger metaphors in the sonnet 'glutton, eat' seem to mirror poet's longing for the subject of the verses as well as the self-centeredness of a narcissistic youth, which is oblivious to the future and lives only for today giving in to his own ravenous desires (Huw, 2016).

3.1.2. The theme of love in *Sonnet 18*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. (Shakespeare, 2018).

Sonnet 18 is dedicated to the appraisal of the beauty of the poet's beloved friend. By using a series of sensory delineations there is created a vivid image of his friend's attractiveness. It seems that Shakespeare aims at finding the perfect metaphor to describe his feeling, comparing his beloved to the - rosebuds, summer day. Yet he finds that there is always something imperfect about nature as it is constantly changing, time is passing, and nothing stays in the state of utmost perfection. Everything in the universe succumbs to the power of time and even his friend's grace will eventually disappear with the lapse of time. Emotions will be defeated by transience, people by mortality and what will stay on shall be the art of verse. Shakespeare eventually concludes that only poetic verses are eternal and can preserve love for the individual and by that conquer time and death. Life of an individual is in this sonnet valued much more than any sort of spiritual ideal or theological abstraction. True love is the ultimate aim of life, and its existence is to be maintained through poetry (Vendler, 1999).

By writing these verses Shakespeare wishes to immortalize his friend's moral virtues rather than only eulogize his outer beauty as Shakespeare differentiates between being beautiful on the inside and on the outside. The sonnets articulate the poet's gratitude and admiration for his friend's benevolence and assistance to him in spite of his low social status. Shakespeare expresses the internal beauty of a person, which cannot be likened to anything like flowers or natural beauties but is of much more value than mere physical attractiveness, and such inner beauty will stay longer in people's memory when portrayed in poetry (Liu & Shen, 2016).

3.1.3. The theme of love in *Sonnet 116*

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments; love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (Shakespeare, 2018).

The sonnet 116 has been widely regarded as 'the wedding sonnet' as it speaks of the true love between two souls, which is constant and unalterable by time and change. It has been read as a definition of true love - a bond between two special souls, which lasts till death does them part. Shakespeare aims at creating a definition of true love in this sonnet. He portrays it as truthful emotion, which is characterized by mutual faithfulness and trust. Love should be a lighthouse, guiding the wandering souls towards the right direction in life - their soulmates. It is freely given and received, though just like stars are far away, also the notion of true love is a distant concept, whose worth cannot be fully appreciated by people. The poem articulates a conviction that although time is a tyrant grim reaper, true love is not influenced by the impediments of alteration and remains the only never-changing invariable in the life equation. True love means that one shall never wander away from its beloved by being unfaithful as adultery is what wreaks havoc upon the truthfulness of love (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017).

However, due to the presence of negation, the words 'never, not, nor', another interpretation of the verses is possible. The poem can be viewed more as a rebuttal of the existence of true love and resignation to believing that something so pure may exist between two imperfect human beings. People's qualities change over time creating impediments to the romantic relationship thus love can never be constant and permanent. Thanks to the reciprocity in love if one person changes the other undergoes alteration as well and the whole tie between them can never be the same. The cause of alternation is merciless time and mutability, which destroy the physical beauty and youth of the beloved and by that also ruin the romantic love and attraction between lovers. According to this interpretation, love gradually fades away and no such thing as eternal spiritual bond between 'married souls' can exist in reality. The

superlunary fixed 'star' is non-existent at the edge of doom i.e., in the reality of mortal beings (Vendler, 1999).

3.1.4. The theme of love in *Sonnet 129*

Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action, and till action, lust
Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
Past reason hated as a swallowed bait
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
Mad in pursuit and in possession so,
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe,
Before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream.
All this the world well knows yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell (Shakespeare,2018).

Sonnet 129 is one of the first of the pessimistic sonnets of the sequence as well as one of the most erotic and sexually allusive of them. The sonnet speaks of a men's submission to lust and of his deep shame and blame connected with that erotic longing. The poem portrays different consequences and repercussions of lust in action and different mental stages that one goes through before, while and after experiencing a sexual act. It grasps the very basis of purely sexual relationships and belittles the value of such love-less connections to the utmost extreme. Lust, as described in this poem, goes beyond reason and changes otherwise rationally thinking men into savage madmen as well as turns them away from genuine relationships in their life (Vendler, 1999).

As Shakespeare presents it in the Sonnet 129, giving into lust makes you abandon your morals, logic as well as it forces you to harm people and act selfishly. For a brief blissful moment, you might feel joyful, which is however immediately followed by regret and ignominy. Sexual attraction tricks you into agony of shame and guilt yet nobody is wise enough to avoid this escapade and still ends up yielding to this well-known trickery of senses. Lust is

fleeting and unsubstantial yet still that momentary heavenly beatitude makes men overlook the aftermath and venture down that road again and again. In lustful love, irrationality always seems to prevail, and it keeps on making a man a slave of his rudimentary needs. Surrendering to the power of libido immediately triggers a wave of self-hatred and such feelings, at least in this poem, by far exceed the benefits of sexual desires (Balcarcel, 2014).

3.1.5. The theme of love in *Sonnets 130*

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go—
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare (Shakespeare, 2018).

Sonnet 130 is essentially a parody on a blazon, and it mocks the whole plethora of love sonnets, which idealize feminine figures by using metaphors and similes. Likening a woman's eyes to a sun and her lips to roses and the overall Petrarchan conceit is dismantled by this sonnet, which rejects the standard praise clichés and the false models of womanhood favoured by the poet's rivals. Shakespeare in these verses expresses preference for the individual over the ideal, the flesh over spirit as well as natural flaws above artificial flawlessness. Goddesses are overrated and what should be treasured is the realness and individuality of the one special beloved (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017).

Apparently, Shakespeare is irritated at the excess of love-lyrics and fake depictions of the beloved ladies. The mistress in sonnet 130 is in reaction to that portrayed as a real woman with plenty of imperfections. Actually, in some verses the description of the dark lady's

appearance verges on crude and insulting, however the final couplet partially makes up for that by categorizing the verses as mere honest portrayal of a woman stripped of any sort of empty metaphorization. No false comparisons are needed to enhance mistresses' beauty as every woman is unique and beautiful as she is and what speaking in clichés about a woman does, is in fact just misrepresenting her true beauty and diminishing her real value. In spite of his lady's drawbacks, the poet's love for her is more valuable than any sort of worship-like relationship presented in other melodramatic sonnets. It is a special down-to-earth love and a sincere emotion that is the true love itself (Vendler, 1999).

3.1.6. The theme of love in *Sonnet 154*

The little Love-god lying once asleep
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand
The fairest votary took up that fire
Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,
And so the general of hot desire
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarmed.
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy
For men diseased; but I, my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure, and this by that I prove:
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love (Shakespeare, 2018).

The last sonnet of the collection is strongly tied with the preceding sonnet i.e., the sonnet 153. These two deals essentially with the same topic and they both create an ending to the 'dark lady' part of the sequence thanks to which, it is presumed that the pair of the sonnets was intentionally put to the end of the sequence to function as a sort of a conclusion, in spite of having been written rather earlier. This dark and sexually charged sonnet takes inspiration from an original Greek poem composed around the 5-6th century and it features two mythological characters - the Roman love-God Cupid and the nymph (Vendler, 1999).

These two figures represent two counteracting concepts - lust and chastity i.e., true love vs. lustful love. Featuring imagery of a mythical landscape, the poem therefore symbolically narrates a contest between sexual abstention and erotic passion, in which the later one prevails. The poem also expresses an elementary feature of love - its inherent unquenchability and indestructibility. In other words, love cannot be cured nor erased, it is an eternal force, a never-ending flow of heat, which cannot be extinguished. This is in the poem articulated through the usage of symbols, in particular by the Cupid's burning torch. Just like love is imperishable, also Cupid's fire only heats up water in the well turning it into a magical bath able to heal lovesickness, but it never loses its powers. The Cupid's torch represents a phallic symbol and the yonic one, thus they stand for the masculine and feminine principle in the poem. Moreover, both the speaker of the sonnet as well as the Cupid are hypnotized and betrayed by women in their most vulnerable state, the speaker while being taken over by his emotions towards the 'dark lady' and the Cupid when sleeping disarmed next to a chaste nymph. The poet's enslaving passionate erotic love for the 'dark lady' is incurable, which is the depiction of love typical of all the late sonnets in the sequence. The understanding of love in Sonnet 154 is directly linked to the one in *Lover's Complaint* - a narrative poem published as a part of the sonnet sequence in 1609 (Spacey, 2020).

3.2. The theme of love in *Venus and Adonis*

By re-telling the ancient Greek mythological story of Venus and Adonis, Shakespeare overthrows conventions of love poetry as he once again departs from the Petrarchan-inspired veneration of a feminine figure and relates to the depiction of women as presented in the sonnets dedicated to the 'dark lady'. This bold mythological adaptation of *Venus and Adonis* was published during the brief closure of theatres due the outbreak of the plague, probably around the year 1593 and it was one of the first important poetic feats of Shakespeare. Love in the poem is portrayed in a complex and contradictory manner and there is a strong sexual dimension to it. The poem can be interpreted as a direct refutation of the Platonic and Puritan arguments against bodily love as well as a re-enactment of men's fall to sin. Traditionally, Venus is the goddess of love - a symbol for desirable femininity. However, in Shakespeare's remodelling of the myth, Venus is portrayed as an ardent and pursuing woman, whose seductive advances gradually grow insatiably eager changing her into a consuming and violent

impersonal force embodying pure lust. Thanks to the vivid oral imagery of kissing and eating, originally a love goddess, is in the verses depersonalized and even likened to an animal devouring a prey. Dehumanization of Venus leads to describing her as a tyrannical lustful energy compared both to the animal world as well as the battlefield. Venus' oral aggressiveness is strongly at variance with the typical situation in love poetry - woman being a silent auditor to whom man woo and whom they worship. On the contrary, Shakespeare's Venus represents the sensual type of love driven by sexual desire and tempestuous emotions while the male character in the poem i.e., Adonis, represents essentially the spiritual counterpart of love thus true love itself. For Adonis love as expressed by Venus is only craven lust, which comes and goes like a violent brief storm, and it is unreliable and dangerous. Rational control seems to prevail in Adonis' behaviour as he throughout the poem keeps on being oblivious to erotic impetuses of his female admirer, repudiating *eros* within himself.

Yet, Adonis' chase of hunting defies all logic, and it only testifies to the fact that his acts are in fact irrational and instinct driven. Also, his standoffishness cannot be attributed to his self-restraint but rather to the fact that he is not even remotely tempted by Venus' beauty nor interested in engaging in sexual affairs with her. Rather he is interested in the faithful enduring type of love, which is in the poem symbolized by the hunting obsession. The hunger for hunting the boar represents the human desire for the unattainable and distant i.e., something which lies beyond the grasp of an individual, therefore the very ideal of love. On the other hand, Adonis' hunger for hunting can be viewed also as a way to ridicule the very concept of love. As choosing to fight a hideous savage creature in contrast to giving in to a beautiful love goddess evokes comical and mocking undertones in the poem. Also, the hero's desire to hunt the boar can be understood as a way how Adonis channels the dismay of sexual threat and aggressivity that erodes him from within. Adonis rather opts for being threatened by death than for annihilating his self by yielding to emotions or passions. Through incorporating the ugly boar within the story Shakespeare explores different ways how evil operates and how various forces destroy youth, an example of which may be the forces of mutability, imperfection, and mortality (Kahn, 1976).

Nevertheless, in spite of their varying views on love, both Venus and Adonis' actions prove that all people are liable to be compelled by their desires though they may be inexplicable and that all love brings about conflict and invariably results in suffering or death. People when influenced by lust will do anything to satisfy their desires only to find out they hide agony and despair. Therefore, the very climax of the story can be then interpreted as a moral lesson of the consequences of yielding to passions (Hamilton, 1961). Nonetheless, Adonis' attitude towards

love is to a great extent influenced by his narcissism and self-absorbedness. In creating the character of Adonis, Shakespeare is inspired by Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*, in particular by the character of Narcissus. By closing up Adonis within his own self-centred world, Shakespeare dramatizes the effects of excessive self-love. Adonis is the ideal of beauty - a young handsome hunter whose looks are spotless. Yet it is quite the physical attractiveness and youth that make him his own greatest enemy. His narcissistic self leads him to protect himself from the threat of love, which like the refusal of procreation in sonnets, brings about the hero's ultimate demise. Adonis's situation reflects the crisis of identity in youth, the transition from boyhood to manhood and the clash between intimacy and isolation. The end of a boy's childhood is marked by engaging in a relationship with a woman, which is a step that Adonis is unwilling to take. The cold and harsh refusal of sexual union with Venus stems from his inability to love others and from his frustration with intimacy. His excuses and defensive stance on love itself is focused at denying the very existence of the emotion while he has no experience with romance whatsoever due to his young age. Adonis' closed heart and overwarriness basically alienate him from the human race condemning him to solitary and meaningless being.

The very climax of the story - Adonis' after-death metamorphosis into the flower symbolizes his early mortality and his solitary existence during life as well as the relationship to himself and others - as flowers grow and die regardless of human existence. The purple colour of the flower blossom symbolizes the end of clash between white and red i.e., coldness and lust and the final reconciliation of these two concepts. Naturally, the rebirth of Adonis as a flower fundamentally changes the whole relationship between him and Venus. Previously seductive Venus realises in the nourishing of Adonis's flower her motherly instincts and finally achieves symbolic possession of Adonis even though he is only an object of gratification lacking any mind or free will. Venus treats the metamorphosed flower as her child yet to own it completely she would have to pick the flower thus to be responsible for its death. The strange relationship Venus holds for the metamorphosed flower signifies the inherent connectedness of love with conflict and frustration. All must love and though none shall find perfect satisfaction, life apart from love is death (Kahn, 1976).

By changing the original version of the myth, in which Adonis finally subsides to the goddess' temptations, Shakespeare frees the story of a huge moral lesson. Also as opposed to the original version, Venus in this poem represents love whereas normally it is Venus' son Cupid that carries these characteristics. Supported by flowers which do not bend, born by doves towards the sky, Venus functions as the ultimate representation of unconditional love.

Although she evolves from a domineering temptress into a humble motherly figure, still she impersonalizes just different ways of love itself.

Gradually, the erotic courtship to Adonis converts into deep grief, which is in line with the overall change in the overtone of the narrative poem, which changes from the comic and bawdy account of characters' actions into a poem with tragic and lamentful atmosphere. Surprisingly, it is the male character of Adonis that functions in the poem as the symbol for beauty, which is in the poem tied with the perversions of love - self-loving and love-lacking whereas normally it is Venus that is the embodiment of beauty. Also, the worshipping of Adonis' beauty can be viewed in a way as a criticism targeted at the Platonic outlook on love, as loving a person only for its beauty results in loving the ideal of beauty itself. That is to say, excluding the inner beauty from loving leads to misinterpretation of its value and to the tragic ending of the appearance-based romantic relationship. Venus' blind obsession with Adonis' looks leaves her lost in the labyrinth of emotions and swayed by the lustful chaos.

The comic treatment of love in Venus and Adonis prefigures Shakespeare's early comedies and the transformation of the poem's emotive atmosphere corresponds to the innovative style of Shakespeare. By writing this narrative poem, Shakespeare establishes vogue for erotic mythological poetry and Venus' admiration of Adonis becomes the archetypal relationship of Shakespeare's comedies just like Adonis' absurd death establishes the archetypal ending of his mature tragedies (Hamilton, 1961).

3.3. The theme of love in *The Rape of Lucrece*

As the title suggests, narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* is nothing like a love story. There is no place for romance in the poem but rather it is a direct condemnation of lust as well as meditation on the consequences of yielding to one's lascivious bodily desires. The act of violent takeover of a woman in *The Rape of Lucrece* symbolizes the results of loving the outer beauty of a woman only. Particularly, the poem depicts negative effects of the idealization of women's appearance, which is in the poem realised through Collatine's description of his spouse. The created oral portrait of Lucrece arouses listeners' imagination to the point that it encourages one of them to possess her sexually. Deeming Lucrece as an exceptionally beautiful chaste goddess and likening her to a temple or a shrine creates a perfect image of her, which encourages the villain to conquer that unattainable ideal boastfully presented to him.

However, not only Lucrece's beauty but especially her maidenhood is a stimulus inviting Tarquin to commit the violent sexual deed as it in his mind shapes an image of closure that needs to be violated. Tarquin's false desire for his comrade's wife is triggered solely by the construction in his mind and by his inherent need to get what others consider perfect.

Lucrece is portrayed as an ideal Renaissance woman or a heavenly innocent saint and her character contrasts to the despicable masculine character of Tarquin. She is a dove to his night owl, a saint to his devil. Tarquin is described as lacking any spiritual and moral potential and portrayed as a beggar or a thief appropriating the only pure thing existing within the Roman society in the story. His character is defined by self-centeredness. The closest he comes to considering other people's perspective is when he thinks about the possibility of his descendants being eventually ashamed of him. On the contrary, Lucrece, unlike in other versions of the poem, in which the character of Lucrece is essentially muted, is in this adaptation actually assigned characteristics of a persistent and eloquent fighter, who only falls prey to Tarquin when she is threatened by the loss of dignity and humiliation of her family name. Lucrece's character counters traditional associations of women saying little or absolutely nothing. Moreover, her articulacy distresses Tarquin so that he is only able to execute the violence when she is muffled and out of his sight. Other than that, the conception of gender in the poem is somewhat straightforward and binary as there are assigned absolute traits to both sexes. The female characters in the poem are portrayed as obedient and morally pure whereas the male characters are described as driven by pride and need for power. Yet the patriarchal model of society as well as that of the idealized femininity both collapse as the climactic situation of the rape comes to light. From the very moment of the act of plunder, the lives of both characters rapidly change, and the despicable deed ultimately breaks down social order and brings chaos to Rome's fictional society. Both the rapist and the victim have different yet mutual social responsibilities.

Shakespeare does not forget to give account of the repercussions of the rape especially as far as Lucrece's feminine outlook on the situation is concerned. Lucrece's emotional trauma and moral dilemma is given appropriate attention and only through the character of Lucrece are readers able to take a glimpse into the women's world. In lengthy soliloquies she grieves her lost virginity and describes the suffering rooted in being disgusted with one's own body. While contemplating putting an end to her suffering, Lucrece questions the views of the world she had until then taken for granted. The traumatic experience had catapulted her into an indistinguishable reality in which she is unable to carry on living. Before the climactic event, the world she lived in, though corrupted and limiting, had functioned according to certain rules

but afterwards there is left nothing but confusion and sorrow. Lucrece affirms the purity of her soul by ascribing the shame solely to her corrupted body thus liberating her soul from the polluted prison in the suicidal act. As far as symbolism in the poem is concerned, the twistedness of the heroine's body is symbolized by the black stream of blood coming out of her corpse after her death, while the red stream symbolizes the pure intact soul of hers. However, not only Lucrece's world is shaken to the core but the whole patriarchal society fails to exist without the woman's element. The perpetrator himself is faced with the corollary of his contemptible actions. His initial momentary joy is quickly followed by feelings of utter shame and guilt. Horror of the act of rape haunts his mind and brings doom upon him as well as his whole family, the tyranny of his father being one more reason to egest the Tarquin family of the society all together. Once the privileged dynasty is banished from the city, there is a chance for those who are left to learn from other people's mistakes and to take side with Lucrece. However, the men in the story are once again defeated by their own masculine nature as they fail to revenge the sexual violence done to Lucrece focusing only on re-establishing the broken-down social system into its new form - patriarchal democracy. A form of power closer to Lucrece's ideal of love-embracing monarchy, still fundamentally flawed though, being just another example of a degraded masculine political sphere (Quay, 1995).

On the background of public injustice, the poem tells a story of a decay of sweet chastity and the sacrifice of feminine dignity for the sake of political revolution. Although the feminine outlook on the whole situation is by no means excluded from the narration, the text is quite expressive about the reality of the inferior position of women in the author's time. Not only Tarquin, but also other male characters in the poem, in particular Lucrece's father and Collatine, abase the role of women when they regard Lucrece as a property of theirs and eventually breach the retributive oath of Lucrece to avenge the crime. Lucrece's father and husband view the deed of rape more of as a violation of property rather than a crime against a woman's freedom. The recognition of the act of rape from the men surrounding Lucrece is inadequate, and it attests to the fact that their love for her is not true and unconditional. In fact, the male part of the society only completes the indignity inflicted upon the female heroine by Tarquin (Desmet,2015).

The story portrays the difficult and uneven position of women within the rigid patriarchal models of society at the time of Renaissance as well as it points to the fact that women at that time felt guilty for men's sexual assaults on them or that they even internalized being responsible for not protecting their chastity. Women's virtue was supposed to be sexual purity and men's courage. Therefore, sexual heinousness of men was oftentimes ignored or

blamed on female seductiveness. However, Shakespeare challenges this Renaissance notion by clearly depicting Lucrece's attempts to return the shame to its proud owner and also by portraying Tarquin's understanding of the rape as self-aggrandizing and exculpatory. Tarquin feels deeply ashamed and fearful due to committing the crime even though only chiefly because he is concerned about losing his face. In fact, the theme of shame is explored thoroughly in the poem, in particular as far as the relationship of shame to other emotions such as pride, fear and love is concerned. Though Lucrece and Tarquin respond diversely to shame, they are undoubtedly both heavily affected by that feeling. In the end, the hypnotizing shameful lust complemented by pride seized control over Tarquin's fate and the fear of shame brought doom upon Lucrece's existence.

In this psychologically complex mini-epic Shakespeare reconstructs the classical Roman myth while inspired predominantly by Ovid's *Fasti* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and provides criticism of the rigid societal and gender roles as well as expresses nostalgia for the good old days of honourable shamefastness, the times when moral virtue and bashfulness dominated over selfish hot-bloodedness. People of the golden age were governed by pudor rather than lust and pride, which is according to Shakespeare desirable, yet non-existent within the realms of the society of his time. All in all, as far as love is concerned, the poem focuses on depicting the negative effects of glorifying female beauty and of ignoring her inner qualities. Shakespeare puts forward an idea that without considering female desires love cannot emerge because it needs reciprocity and understanding in order to come into existence (Scodel,2013).

4. The nature of love in Shakespeare's comedies

Shakespeare's comedies, as published in the First Folio in 1623, are a collection of 14 plays with varied stories yet they form a sort of unity, comprising what critics call the Shakespearean comedy. Unlike his contemporaries, who mainly opt for comedy combined with bitter satire, Shakespeare does not burden his comedies with that serious and embittered overtone. Rather his comedies are light-hearted dramas where romance plays first fiddle. Shakespearean comedies are plays of incidents and mistaken identities with colourfully complex characters and fantastical elements. The stories narrate mishaps of couples in which they are inspired chiefly by the love stories of Roman comedy and Greek romance. Shakespeare's comedic material re-introduces familiar love stories of ancient times and departs

from the mainstream satirical comedy genre of his era. The cheerful atmosphere of Shakespearean comedies is filled with love, which resonates with the setting of the plays, which is usually some foreign timeless location far away from the dull reality of the everyday. The world of comedy is a rainbow world of love and enchantment in lethargy where nothing matters more than romance. The type of love as presented in the comedies is fickle and unstable love, which ignites at first sight. It is lawless and expressed by protracted flirtation. It is not the kind of lustful and dark bodily type of love that Shakespeare scorns in sonnets. It is rather a grotesque infatuation than a marriage of true minds lasting forever. Love in the comedies is grounded on illusion and liable to succumb to the people's misunderstandings. Shakespearean comedies tell startling tales of men and women in love and the obstacles they face when being in a relationship. The storylines articulate the notion that the course of love never runs smooth and that lovers often need to overcome great odds to get into the safe harbour of marriage (Herford,2011).

On this bumpy road to love however heroes find themselves encountering troubles that are caused in particular by their own inner demons. It is not the external impediments that complicate the relationships of lovers but rather their own unresolved psychological issues. In particular, the male characters in the plays themselves are the love's worst enemies, not the external hindrances that befall them. The bonding of a couple is often disrupted by men's inherent need to read women, to understand them, which keeps on failing and driving a wedge between the lovers. The young male characters in the comedies undergo a transition from boyhood to manhood as their fathers are usually no longer alive or part of the family. Due to that there exists within them an inner conflict between immaturity and independence. The male heroes hesitate to create stable relationships as they are still unable to make sense of their own emotions and position within the society. Though equipped with a newly found sense of freedom and space for adventure, there is also a big portion of responsibilities that come with it and the heroes in the stories seem to treat them rather presumptuously. The heroes of Shakespearean comedy are young men caught between the death of their father and the birth of conception of themselves. Though they want to delve into marriage, they are ultimately lost in the labyrinth of their emotions. They long for adventure, however they are reluctant to embark on that love journey due to their insecurity and ambivalence. In the midst of all this youngblood confusion fatherless heroes are prone to making reckless decisions and to respond illogically to their attraction for women as they are completely swayed by their waywardness in the whole process of falling in love. While compelled to women they are also at the same time either implicitly or explicitly reject their female counterparts, closing up within their own

worlds of distrust for love. The heroes stagger between one view of women to the opposite, adoring them while degrading them, acting offensive as well as defensive, feeling overwhelmed and enraged at the same time. As a consequence of that, it is usually the male heroes themselves and their ill-founded suspicions that impede the romantic relationship.

Luckily, there are their other halves ready to step in and save the day, making a way for the happy ending. In contrast to the liberated and selfishly acting guys, the heroines in Shakespeare's comedies are depicted as restrained by patriarchal conventions and gender roles. Women are mostly portrayed as unadventurous beautiful virgins who are confined predominantly to the indoor world, limited to fulfil only preordained roles of motherhood and being keen on domestic arts. Women are bound to men in all ways possible and it is expected of them to be subservient to their husbands. In several plays the heroines are trapped not only metaphorically by the patriarchal conventions they live in but also literally in a prison or their own home or even at times within the walls of a convent. Women heroines are usually of higher social rank than their male counterparts although willing to sacrifice their position just for the sake of finding true love. In love with men, the heroines are wonders of courage, moral examples of womanhood and strength, which undergo their individual journeys to save the relationship that had broken apart. Women heroines take the front of the stage in Shakespearean comedy. Though they lack freedom they by far surpass men in intelligence, position, and their value to the society. While they are isolated within the constraints of societal roles and waiting for the vivifying influence of their men, they are at the same time the only constant variables in the love relationship equation. They are willing to take risks for love and do not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for their men. The heroines even at times jeopardize their sense of self solely for the purpose of giving in to love. Love emboldens female characters in the stories, and it liberates their soul. Their generosity, realised by gift giving, professes their unconditional love and honesty in regard to the romantic relationship. However, in spite of their extraordinary qualities and goodness inside, they are the ones slandered by men and the ones who suffer for love. The lack of freedom of heroines in the plays is compensated for by the disguise. In their whole-hearted devotion to their men, lovesick Shakespearean heroines wear men's attires in order to shortly regain the perks of male social position, namely, to escape their captors in the guise of vagabonds, servants or pages. Masked as men, women are free to follow their own daring passions and make their own individual choices leading to the reconnection with the beloved (Lewis, 1992).

Even though it takes time for the characters to learn about the truth of their own hearts, the young men in the story eventually realise the value of their partners. As a matter of a fact,

it is quite the feelings for the women that eventually lead the men out of the chaos of his senses, which had previously misled him into rejecting love. The hero is by the end of the play taught to trust women and to get over his stupor as well as made to figure out that women are actually sources of all learning, wisdom, and faith. The inner turmoil within lovers goes silent as the hero submits himself to the perils of love being aware that love is the only way to take. In the end everything falls into place. Deception and trickery no longer have their place in the story, and everything is as it is supposed to be. The stories end with multiple marriages of two equals putting an end to disaffection and quenching the flame of strain by giving in to love. Trust and reciprocity finally conquer the initial misapprehensions of love, opening a new way of life for the lovers as a couple. Shakespearean comedies show us how men come to see women and the world aright. The moral of the stories is that seeing with your eyes brings decay and that yielding to one's senses and prejudices destroys reason. The process of falling in love is throughout the stories portrayed as a procedure defined by change and transformation, which however at the end evolves into the state of all-embracing peace and contentment in the form of marriage. The marriage represents the very conclusion of the love story, the ideal of love between two wedded souls. It also has symbolically regenerative function as it brings all characters together providing for a happy ending (Mullan,2016).

4.1. The theme of love in *The Merchant of Venice*

As is typical for other Shakespearean comedies, *The Merchant of Venice* is centred around a series of romantic relationships between young lovers who are just about to venture into their adulthood and to choose their life partners. In the play there are intertwined stories of three couples - Nerissa and Gratiano, Jessica and Lorenzo and in particular Portia and Bassanio. The later pair of lovers takes the front of the stage, the other ones only functioning as fillers to the romantic plot of the play. Bassanio's relationship to Portia is from the very start defined by his desire for wealth. Due to the fact that Portia is a heiress to her family fortune she is endowed with substantial riches, which accounts for the primary motivation for Bassanio to woo her. Bassanio's inconvenient financial situation encourages him to leave for Belmont to secure his well-being through marriage with Portia. However, he is also surely tempted by the prospect of having an extraordinarily beautiful chaste wife by his side. Nevertheless, his motives are mostly superficial and before leaving for Belmont Bassanio definitely does not

love Portia, yet he is prepared to take the step into falling in love. Bassanio's interest with 'the lady richly left' is in line with the whole portrayal of Venice as the world of money, pretence and materialism and Belmont as the world of romance, salvation, and fantasy where everything merry awaits and where dreams come true.

For Venetians even love revolves around money, and they use it as a single tool to express their passions, both hatred and love. Finances are also strongly tied with characters' existence, and they make them dependent on each other in various ways as the heroes of the story are rarely self-sufficient on their own. Though money is portrayed as unstable splendour that can vanish at any time it functions as the primary vehicle for expression of romantic feelings between loved ones. There is no place for direct displays of love in Venice but rather all of emotional references appear only in subtext. Within the borders of Venice, the very idea of conventional declaration of romantic love is lost and romance cannot take roots on that territory. The impossibility of Venice as setting for romance is articulated through the story of Jessica and Lorenzo who can only find peace for their love when in Belmont.

Through the relationship of Jessica and Lorenzo, and in particular Jessica's theft of her father's valuables, is also expressed the inherent similarity between money and love, which are both highly transient and fickle human values. Though people are eager for love and money both of these pleasures quickly wear off and are too unstable to be the ultimate aims of one's existence. Money and love go together and are lost together in the story.

Anyways, though money seems to be on the top of Bassanio's priority list, his greed appears to fade away to the background when he is in the midst of his process of courtship to Portia. Although likening Portia's hair to 'golden fleece' seems a somewhat suspicious and clumsy metaphorization to leave the idea of Bassanio as driven by lust for money altogether. Anyway, the success of Bassanio's wooing is rooted in the fact that when he undergoes the casket test, he takes heed of conventions rather than logic and reason whereas his rivals are prone to believe judgment of the eye and to be controlled by their idea of Portia's uniqueness. Also, Bassanio seems to be a more appropriate match for Portia as he is no exotic prince but rather a down-to-earth suitor and a real man capable of loving the real side of Portia. Yet when he solves the 'casket riddle' winning the hand of Portia, the appraisal of her beauty, which he speaks of as uncapturable by any work of art, resembles rather the overinflated rhetoric of his adversaries. Bassanio's mawkish phrases, exaggerated soliloquies and cringe-worthy flirting seem somewhat unnatural considering his character. His graceful appearance and richness of gifts when he arrives at Belmont are completely false as he is only a poor aristocrat drowning in debts and seeking affluence.

Nonetheless, Bassanio's personality and his wooing tactics undoubtedly enchant Portia. Portia who had prior to that been a character of cool wit and reservedness is now changed into tangibly vulnerable woman expressing her love for Bassanio through passionate outbursts of emotions in their playful affectionate flirtation. Leaving behind her anxiety and passivity resulting from her societal constraint, she essentially loses control over herself, and she willingly and happily gives herself over to Bassanio together with all the fortunes she has. Feeling relieved and grateful for her love, she does not hesitate to make sacrifices for her beloved even being pleased with such opportunities as they can be used as a way to profess love for her husband. Portia in her modesty even considers herself unworthy of Bassanio despite the fact that he is penniless, and she is an heiress. For her, love lies not in what is received but in what is given to her other half. Yet, the intimate ecstatic moments of the two lovers are soon disrupted by Bassanio's past catching up to him. In the face of the upcoming news from Venice the secure world of love is broken and Bassanio's former love relationship enters within the realms of his new one creating an undesirable love triangle (Leggatt, 2004).

The strong friendship between Antonio and Bassanio accounts for the second most central love relationship of the play. However, as is evident from the very first act, the relationship between the two is somewhat one-sided and unequal. There is a disparity between their feelings and their connection can be regarded neither as healthy nor romantic. It could even be argued that it is essentially a story of unrequited love and the toxicity such bond breeds. Melancholic merchant Antonio throughout the story apparently invests much more into the relationship while Bassanio is rather keen on his friend's financial support. Antonio's love has become too explicit and excessive to the point that he oversteps the boundaries with the moneylender Shylock blindly setting himself to possible death just for the sake of fulfilling his friend's wishes. However, his actions are not at all selfless as by riskily arranging for Bassanio's loan, Antonio makes his friend feel obliged to him, thus in a strange and desperate way strengthens their friendship. Antonio is throughout the play portrayed as an emotionally isolated and lost character, outcast of the society who does not follow the conventional way of life. As he is disarmed by being alone Antonio's actions give the impression of hopelessness. The death sacrifice he is willing to take for his friend, seemingly selfless and noble, once again only speaks of his desperate longing for his friend's affection as well of Antonio's merciless attack at Bassanio's conscience. Antonio's love is demanding, querulous and in need of displays of attention, therefore it is not definitely pure unconditional true love which should be admired. On top of that Antonio even views himself as a rival to Portia and he is prepared to compete with her for the final claim on Bassanio's love. This love rivalry is an underlining

theme of the play, and it represents the archetypal conflict between heterosexual love, realised by marriage and passionate brotherly love. Antonio's jealousy to a certain extent goes beyond the boundary of traditional friendship even though this strong emotion is eventually soothed by the way Portia approaches the relationship between the two - she has no intention whatsoever to drive a wedge between the two friends (Hurrell,1961).

Though Antonio's martyred death would have put a splendid ending to his love professions it is ironically quite Portia's love and intrigues that ultimately save Antonio from sure death. Disguised as a lawyer and equipped with a new sense of masculine freedom, Portia saves the situation and frees her husband from the strain of guilt. For her it feels only natural to undergo all this experience as she had embraced Bassanio with all his troubles when she had committed to him. As a married couple their share together the good and bad and the settlement of Bassanio's debt is getting them one step closer to consummating their marriage (Leggatt, 2004). After a series of paradoxical misunderstandings resulting from the mistaken identity of Portia, eventually everything falls into place and in the end, there is re-established the romantic harmony that had been initiated in Belmont. The stage is dominated by three couples of lovers who function together perfectly in spite of their apparent unlikeness. It is a patterned team of lovers who have attained a security in their private worlds of happiness and who are finally united in their love. The harmony of romance in the play is symbolized in the final scene by characters talking about music. However, this sense of unity is reserved solely to the happy couples and others are separated in their worlds of confusion and disharmony. An example of which is in particular Antonio, who is the odd one out and makes up for the primary alien element disrupting the relationship consonance in the play (Eggers, 1977).

4.2. The theme of love in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

A Midsummer's Night Dream is a comic fantasy in which Shakespeare intertwines romantic stories of four lovers and intermingles two parallel realities - the world of mortals and the world of magical immortal creatures - fairies. One confined to the magical forest, where imagination and passions thrive, and one bound to the city of Athens governed by reason and societal constraints. Characters in the play appear in groups and they are usually quite oblivious and unapprehensive of the nature of others. In the play there appear lovers, magical creatures, and actors, each of them dominated by different types of thinking and swayed by diverse

emotional forces. Due to their self-absorbedness the pairing of such disparate beings always brings chaos. As the play progresses it is evident that these two coexisting realities, though functioning by quite opposite principles, are not at all separated but they in fact penetrate and profoundly affect one another. This portrayal of a fantastical world of fairies in contrast to the realistic human society articulates the importance of balance of reason and imagination in life as in the play the worlds also need one another to flourish and to function harmonically. Also, by creating the setting of the enchanted forest Shakespeare points to the irrational nature of love and the indispensable role of imagination in regard to getting the grasp of the emotion. Within the walls of Athens, infatuated lovers struggle to acquire any sort of understanding as within the world of pure reason love just cannot be fathomed out. Love and reason keep little company and therefore in the context of pure rationalism no such thing as love can be accepted. The romantic relationship between Hermia and Lysander, while representing virtually the ideal of true love, is incomprehensible to the ruling authorities of the city as well as parental ones, as their narrowmindedness prevents them from seeing through the eyes of the lovers. Although, the inability of Theseus and Egeon to identify with the lovers' feelings only reflects the fact that love itself is from an outsider's point of view puzzling and inconceivable. Moreover, even the lovers themselves fail to comprehend the reasons for their love so it is no wonder that others fail in that respect too.

Love as depicted in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* is an instantaneous force defied of all logic which strikes individuals who have no choice but to subdue to their passions and act on the basis of their emotions. Love is portrayed as blind and unconditional on beauty or character of the beloved. The aspect of blindness of love is expressed in particular through the 'love story' of Titania and Bottom, whose disparity and otherness is so striking that their pairing only accentuates the absurdity and nonsensicality rooted in the way love operates. The power of love in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* is depicted as rendering common sense irrelevant as well as making any authority or conventions insignificant in comparison to the desire for the beloved. It seems as if the enamoured lovers in the play were simply acting as slaves under the enchantment of Cupid's torch deprived of free will and individual choice. For instance, Helena leaves behind her morals and jeopardizes friendship with Hermia, solely to catch sight of her beloved Demetrius. This sense of lost control over self is gradually reinforced by the tricks of the forest creatures, who by their mischief enhance the inherent helplessness of lovers before the power of love.

Surprisingly, the fairies, though they are endowed with magical power and ultimate freedom, are somewhat clumsy when dealing with mortals and also have their own limitations

and troubles. Since they have feelings, they are also exposed to the passions of the heart and liable to the human maladies of romantic love as well as prone to believing the judgment of the eye. In fact, Oberon, the king of fairies, is susceptible to jealousy and mistrust for his queen and does not hesitate to punish her disobedience with his magic potion tricks. The goings-ons inside the magical forest are full of deception and mystery. Though the infatuated lovers Hermia and Lysander escape into the enchanted forest with the intention to free themselves from the chains of societal rules once they set foot into the fairy land, they end up being once again controlled by the mysterious beings inside the forest, who in spite of having good intentions, temporarily bring even more chaos to the lovers' situation. On the other hand, in a way, the primary deceptive tool of fairies - the bewitched flower juice, does nothing new to the lovers as they had already been under the magical enchantment of love so what the potion does is that it only intensifies the irrational feelings of the heart and re-directs the aim of lovers' admiration. Interestingly, the magical potion extracted from the Cupid's flower is symbolically poured into the eye and applied when characters are asleep, which symbolizes the fact that love attacks our senses and that it has dream-like characteristics.

Anyway, despite the fact that the dreamy night-time forest is constantly very close to the darker world of chaos and suffering, the comic element always prevails, and the thin line is never violated. Even though the fairies' forest could be a place of blatant eroticism the character's inside of it by contrast have a firm grip on their sexual passions and at least in that sense have control over themselves. Actually, the erotic nature of love is more or less excluded from the story as the characters do not wallow in bodily pleasures but rather express their love through flirtatious wooing monologues. The speech of lovers is swift, gay, and though at times also brooding and filled with rage or melancholy, due to its poetic form and abundance of rhymes it lacks seriousness and has humorous effect. Similarly, the passions of lovers, bringing both joy and suffering, are convincing only to the characters who express them and not to others as only the lovers themselves are so embedded in their romantic experience so that they can take the issues seriously (Leggatt, 2004).

In contrast to the strongly sensual relationships in the story, there is one that is devoid of any romance. Namely it is the marriage of Theseus of Hippolyta whose connection is solely practical as well as constructed entirely on Theseus' domineering attitude and radical decision to claim his wife with a sword. Hippolyta's resignation on her ability to speak on the matter of her marriage however does not prevent her from expressing the desire to experience romantic love she sees all around her. She is unsurprisingly attracted to the world of fantasy and imagination and prone to believe the tales of lovers her husband unequivocally rejects.

However, at least at the start of the play, Theseus is a person reliant solely on truth and facts and has no intention to be controlled by something so irrational such as love is. Theseus lacks any imagination and is completely unable to comprehend the world of dreams he is told of, deeming it as mere trickery and deception played upon him (Ritcher, 2010).

Considering the deception that permeates the whole story one may find a grain of truth in Theseus' belief. With deception present is portrayed every single relationship in the play. By using those illusive devices Shakespeare highlights the deception as an inseparable aspect of love and points to the fact that deceit is in fact crucial to formation of romantic relationships. In the play, deceit takes the place of traditional wooing and courtship and eventually makes the characters discover internal truths about themselves and love. Regardless of the active subject, who is responsible for the trickery, as it can be both the lover self-deceiving himself or some kind of misleading outside force seizing power over him, in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* love carries illusory and confusing characteristics. Love can be easily manipulated by falsehoods or dishonesty, and it is rarely true to its very core. Particularly, self-deceit often underlies romantic love in the play as the enamoured individuals fail to see any imperfections of their beloved whatsoever. Rather than a flawed human, the beloved is described as an embodiment of desirable qualities, spotless and lacking any ulterior motives. Yet, the reason behind the characters' naive ignorance of their beloved's slips is not their foolishness but rather their overt engrossment in their own emotions (Gray, 2017).

The story also points to one more characteristic aspect of love and that is its natural fragility. For instance, when the deceitful manoeuvres strike the lovers in the forest, Hermia almost immediately loses faith in her relationship with Lysander and right away turns against Helena, even though just a day before their love seemed as firm as it could be. This situation reflects the fact that even the strongest love can quickly turn into hatred and that no one is never absolutely safe in love nor sure of his or her partner's feelings. Love cannot be trusted to hold out against any length of time as it is flickering and transient by its definition. By this Shakespeare comments on the senselessness of people who build relationships simply on love, as stable bonds should rather be based on principles such as fertility, mutual understanding, and security. Nonetheless, in spite of the various acts of deception, love eventually conquers against all the odds (Burgess, 2020).

Through the life-altering experience in the forest, there is achieved harmony between the four Athenian lovers who in the end matchup in meaningful pairings putting behind the past. Finally, characters speak of their love with a vengeance and authority it deserves. Even Theseus embraces the freedom in love, allowing for all lovers to live happily in his kingdom.

Through the workings of nature and the cooperation of mortal and immortal worlds the initially disparate characters finally come together and happily paired complement the play's final harmony (Leggatt, 2004).

4.3. The theme of love in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Love in *Much Ado About Nothing* is presented through the romantic pairing of two sets of characters - Claudio and Hero and Benedick and Beatrice. In the city of Messina, the lovers are confronted with numerous identity games and exposed to calculating machinations aimed at either bringing them together or breaking them apart. This is in line with the overall atmosphere of the city of Messina, which is naturalistically depicted as an enclosed world defined by deceit, calumny, and pretence. The deceptive matchmaking activities of the people around the lovers manipulate them into intended situations and make them essentially appear as deprived of individual critical thinking and liable to believing the judgment of the eye. The lovers fail to differentiate between appearance and reality and are at times depicted as puppets responding to the malevolent plot of the manipulators. By portraying Messina in this manner Shakespeare points to the deceitful nature of love and the thin line between appearance and reality. By involving other characters within the intimate world of lovers, as schemers, clowns or truth unravellers, the author points to the fact that in the Renaissance, the romantic relationship did not include only lovers themselves but that also other family members and friends were engaged in the romantic affairs. The two romantic stories of lovers, though they are very different by nature, evolve along the same lines having their climaxes and resolutions at similar points and being co-dependent on one another in their emotional development. Love in the play moves towards marriage yet both couples are bound to at first overcome numerous impediments on their way to happiness.

The relationship between Claudio and Hero represents a typical orthodox love story resembling medieval romances defined by courtship and dazzled appraisal of woman's beauty. Claudio easily yields to the conventions of romantic love and expresses his affection for Hero through polished formal soliloquies and woos his love object through prettified sententious rhetoric. However, though speaking in mechanical clichés, from Claudio's perspective his feelings are genuine and natural. He represents a typical young hero swayed by passions and desire, reliant solely on his senses. The very essence of his love is flickering as it is not based

on a conscious choice and evaluation of his match with Hero but rather on his temptation for her beauty and his conviction that he loves her. Claudio even never explicitly expresses his love but resorts to glorifying Hero's appearance without considering her inner qualities and speaking only of 'liking her'. Due to Claudio's irascible and hotblooded nature his love is rooted rather in feelings than knowledge or actual connection between lovers, therefore there exists a sort of unreliability element in his love, which manifests itself soon enough. Claudio's unstable affections quickly switch from courtship into betrayal only when his fiancé is falsely accused of being unfaithful to him. Without any substantial evidence Claudio almost immediately falls prey to the made-up testimony and closes up before love while making a stark decision to publicly humiliate his wife to be at their wedding ceremony. Blaming Hero's beauty of tricking him into love he renounces all trust in sense as a means to understanding the world. Not even at first moved by Hero's supposed death but only upon discovering her innocence, Claudio's obviously is more or less overcome with hatred rather than grief, which speaks of the heatedness of his love and the liability of his love to quickly change into disdain.

As far as Hero is concerned, her character throughout the play serves as a sort of a passive element in the relationship. Her main role is to stand there and look beautiful and her feelings are not given particular attention. When blamed for cheating, Hero is defenceless and overcome with shame she faints, her silence and passivity providing for one more reason for Claudio to be reassured of her guilt. However, in fact she is just an innocent and delicate human being incapable of handling the betrayal of her beloved. In the play Hero functions predominantly as a tool for Claudio to achieve his love transformation and to free him from the chains of deception and self-deception that has taken control over him (Leggatt, 2004). Nevertheless, from the way how Hero approaches the marriage, as she is really engrossed in tying the knot with Claudio, there can be sensed that she is also a passionate lover quick to act on the basis of her senses. Moreover, by taking on a role of self-sacrificing martyr when faking her own death, Hero once again partakes on Claudio's journey to advance into being able to feel true love and reinforces her self-sacrificial and redemptive role of a person designed for the restoration of others. Her final resurrection only complements the Christ-like characteristics of her figure. Overall, the basis of Claudio and Hero's love is very fragile, full of mistrust and misunderstanding and their final reconciliation is achieved only through the workings of impersonal forces in the play, not by some sudden individual awakening of Claudio. Moreover, it is only when Claudio learns about Hero's innocence that he can see what he has lost in her and actually appreciate the wonders of her inner beauty. Through repentance and penance Claudio is able to get over himself and get the grasp of true love and achieve the radical

transformation of his character, which is proven by his self-imposed acceptance of marrying a stranger. As in his intention to marry a veiled woman it is evident that he is no longer reliant on outer beauty of women (Lewalski, 1968).

The other romance in the play, the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick contrast to the one just described, as from the very start it is completely unorthodox and departs from the conventional outlook on how romantic relationships were to be formed at that time. In fact, the lovers satirize the institutionalized romance and mock the relationship of Hero and Claudio deeming it as empty, foolish, and unworthy of them. Beatrice actually refuses the very idea of arranged marriage emphasizing the importance of a woman's will in regard to choosing a life partner and breaks the illusions of romantic love with realistic comments. Claudio's romantic wooing is played off against Benedick's cynical remarks and Beatrice's emancipated turn of phrase to Hero's passivity. Overall, Benedick and Beatrice are freewheeling characters who do not fall into the classical categories of gender. Through their story is presented a better type of courtship that is sincere, realistic, and not based on empty clichés and idealization (Leggatt, 2004).

Benedick and Beatrice's love definitely does not ignite at first sight as their initial meeting underlies mutual aggressiveness and unapproachableness. Benedick and Beatrice are at first caught within the shell they had created for themselves to be protected from love and to hide their anxiety of trusting other people. Their anti-romantic wit is but only a temporary pose which falls down as soon as they let their emotions loose. In order to open up their heart there is however needed an intervention of the characters around them. Their friends consider the brusque and straightforward interplay of Benedick and Beatrice's witty minds as mere cruelty and pride at work and take steps to bring the two self-centred mules together. With the contribution of others, Benedick and Beatrice are finally able to profess their love for each other and to together venture out onto the bumpy road of love. However, to adopt their new role both lovers need to step out of their comfort zone and leave behind their refuse approach to love as well as break apart past relations. Especially Benedick, has to in order to demonstrate his devotion to Beatrice sever his ties with his friends as he is demanded to duel Claudio on Beatrice's request. Though not at once ready to surrender his friendship he eventually consents to his beloved's wish passing in the test of truthfulness of love that Beatrice had assigned him. In Beatrice's eyes, by agreeing to her wish, Benedick abandons the youthful masculine world defined by waywardness and brotherhood and swears his loyalty to their life as a united couple.

Gradually, Benedick and Beatrice move closer and closer to what defines their natural roles as a husband and wife but still their relationship appears to be much more balanced and

stable than the one of Claudio and Hero. This can be attributed to the fact that Benedick and Beatrice's relationship is actually based on a true connection and evaluation of the other half's qualities of a character. Therefore, their love is constructed on conscious choice and genuine knowledge of the other one rather than on some capricious infatuation or mad displays of passion. Benedick, though undoubtedly attracted to his lady's beauty as he describes her as his ideal woman he has always dreamed of, does not forget to take into consideration her virtue when delving into their romantic relationship. Anyways, from a misogynistic young man refusing the institution of marriage and considering himself a tyrant to female sex evolves a husband who is willing to uncompromisingly give himself in to his wife and ready to risk his life just in the service of his wife's unproved testimony. Seeing all the excellencies of women united in Beatrice, Benedick is in the end, at least partly, also hypnotized by a woman just like other men before him (Lewalski, 1968).

Regardless of to what extent are both couples controlled by convention, deception, or passions, in the end, like in other Shakespearean comedies, everything seems to be in perfect harmony and lovers once again connect themselves in marriage. Even originally unorthodox lovers such as Beatrice and Benedick succumb to the familiar pattern of life and come to terms with the conventions of romantic love. Love in *Much Ado About Nothing* is portrayed in the context of the conflict between the larger world of experience and private world of love and described as being inherently connected to convention. The message remains, that though individuals, lovers are all bound to the same rhythms of life and forced to follow the authorities and though there are impediments, true love eventually enables the beloved to come out the other end of it and transform rampant chaos into spotless harmony (Leggatt, 2004).

5. The nature of love in Shakespeare's tragedies

In spite of the numerous and varied impediments that romantic relationships are faced with in the comedies that could be fatal to the characters, the vision of love as bringing about peace and happiness always prevails, and the happy endings make all the possible dangers of love seem as trifling or as natural parts of the love-transformation journey of characters. In other words, the partially tragic events in the comedies account only for necessary obstacles that need to be overcome in order to achieve that final satisfying harmony in marriage. Moreover, due to their light-hearted atmosphere and choice of humorous language, comedies never even closely evoke any sort of melancholic or ominous feelings, as these characteristics are reserved especially for tragedies and late romances of Shakespeare.

As opposed to the merry comedies, tragedies by their very nature disrupt any balance and turn any natural order into the nightmare of violence, death, and chaos. Due to that, love is in the tragedies described as having predominantly negative implications and as upsetting of natural harmony. Actually, love as portrayed in Shakespearean tragedy is a catalyst in human relationships as it is described as having the ability to unravel certain, usually evil or destructive, aspects of characters' personality. Love together with other passions have a great control over characters' actions and decision-making often causing them to revolt against societal rules, morality or even their self-imposed principles. As far as female heroines of tragedies are concerned, their portrayal deviates from the traditional model of womanhood originating in medieval times, which viewed women either as naturally virtuous or inherently flawed and corrupt. 'Tragic heroines' are no black and white individuals, but rather complex characters usually depicted as assertive in the matters of marriage and sex, by which they deconstruct the tenacious stereotypes about women and leave behind the idealized picture of women as defined by obedience and chastity. Female heroines almost never accept their preordained husbands but on the other hand tend to choose a life partner of their liking. However, the choice at times turns up as hapless as the husbands fail to fulfil the ideal of a good husband, often unjustly slandering their wives of violating their marriage. Nevertheless, the female heroines never display any sort of revengeful tendencies but rather remain loyal to their husbands all the way. Similarly, as in comedies, female heroines once again take the front of the stage and to a great extent influence the plot. Though at times seemingly hidden in the shadows of their husbands or fathers, they mostly exercise dominant roles in the plays and display great strength in breaking free from the chains of their inferiority, rebelling against

what is expected of them. In fact, female heroines in tragedies often function as the spokes turning the wheel and set the course of love in the romantic relationships in spite of the influence of male ascendancy that is warping their lives. Women heroines display a great deal of romantic ambition, which makes up for the primary vehicle in gaining their freedom and stepping out of the limits of their gender (Usongo,2017).

Regardless of which of the lovers is responsible for the decay of the relationship, romance in tragedy appears to be disastrous for everyone involved in its scope. Neither of the lovers is excluded from the detrimental effects of love that corrupt lives and catapult lovers against themselves and the world. Though love is not the guiding theme of tragedies, tragic scenes are replete with love situations and interwoven with romantic stories. In particular the negative allied forms of love, such as jealousy, lust, or idolatry, are of particular importance in Shakespearean tragedies. From the abundance of love references in the tragedies, one can safely say that love as illustrated in tragedies is very far from ‘the marriage of true minds’. It is rather unstable, lawless, and based on illusion. Romantic love, though at times presented through perfectly matched and deeply enamoured couples, ultimately breeds ruin within itself and soon enough shows its true nature. Love in the tragedies is far from idealized and on the contrary, there are displayed essentially just negative sides to love, which stray from the established norm of love that Shakespeare had constructed in his works. Shakespeare’s ‘norm of love’ is characterized as a passion igniting the heart, brain, and senses alike in balanced proportions and as an emotion based on reciprocity and mutual respect of both partners. Ideally it should be an ever-renewing force able to enhance lovers’ emotional lives and create harmony in the world of chaos. This norm of love is however never achieved in tragedies but on the contrary, there are revealed deleterious features of love such as its duplicity, unregenerativeness and the fact that it often produces isolation and loneliness. In the midst of all the negative connotations of love, in the tragedies there are plenty of joyous romantic moments, which however soon vanish as the very essence of love in tragedies is illusory and transient to its core. The very feelings that characters interpret as love often cannot stand the test of time or other hindrances due to their fragile and delusive foundation. The fantasies of true love the characters had constructed in their minds make them partake in overinflated worship or tempt them into seizing control over their beloved through manipulation.

Apart from the illusory nature of love there is one more fatal element of romance presented in tragedies and that is excessive passion. Excessive passions in one way or another sway the heroes of Shakespearean tragedy as they are unnatural and make human relationships depart from their natural structure and developmental procedures. In the context of Elizabethan

mentality as well as tragedies of Shakespeare, passion was understood as a manifestation of disbalance between will and reason and such disharmony was seen as resulting in consuming unsustainable love. Overt passionateness was believed to create romantic bonds incapable of regeneration and therefore ones, which are ultimately pre-destined to collapse. What is evident throughout tragedies is that extreme passion debilitates love and leads over the course of time to destruction of heroes, or alternatively makes them escape into the world of delusions or madness. Unlike true love, love defined by pure passion cannot bear the tragic circumstances that characters come up against and eventually falls to pieces.

In tragedies, Shakespeare dramatizes love between individuals ill-suited to the reality of love and portrays characters which love either not wisely or not well and thus are unavoidably doomed to end up tragically. Throughout the tragedies the frustrating and miserable side of love is emphasized to the point that it seems that there is no pleasure or fulfilment in romantic relationships whatsoever. The portrayals of love in tragedies chiefly include its negative variants, such as unrequited love or stories of heroes subscribing to the idealized conception of love, lost in self-deception, illusion or hypnotized by passions. By pointing to the maladies of love connected with deceit and hypocrisy Shakespeare dramatizes the utmost importance of honesty in romantic relationships. As deceit at crucial points in the tragic stories brings about disaster for the beloved and lover alike. Throughout the tragedies lovers fail to achieve realistic love and even magnificent and splendid bonds are ruined by the excess of destructive emotion. From fanciful affairs in comedies Shakespeare turns to ruinous unions of individuals which result in the negative and deficient types of love (Clark, 1974).

Nevertheless, in spite of the disastrous outcome of the love-relationships almost all characters in tragedies aim towards marriage and there rarely appear individuals who do not contemplate marriage when in love. Married life is an indispensable part of the romantic plots in Shakespearean tragedies, although serious infringements of marriage such as cheating are rather unShakespearean. In a similar vein, love, though at times frustrating and depressing, it is at the same time never depicted as criminal or blatantly erotic as Shakespearean tragedy refrains from exploring deep, sinister forms of passion. The penetration of love by devilish forces happens creepily rather than striking lovers at once. The very basis of the love relationships is insidiously undermined rather than shattered to its core by a single event (Herford, 2011).

All in all, for poets such as Petrarch, love carries metaphysical characteristics and is described as permeating all living beings. It is the vital part in the functioning of the universe, and it brings individuals to the higher form of existence. Shakespeare does not understand love

in such an elevated way, but he still endows his plays with substantial appreciations of love in the real existing conditions and visions of love's ideal image. Both in tragedies and comedies Shakespeare describes different ways how lovers can alienate from love, only in different perspectives. In tragedies lovers, unlike their comedic counterparts, are inevitably predestined to succumb to the alienation of love and doomed to fail in resisting love's impediments. This ill-suitedness to love is rooted in the fact that the tragic heroes are virtually trapped in the universe they live in, in the world where they had been cast in the wrong roles, in the wrong place, in the wrong time. Characters in the tragedies are overpowered by the constraints of their world and unfit to the life they are supposed to lead rather than swayed by metaphysical forces or inner flaws of their character like the heroes in Shakespearean comedy. Their romantic feelings are at odds with the society they exist in and hoodwinked by history, the tragic characters are unable to learn from the mistakes of the past and to choose a destiny independent of the societal rules of their time. In tragedies there is depicted an inherent conflict between what lovers need to be, deserve to be and what society around them condemns them to be. Characters simply fail to come to terms with the world they live in as their nature and feelings are radically different from what they should be. The heroes of tragedy face tragic fates as they never fit the time of their existence. Romantic happy endings are nowhere to be found in Shakespeare's riper art as the ultimate nemesis of tragedies is isolation or destruction lovers (Kiernan, 2016).

5.1. The theme of love in *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet, being the biggest love story of all and essentially the greatest romantic tragedy in history, undoubtedly includes an abundance of love references and romantic motives within its lines. Written at the outset of Shakespeare's career, in 1597, and being one of the earliest tragedies in his repertoire it is quite different from the mature tragedies, which deal predominantly with mental struggles of characters and are imbued with sinister and ominous ambience. Due to its lyricism and perfectly matched lovers, who are portrayed as lacking any blemish, the play could have easily been a comedy with a happy ending only if it was not for the blind chance and remorseless coincidence that thwarts their love. The widely accepted interpretation of Romeo and Juliet's love story regards the characters as star-crossed lovers whose happiness was only foiled by the power of fate. The deeds of the lovers are not

curbed by some higher power taking control over them but solely by the workings of a series of unfathomable accidents that befall them, which are by their nature petty but have detrimental consequences and turn the romance inside the story into tragedy. Also, it is not the characters' flaws that would bring doom to their youthful and earthly passion, it is rather the outside coincidental impediments that ultimately lead them to the tragic ends. Though love is a mighty power, the play makes it clear that destiny is still mightier, and, in its cruelty, it overpowers the strength of romantic love (Cain, 1947).

Nevertheless, apart from seeing Romeo and Juliet as mere victims of bad timing and misfortune, it is possible to view their tragic fate as the final consequence of the conflict between their families. To put it simply, the lovers' desires just do not match the life of the family and society from which they spring and hence their flame of love must be quenched by the undermining invisible forces. In fact, the hostility between Capulets and Montagues and the reigning demands of the familiar and social norms in Verona jeopardize the romantic relationships and self-realization of the lovers all the way through the play, way earlier before Romeo and Juliet's love story ends in death. The central theme of the play - the clash between individual desires and expectations of the society and the effect of familial bondage onto love relationships are evident also in the very first romantic escapade of the play - Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline, the niece of Lord Capulet. Though Romeo's affection for Rosaline is very short-lived and based predominantly on lust and sexual appetite, it carries within itself similar characteristics as Romeo's love for Juliet - it is forbidden love disapproved by the authorities. Romeo's unsatisfied longing for Rosaline temporarily turns him into an empty desiring shell of a man who feels like there is no other pleasure to be found in life. This episode of unrequited love, due to its momentariness, only testifies to the fact that desire is in itself very flickering and promiscuous. Since as soon as Romeo lays his eyes on Juliet, he forgets all about Rosaline.

Actually, Romeo's initial crush for Rosaline only prepares him emotionally for taking a step into a more mature kind of romantic relationship with Juliet. In a way, he learns from that initial consuming experience and is not that taken aback by his feelings for Juliet like she is, as he is already acquainted with the fact that he is able to love an enemy and that love carries within itself suffering and calamity. In a similar vein, also Juliet who was previously quite ready to give in to the arranged marriage with Paris, instantly leaves behind the attitude of a well-behaved and obedient daughter completely overcome by her passion for Romeo. Upon their first meeting Romeo and Juliet are swayed by the power of their immediate love, which is passionate and anonymous as they yet not unravel their faces under the masks. Surprisingly,

the discovery of each other's identity only reinforces their engagement in the relationship as they believe that it could have positive implications for the feuding families of theirs. Yet rather than being concerned with the effects of their relationship on others they are preoccupied mainly with fulfilling their own individual desires. Through their love, Romeo and Juliet set off on a self-liberating journey, which leads to departure from their familial bonds and to construction of a private world of romance where in their separateness they can truly flourish and be themselves.

The clash between the lovers' individual desires and the family requirements in the play depicts the inherent feature of love as being opposed to the interests of civilization and the fact that personal desires are irreducible to the social norms by which they are formed. Duty-bound forms of life are unable to fulfil the needs of lovers who strive for freedom and utmost individuality. If they want to claim their life as their own and not be just the puppets of others there is no other way for Romeo and Juliet than to depart from the society, they live in. Especially Juliet needs to subvert her household authority and go all in with Romeo's love, through which she will achieve individualization and truly live her life as she pleases. Anyway, both lovers seek recognition from each other, they long for a satisfaction of different sort, for something more long-term and stable than the passion that had started their relationship at first.

Gradually, Romeo does not view Juliet as an object of attraction to be conquered or possessed but relies on her reciprocity and takes her as an essential and irreplaceable part of his life. He acknowledges her as a free self-conscious individual and understands their love as a means to understand the world. After a series of empty professions of love to Juliet and singing the praises of her beauty, Romeo realises that Juliet is no angelic object of glorification but a real human being whose actions and feelings need to be apprehended. Only by mutual recognition of each other's individuality can Romeo and Juliet truly fall in love and love each other for who they really are, not just love the idea of the other person they had constructed in their mind. By recognizing the real side of the beloved, they can only enjoy the earthly happiness rooted in true human connection. Nonetheless, in spite of the ever-lurking threat of discovering their secret romantic affair, the self-discovering intimacy and private moments of lovers are surprisingly not disrupted by any sort of interference from a third party. The space of an orchard, balcony and Juliet's room at night remains a sanctuary of lovers, from which only they can willingly depart. Though with reluctance, Romeo eventually in order to arrange for their marriage, abandons Juliet. Nothing external comes between the lovers when they are together, only the prospect of celebrating their union outside of the public view finally sets them apart. Taking things into their own hands and believing in their ability to outstrip the

society's demands eventually proves fatal. Nonetheless, the view of Romeo and Juliet's love story as a hapless struggle for individuality and freedom is only one way of looking at the relationship (Kottman, 2012).

Apart from blaming the parental opposition for their decay, the tragic ending can be attributed to the nature of their love. In particular to the intemperance and hastiness by which Romeo and Juliet go about. In spite of Friar Lawrence's warnings to love moderately, Romeo and Juliet are utterly in the grip of the powerful erotic passion and virtually love too intensely and precipitously so their love is liable to go down as quickly as it had ignited. The fatal chain of mishaps that befall them can be viewed as a result of the speediness of the lovers' actions and the consuming nature of their love, which makes them act recklessly. In their quickly snatched illicit delight the lovers forget all about the world around them and tend to view all the trouble and obstacles they come across as insignificant in comparison to the joy they get from spending time with each other. They have no other choice than to follow the law of their hearts even if it leads them to catastrophe, as they in their youthfulness fail to resist these glorious passions. The combination of ecstatic and destructive element in Romeo and Juliet's love as well as its passionateness is throughout the play presented through the image of lightning, which just like lovers' romance, quickly strikes with immense strength and then disappears. However, the swift passion of the lovers is only the answering force to their parent's hate and cannot be ultimately considered completely responsible for their tragic fate. Romeo and Juliet are first and foremost destroyed by external forces not by themselves as their love is from the very start forbidden by the nature of their familial identity.

All the way, the romantic plot stands in direct opposition to the hostility and violence of Verona and the counteracting powers of love and hate are battling together all through the play. Romeo, being deeply in love, initially has no intention in proving his manhood through fighting and considers his sense of honour weakened by the infatuation with Juliet. However, eventually at one crucial point he gives up love for hate and he slays Tybalt, temporarily adopting his vengeful character and embracing hatred. Nonetheless, when Romeo duels Tybalt, the representation of tender love essentially conquers incarnation of enmity. Yet this victory of love over hate does not last long and it actually only prepares for the series of detrimental events triggered by the act of slaughter. The murderous and suicidal events of the last acts of the play, correspond to the overall hasty behaviour of lovers who are prone to jumping to conclusions and not thinking twice about things. The mortality and death seem to be close to lovers for the most part of the play especially as Juliet devises the 'act like death' plan with Friar Lawrence. The final destruction of heroes however seems to be particularly a punishment

for the blind enmity between Capulets and Montagues as well as a way for the families to expiate their sin of spitefulness. As only through the sacrifice of Romeo and Juliet's love is finally conquered hate and brought civic peace to Verona (Siegel, 1961).

Also, the death of main heroes enables their families to fully express love for their children, which had been hidden by the insistence on adhering to their rules and blurred by the unreasonable hatred for their foes. Only in the face of death are the parents able to appreciate the individuality of their children and display acts of loving care they should have shown during their life. However, actually death changes nothing in their parental love, if anything it only enhances the strength of their emotions. As their children have no say in the matters of their lives they are as good as dead to them regardless of having a heartbeat or not. This is essentially what Juliet has in mind when devising her 'faked death' trickery. She believes that by performing such an act she will become immortal for her family and that she will enable them to claim their love for her through the funerary rite. After death she will appear to them just like a sleeping beauty without power she had always been while alive. Anyways, although Capulets and Montagues could have condemned Romeo and Juliet for, they had virtually renounced their own families, it is evident that the children are loved by their parents no matter what they had done (Kottmann, 2012).

Apart from bringing civic peace to Verona, the final death of lovers also can be viewed as bringing transcendence to the romantic couple itself. By choosing to leave the world of the living together, Romeo and Juliet defy the stars and reject the merciless fate that God had fixed for them. United in death they enter the lovers' paradise and renounce the world which had been unjust to them. In their marital bed of death, they are once again joined, wedded in their mutual renunciation of life and enjoying their ever-lasting triumph over death in the place of endless bliss and freedom. Lover's joined fates in death celebrate their devotion to one another when alive and are the results of the overall tension between individuality and social reality. Their tragic suicides are rather the result of the summation of disjoint unfortunate events than results of consequential fusion of actions of the characters. Therefore, on the one hand Romeo and Juliet can be perceived as innocent victims of the workings of destiny, however on the other hand it seems more likely that the Elizabethan audience, would regard the lovers, due to its Christian background, more of as sinners. This duality corresponds with the overall blend of both condemnation of passionate love in the play as well as its appraisal and glorification. These two attitudes, though contradicting, are mixed within the play and together function as a complex and well-balanced point of view on love (Siegel, 1961).

Also, this complexly balanced duality is in line with the idea that the play is trying to put forward from its very beginning. That is that there is no such thing as an absolute quality in life, nothing is good or evil in itself, but everything is relative to the situation and circumstances at play. Initially, the feuding families of Verona consider themselves as absolute saints and their enemies as total villains. Their enmity is actually never explained, which seems even more absurd considering the fact they are both good families, alike in dignity, rank, and moral principles. However, as the play progresses the tragic plot unravels that the good and evil come together in the same place although they are complementary opposites. Characters in the play gradually come to the realisation that there is no such thing as black and whiteness of people, but everybody has its bright and darker sides. In fact, in the play there is a very thin line between good and evil and often something good as pure love is responsible for many peoples' destruction and a thing so bad as death can accomplish something as good as reconciliation of families. The message of the play is that though one tends to classify people's qualities as single and absolute and due to that glorify them or condemn them, humanity is so complex of a reality that relying on one's immediate and narrow-minded judgment can be tricky and misleading. Both in the play and in the context of one's life, under certain conditions love may cause grief, adoration may kill, and defence might trigger destruction. Even well-meant intentions can turn out the worst and there is no point in fighting this inherent paradoxicality of life and love (Bowling, 1949).

5.2. The theme of love in *Hamlet*

In Elsinore, the place of murky happenings and mistaken identities, where people are governed by illusions and pretence and in the state of Denmark where everything is upside down and polluted by an insidious disease caused by the corruption of its leaders, no such thing as love can properly thrive but it rather ultimately comes to destruction. Though love has neither the scope nor the intensity typical of the emotion in other mature tragedies of Shakespeare there are numerous events and relationships, through which can be observed the ways in which the play relates to the theme of love. The very basis of love in *Hamlet* is not sound and it is interwoven with illusoriness and deception just like everything else in the play. The central love story, the bond between Hamlet and Ophelia, is constructed on impassioned love and deeply undermined by Ophelia's patriarchal dependence and Hamlet's determination

to avenge his father's murder. The essence of Hamlet and Ophelia's love is illusory due to the fact that both lovers are infatuated with the construction of the other person they had created in their minds irrespective of the real qualities or feelings the other one has. Ophelia is touched by Hamlet's amorous attention. In her sightless fantasies she idealizes him as a romantic prince and blindly believes the sincerity of his professions of love. Similarly, Hamlet tends to appraise the ideal Ophelia through his verses but fails to act accordingly when facing her directly. In his wooing to Ophelia, Hamlet seems to be a true figure of Renaissance love, yet his avowals are incongruous with his treatment of her in reality (Clark, 1974).

In fact, for the decay of their relationship are not responsible only external forces such as fate or the demands of the patriarchal society as in other tragedies, but rather the contradictory nature of their understanding of love. Hamlet and Ophelia simply do not share the same view of love and are both very different personalities. Their minds function under opposing principles and are controlled by diverse motivations and emotions. While Hamlet is a melodramatic, moody, and troubled philosopher-poet who deals with emotions in hyperboles and is prone to acting instinctively and to feel deeply, wrapping himself up within his own brooding world of constant contemplation and inaction, Ophelia is more grounded in reality. She is a quiet, tender-hearted trusting girl prone to not questioning what she is told. As far as her views on love are concerned, Ophelia finds comfort in custom, predictability, and convention. She is a character attune with the ways how love should look like and has a desire for the typical ways of love. Considering love merely a necessary element in courtship she also does not question the sincerity of Hamlet's wooing tactics as she is credulous and affectionate by her nature. Though essentially lacking freedom or individual choice, Ophelia feels secure in the conventionality of being a woman and her father's daughter only aspiring to find a partner, because that is just how a woman transforms from the role of a daughter to that of a wife.

In contrast to that, Hamlet's view of love is represented mainly through his empty verses in which he resorts to glorifying the idealized picture of Ophelia, likening her to a chaste innocent nymph of extraordinary beauty imposing upon her his abstract idealization of womanhood that had been springing up in his mind. Hamlet fails to express love simply and honestly and his words resemble writings of Renaissance poets, who put their beloved on pedestals and look at women through rose-coloured glasses. As Ophelia is only a source of Hamlet's idealized avowals and her individuality is cast aside all through their courtship, written form becomes the perfect way of expressing Hamlet's affection as by writing verses he can immortalize his idealized image of a women, avoid direct and honest communication with

Ophelia and realise his poetic ambitions. Undoubtedly, Hamlet is no thoughtful lover as he is unable to recognize Ophelia as a partner in love and tends to treat her merely as his soul's idol, a passive recipient of his avowals of love and a sheer object of admiration. Hamlet's feelings for Ophelia are filtered through his mind abstractions and transformed into something lofty, elevated, and philosophical, that is to say to something which is strikingly different from what the emotion looks like in reality. For Hamlet, love is yet another concept to be ruminated on and he does not separate it in any way from other dubieties in his mind (Samons, 2018).

Nevertheless, the disparity between their definitions of love and their conspicuous inability to communicate is only one contributing factor to the decline of their relationship. The radical turnaround in their love is caused by Ophelia's renouncement of their relationship at her father's bidding. She is alone among Shakespearean heroines in subscribing to the demands of authorities in marriage matters and her piteous surrender ultimately makes Hamlet lose hope in love and triggers a surge of cruelty directed at Ophelia. The deplorable treatment of Ophelia in the 'nunnery scene' in turn elicits her hysteria of unrequited love and due to her inherent delicateness swiftly catapults her into madness. Hamlet repudiates the thought of her from his mind and surrenders himself fully to his vengeful actions. Ophelia in her last moments suffers the pangs of rejected love and in her melancholy resorts to taking her own life. However, the gravity of her depression can be attributed to the delicacy of her emotions rather than to the truthfulness and intensity of her love for Hamlet. Ophelia's illusions of Hamlet had collapsed and with the emotional sobriety came flooding in the reality and loneliness. Their promise of love had been broken and disillusionment started to take its toll on both of the characters (Clark, 1974).

Basically, Hamlet and Ophelia's fragile and ingenuine relationship is not able to survive when tested against the tragic circumstances and succumbs to the irreconcilable differences in their characters ending at a communicative standstill. Their love collapses when their illusions are met with reality as Ophelia views Hamlet as enthusiastic caretaker and Hamlet Ophelia as divine entity, both of these notions being radically at odds with the truth. Even when Hamlet is confronted with Ophelia's death, he once again only resorts to empty pretentious dramatization of his feelings, which is very far from a heartfelt grief or genuine sadness. His reaction to Ophelia's death is in line with his deceptive and confusing behaviour all through the play, which is based on his efforts to either conceal or feign madness (Samons, 2018). Never is revealed the nature of his madness as well as the truthfulness of his love. Actually, throughout the play Hamlet aims to be misread and is prone to tricking others into thinking whatever he wishes them to think. His love professions and lovesickness may thus as well easily be yet

another tool to deceive others as all of Hamlet's actions are underscored by ambiguity and manipulation. His love poems to Ophelia, though they may be viewed as verses of self-revelation, can be at the same time understood as mere trickery and concealment of reality. Since through the poems Hamlet only shows whatever, he wishes to communicate, which can be very different from what is going on inside his head. It seems unnatural of the deceitful Hamlet to unravel the primary point of vulnerability of his - his true feelings for Ophelia and therefore the very declaration of love for Ophelia can be viewed as infected with the possibility of dishonesty.

To put it simply, in the chaotic and illusory world of Elsinore, where true readings are inaccessible and where characters are trying to put forward their own reading of events while declining the ones of others, love has become one more cipher which refuses to be solved. Hamlet fails to read the world and therefore is unlikely to allow the world to read him, the incomprehensibility of his actions being a revenge upon the world and its absurdity. Hamlet's feelings for Ophelia can be perceived only as one more opportunity for his riddling turn of phrase and paradoxical behaviour. He seems to profess his feelings while at the same time denying them, as for instance when he visits Ophelia in the closet too woo to her and ends up silently staring at her, reading her while encouraging her to think of him as being delirious. Whatever information Hamlet gives of himself is misleading and puzzling, by which he responds to the disintegrating and questionable situation in the state of Denmark and the inherent inexplicability of the place. The collapse of Hamlet's selfhood and the disintegration of the play's textuality triggered by Hamlet's empty contemplative soliloquies initiate the destruction of the whole world of Elsinore. All characters crumble as they are unable to communicate or understand each other due to the pretence and deception they master. Nonetheless, the tragic ending of the play as well as the twisted behaviour of characters in Elsinore can be traced back to one single cause - the incestuous marriage of Claudius and Gertrude (Habib, 1994).

As was previously mentioned no such thing as love can flourish in the state of Denmark, unless it is a wicked kind of love matching its depravation. The ambience of Elsinore appears to be well-suited for sustaining a perverted connection such as is the one between Claudius and Gertrude. Their relationship is essentially the sole continued treatment of love in Hamlet, yet little is known of their marriage exclusive of the disdainful accounts of the Hamlets - father and son. Claudius is described as a man of lust who perfidiously seduced with his wits and gifts the most virtuous queen Gertrude. His character is portrayed as infringing natural order. He is depicted essentially as a sorcerer governed by passions and lust for power. In connection to

that, the precipitous marriage between the royal couple speaks of the supremacy of passion over reason and morals. The rashness of the affair testifies to the fact that there is actually no genuine connection between the lovers, and they are both just driven by ulterior motives or lustful incentives. Undeniably, love is not the primary bond holding together their marriage, due to which it is doomed to soon go down, as only evil can come out of evil. Nevertheless, though it is implied that Gertrude had been tricked by Claudius into the relationship, her decision to betray her former husband is only hers and she is just like Claudius swayed by passions which rule her judgment and deprive her of the sense of decency. On top of that, her betrayal may seem even more sordid than Claudius' considering the feelings she allegedly had for King Hamlet. Although she most probably was not aware of Claudius' crime committed on her former beloved, she could at least pay tribute to the deceased husband differently than by marrying his brother.

Anyways, the influence of the adulterous mother on Hamlet's depression and the way he approaches women is immense, just like the betrayal is detrimental to the whole state of Denmark. The very source of the affection between the royal couple is tainted as well as the emotion that comes out of it. The love between Claudius and Gertrude is the rotten, debilitating, and disastrous kind of love, which bears little resemblance to the ideal image of love. The price to pay for delving into the relationship only on the basis of unscrupulous passions is the ultimate destruction of heroes and dissolution of anything good left from the relationship. Upon her death Gertrude finally comes to see the evil rooted in her love, only it is too late because the corrupted love has run its course (Clark, 1974) As the play reaches its end it becomes clear that behind all the pomp and glitter of the court of Elsinore, the crime of incest has been creepily deconstructing all the characters and relationships in the play finally reaching climax in the complete annihilation of the royal family and thus a state of Denmark. Hamlet failed to exist in the world, which is illusory and indecipherable and was unable to find true human connection in the world where no one can be trusted. The representations of love, like everything else in the play, have been lost in the midst of constant misreadings, miscommunications and ambiguities. The play has subverted meaning in the very process of communication and it gradually deconstructed and de-textualized itself to prove the confusion and misery rooted in human existence (Habib, 1994).

6. The nature of love in Shakespeare's romances

The plays classified as Shakespeare's romances are plays composed at the close of the author's career and their singling out can be attributed to the fact that they do not fall into the categories of neither tragedy nor a comedy. Rather they are essentially a mixture of both of these dramatic genres due to which they are often referred to as 'tragi-comedies'. Directly following Shakespeare's late tragedies such as *Macbeth* or *King Lear*, romances develop the final stage of tragic pattern and subsume tragedy in the process of extending beyond its scope. As the magnitude of tragedy is rooted in dramatization of the ultimate human experience, that is to say death, romances transcend the absolute ending of tragedies by opening up a fascinating entrance into another dimension of human reality. Late romances do not consider death as the conclusive ending of life but there occur various instances of resurrections providing for fresh start of characters. In fact, death is taken only as a prelude to the re-birth of a new life, only as a step in the never-ending perpetuation of existence. While tragedies invariably end with destruction of its heroes and the choices of their protagonists are fatal and irreversible, the relationship in romances pervades a certain sense of continuation. In the romances there is accentuated the existence of an ever-renewing cycle of life in the midst of the larger processes of the world and nature itself and the inherent connectedness of generations as well as the past, present and future. The individual fates of heroes are described only in the context of greater workings of nature and against the spiritual backdrop of higher reality. The inner psychological experience of characters and their individual actions are put aside and replaced by the focus on archetypal and communal patterns of behaviour. There is emphasized the immense power of nature and fate in contrast to the limited abilities of humans. Individual characters are transformed into allegorical figures, who display absolute characteristics and abstract virtues and are not fully individualized nor realistic (Uphaus, 1981).

In fact, characters in the romances are portrayed in extremes, either as despicable villains or innocent virgins. Their realistic portrayal gives in to the symbolic representation of their attributes. For instance, young female characters are usually connected with absolute qualities of patience, chastity and faith and described predominantly as pure spotless figures. On the other hand, male characters are depicted more ambiguously. Initially, they tend to carry negative character traits of typical tragic heroes and are able to acquire admirable virtues only gradually over time. This transformation of male characters is realised through the overcoming of various tragic circumstances, which are by their nature very grave and severe.

At first tragic elements such as lust, jealousy, murderous intrigues or conflict between friendship and love unfold and impede the positive development of action, obstructing reconciliation between characters. In fact, in the first acts of the plays the main characters are separated from everything they hold dear and gradually subjected to an enormous strain and suffering while undergoing the journey of penance, on their way facing external impediments such as shipwrecks or other catastrophes. The tragic difficulties of characters however have a particular purpose, being an indispensable prelude to the romantic happy ending. The characters need to get over various and complicated trials in order to earn their prosperity and achieve the final reconciling concord with their loved ones. Heroes of later romances exist in a world defined by frustration and are deprived of all illusions of redemption. Unlike their comedic counterparts, who encounter only minor impediments and accidents on their way to love, characters in the late romances struggle in the bitter-sweet world of lasting storm, where they have lost all hopes so that they are eventually very much surprised by the convenient turnaround. Though they expect the worst, they finally magically achieve redemption and happiness interpreting it as the working of higher merciful powers, in particular assigning their fortune to the ways of providence. Characters respond to the experience higher than their own lives and are aware of the helplessness of their rationality before the power of higher divine reality. Though their way to love is not easy, eventually, the souls of characters are redeemed, and the natural order restored creating a harmony resembling that of comedies. By the sudden disappearance of all the suffering and through the achievement of harmony by the workings of the divine. Shakespeare articulates the Christian belief that people need to inherently believe in ways of providence. Even though they cannot make sense of the peculiar ways of the divine powers, they should have faith in God's ways because they all lead to salvation. In other words, passive acceptance of the accidents of fate is crucial for survival as one is incapable of controlling his own life (Felperin,1972).

As opposed to light-hearted comedies, characters in the romances need to overcome serious impediments in order to be reconciled with their loved ones. The plots are not centred only around romantic pairings of young lovers, but predominantly around relationships between generations, connections between children and parents and dilemmas associated with growing old. Familial relations such as the separation and reunion of family members, take the centre of the stage by which they partly push aside the romantic escapades of infatuated couples. Older characters tend to appear more frequently than young ones, which can be attributed to Shakespeare's high age as well to the aging of his fellow actors.

All in all, the very characterization of heroes is not quite elaborate and dialogues and psychological insights into characters' minds are replaced by the focus on action and plot. Also, the realism typical of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies retreats to the fantastical, mystical, and spiritual elements of romances. There is introduced a new superhuman entity, a deity who watches characters' troubles from above diminishing the individual struggles of characters into mere counterparts in the functioning of the universe. This spiritual element or romances is reinforced by the appearance of various visions, oracles, and dreams as well as by the performances of various rituals within the plays (Bieman, 1990). Romances dramatize versions of a world elsewhere or beyond reality, in which they are inspired by folk tales, fairy tales and myths. The tragicomedies elicit a sense of improbability and unexpectedness defined by the irrational nature of the setting and characters' actions. The world of romances is a world beyond the walls of the real one, a highly magical place bound to the higher reality, where time is reversible, stripped of causality and freed of its tragic conception. The stories do not head towards death but on the contrary from death-like states to restoration in love. Romances invite people to think of the unthinkable and to believe in the impossible as there are all the way presented workings of magic and miracles or incorporated doings of supernatural beings (Uphaus, 1981).

Though romances share many motives with comedies and there are employed tragic plots within their stories, they by many ways depart from these standard categories of Shakespeare's repertoire. Inspired also by masques, they in the context of exotic settings tell stories of symbolic heroes who through violence and discord reach all-embracing spiritual harmony. Love in the plays functions as a trigger for extraordinary adventures and individual love stories are described chiefly in their relation to family groupings and the whole continuum of life. The conclusion of romances is characterized by the aura or reconciliation and happiness as all main characters in the end come together, joyfully united after a series of wanderings and separations they finally achieve love (Bieman, 1990).

6.1. The theme of love in *The Winter's Tale*

The exploration of the theme of romantic love happens in *The Winter's Tale* through the set of two couples of lovers. These lovers are no strangers, as actually they represent two generations of relatives experiencing love decades apart from each other. These two couples are juxtaposed and contrasted as far as their nature of love is concerned as well as they are situated into completely different time frames and diverse settings. The older of the couples, Leontes and Hermione, are described in the context of Sicilia, an urban place of aristocratic hierarchy, where there is a stiff class system and where noble manners and courtesy seemingly prevail. It is a world defined by politeness and seriousness and the characters are trapped within a strict social structure rooted in their maturity. At the time of the play, it is wintertime in Sicilia and with the cold weather wafts in the sense of mutability, mortality, and the tragedy itself. Winter seems to bring doom upon the royal relationship, which takes a radical and unexpected twist. Though the decay of the central relationship of the play cannot be imputed to course of nature but rather to Leontes' sudden and mysterious change in his love to Hermione. Driven by unfounded suspicion of his wife's infidelity, Leontes' love turns into pure jealousy and becomes a neurosis that impinges upon his common sense, and it is destructive to everyone around him. Leontes' motives for his brutal and beast-like actions, which result in Mamillius and Hermione's death and the casting out of his new-born daughter Perdita, are at first non-apparent and incomprehensible.

Yet after an introspection into Leontes' mind and consideration of the presence of his long-life friend king Polixenes, the trigger of Leontes' cruel madness can be partially grasped. Basically, with Polixenes come flooding in the nostalgic memories of the two boys' innocent and carefree childhood, the recollections of the times when they were both just 'two twin lambs' living their life away from all the difficulties of life, yet untouched by the desires and sins of adulthood. Reminiscing, Leontes and Polixenes look back at their childhood and think back of it as masculine paradise away from the ravages of time. For the fall from that blissful Eden of youth, Leontes blames solely his marriage and the corrupting female sexuality of his spouse. Leontes' mind gets blurred and his wife in his eyes becomes the devil that had seduced him into letting loose of his sexual desires. Hermione is to him a demon with a bastard child who rejoices in destroying his youthful innocence. Leontes recalls the innocent courtship to Hermione and is more or less in love with the idea of their past youthful love, unable to embrace the maturity of their relationship and deal with the realities of growing old. Leontes is

persuaded that by marrying Hermione, he has lost his innocence and has become sinful and that ever since then, his existence has been pointing towards nothing but decay. Nevertheless, the king's unwavering conviction of his queen's guilt is in stark contrast to Hermione's blamelessness and the power of her unyielding love for her husband in spite of the accusations and wrong doings of his. Hermione is throughout the play virtually portrayed as the representation of the ideal of patience, loyalty, and unconditional love, yet her husband perceives her as the complete opposite, the source of all evil in his life. Paradoxically, Leontes' love for Hermione is selfish, impure, and egoistic as well driven by self-centeredness and self-love, which is essentially the opposite of Hermione's pure affection for her king (Everett,2004).

To put it simply, Leontes comes to know what it is like to be a man in a world driven by passage of time and is unable to come to terms with the realization that maturity is inevitable, putting the blame of losing his boyhood onto his poor wife. The past and future of his life have come into contact, merged and caused a massive confusion of his senses and diseased his mind. Anyways, after a vicious denunciation of his family, even the frenzied Leontes is tamed by the discovery of his son's death. Upon that disturbing revelation Leontes sets off on a journey of redemption, regretting that he had let himself be taken over by such strong passion, wishing to be reunited with his loved ones and hoping that he will simply beg pardon and things will get to the point, where they had been before the jealousy had taken over him. Yet his decisions are quite fatal and some of his crimes are irreversible. In fact, before being granted that privilege of being reunited with his family, Leontes has to go through years of suffering and loneliness, which account for the atonement for his crimes and teach him how to properly appreciate love. Leontes must lose himself to find himself in love again. He needs to contend with the loss and guilt for years to win his happy ending and to look deep within himself to find mature wisdom other characters, such as Paulina or Hermione, already had from the start. His quest for understanding is all the same as a quest for love. Love, which in his case has redemptive power ultimately brings his loved ones to him, of course with the contribution of the divine workings of the universe (Colley, 1983).

The reconciling forces begin to be at work in the country of Bohemia, an idyllic pastoral country inhabited by shepherds, surrounded by wilderness and under the rulership of Polixenes. In Bohemia, where people live in harmony with nature there lies a potential for another kind of love, a more natural and youthful variant of the emotion. This harmonious type of love is represented through the couple of Perdita and Florizel. Their love is portrayed as both an instant feeling as well as a strong lasting bond between two individuals, which is able to make it through any impediments. After the calamity and intense suffering described in the first three

acts of the play, Perdita and Florizel's infatuation serves as a reminder of the existence of hope and happiness. Their open-hearted affection is virtually an epitome of young love, yet it can be at the same time viewed as sort of a spotless, idealized conception of the romantic feeling. Florizel is very much engrossed in his glorification of Perdita, likening her to the queen of nature or deity of flowers deeming her even more perfect than Gods themselves. These magnified compliments give the impression of overt idealization of a feminine figure rather than speak of a true emotion for a real person. Moreover, Perdita in her humility disbelieves the flattery and considers herself unworthy of the attention of such a noble man. Perdita is apprehensive about their relationship going down, when faced with the reality of their unequal status, and is intimidated by Polixenes' spiteful threats. Nonetheless, the relationship between the two proves to be unshakeable as Florizel always seems to look past the class difference and resolutely keeps on making the promise of marriage. Nobody has the power to change their wholehearted devotion as their love is the love which does not 'alter when it alteration finds'. Though Polixenes temporarily mars their blissful infatuation, he does leave marks on the purity of their love (Gardner, 1980).

After a long-drawn-out winter of suffering and regrets, the love between Perdita and Florizel finally brings new beginnings to Sicilia. Their love essentially heals all the infection from the story and brings nice prospects for the future. Their marriage on the territory of Sicilia symbolizes a genesis of a new era and re-birth of love that was lost in the past and the final transition from ominous winter into merry summer. Hermione's statue is resurrected, and everything falls into place. The youthful love of children and the mature love of parents is finally connected in the final all-embracing harmony and long-separated families are reunited in peace. The final bonfires in the play symbolize the ultimate destruction of Leontes' illusions and the coming of new bright days for the young lovers as well as they commemorate what has been irreversibly lost - the life of Mamillius (Everett,2004).

6.2. The theme of love in *The Tempest*

The world of young lovers in *The Tempest* is, as is typical of other Shakespearean romances, deeply tied with the lives of older generations and linked to the past. The central love story of the play is the one between Miranda and Ferdinand and though that romantic plot may seem at first sight subsidiary to the intricate political machinations in the play, the bond between the young lovers has an indispensable function as far as the development of characters is concerned. Only through the young love are mature characters able to redeem themselves and see through the vengeful and power-seeking motives that have been ruining their lives and finally reach a reconciliation. However, at first, everything seems to be driven by the lust for control and revenge of one particularly powerful character - the sorcerer Prospero, Miranda's father. Even the very inception of the romantic relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand is infringed upon by the intrigues and acquisitive manoeuvres of his. Ariel on Prospero's behalf brings the lovers together as their marriage would provide for an opportunity to regain Prospero's dukedom and to even acquire power over a new territory - Naples.

Rather than being driven by private and intimate incentives, the lovers are manipulated into encountering each other by the supernatural beings on the island. Prospero does not hesitate to carry out his deceptive trickery on his innocent daughter Miranda. Their father-daughter relationship is very much distorted by his controlling tendencies, which attribute to his parental love somewhat negative characteristics. Despite the fact that Prospero is predominantly portrayed as over-protective and caring father figure, who defends Miranda's chastity against Caliban, repels her suitors as well as brings her up alone on a deserted island, he also does not think twice about using his own daughter for his own vindictive political purposes. Enchanting her to sleep when he pleases and manipulating her where desired, he essentially deprives her of free will and ignores her consent on the matters of her life. Although he seemingly allows her to choose a husband of her liking, he eventually sneakily spies on the private moments of the lovers and pretends that the relationship is to his dismay. By voyeuring on his daughter's private moments Prospero reduces the romantic exchange of the lovers only to another point in his plot against enemies. He rejoices on what their union will bring specifically to him and does not care about his daughter's desires. On the whole, Prospero's treatment of Miranda is based on psychological manipulation and on his conviction that his daughter is merely a puppet silently obeying and adhering to his elaborate wheeling and dealing. Nevertheless, Prospero's behaviour towards Miranda is still quite reasonable

considering the way how other male characters, namely Caliban and Alonso, approach women. Both of these characters yield to their lust for power even more than Prospero does. Caliban attempts to rape Miranda in order to re-claim his stolen hereditary title on the island and Alonso sells his daughter Claribel to a Tunisian prince in order to secure his political situation, by which they both prove to be despicable misogynists (Sanchez, 2008).

Anyway, the demands and expectations of obedience directed at Miranda from her father do not affect her and she soon enough breaks from his influence. Miranda is essentially the only human female character, the only representation of a feminine element in the midst of a patriarchal world. Her character is depicted as being in harmony with nature as due to her wild and solitary upbringing she is rather untouched by conventions of the court and reacts on the basis of her instincts, without adhering to the preordained sophisticated rules of behaviour. She is unfamiliar with how courtship works and what her role as a woman in the process is, which is represented especially by the scene when she offers Ferdinand to carry for him the logs that Ariel has assigned him to relocate. Miranda is depicted as a young, untried, and perfectly unsophisticated maiden and her naturalness is contrasted to Ferdinand's conventionalized courtship. Ferdinand is virtually a definition of a courtly prince as he is chivalrous, tender, and noble-minded. He falls in love swiftly and completely and his affection for Miranda seems to be pure. All in all, the love between the two is an honest healthy emotion, a light-hearted youthful infatuation based on a true chivalry rather than on some sort of a wild and consuming passion, like for instance the love between Romeo and Juliet. The way how the lovers express love is very varied, and their love language shows the difference in their characters, the fact that Miranda is defined by innocence and Ferdinand by sophistication.

Yet their dissimilarity by no means jeopardizes their relationship. Ferdinand's elevated language constructs an image of Miranda as the most peerless ideal woman and deems himself through his elaborate metaphors as merely her humble servant. On the contrary, Miranda though speaking in blank verse, speaks with holy innocence and straightforwardness and unacquainted with the courtship principles swiftly cuts off Ferdinand's grandiose wooing by proceeding to the marriage proposal. Miranda does not dwell on Ferdinand's avowals of love and being aware of his past affections to other women, she is rather keen on moving from the courtship to the very purpose of it, that is to say marriage (Grindlay, 2017). By her betrothal to Ferdinand, Miranda rebels against the dependence on her father as she is convinced that he does not approve of that marriage. Unaware of her father's trickery - the fact that he only pretends to be against the marriage, while it actually fulfils another step in his plot, Miranda shows remarkable assertion of freedom and courage as she is adamant in her affection to

Ferdinand - a man from the enemy camp and a son of her father's mortal enemy. Miranda and Ferdinand's relationship accounts for an idyllic type of romantic connection, a youthful passion which ignites regardless of the public opinion only on the basis of lovers' desires. Their love is the authentic kind of love, based on mutual servitude and reciprocity. It is a freely chosen mutual bondage which differs from the institution of arranged marriage in that it actually involves emotions, and it enables lovers to fight for their relationship and to stand the test of impediments to love. Without the sincere affection of lovers, the marriage would be merely a cold and sterile union serving a purpose in Prospero's plan. Though Prospero's influence on the action is immense, his magical power need not be used on the lovers as they fall in love naturally without considering what other people want or think (Sturgiss, 1935).

Eventually, the true love between Miranda and Ferdinand secures political harmony and enables mature characters to get over their obsession with power. When it is revealed to Antonio that his son is actually alive and well, the two feuding brothers finally reconcile and leave behind the past grievances. Miranda and Ferdinand are discovered by their fathers playing chess, which symbolizes that in their love they will function as two equals jointly engaging in their joyful game of love. The play closes with an optimistic note on liberty, forgiveness, and happy prospects for the future generations, by which it also ends the author's repertoire on a positive note as *The Tempest* is considered to be one of the last, if not the very last, dramatic feats of Shakespeare. (Sanchez, 2008).

Conclusion

Shakespeare's ideal of love is believed to be as follows "love is a passion kindling heart and brain, and senses alike in natural and happy proportions; tender but not sentimental; pure but no ascetic, moral but not puritanic, joyous but not frivolous, mirthful and witty but not cynical." (Herford, 2011, p.18). Yet this norm of love is rarely to be found throughout Shakespeare's plays and poems as rather than being devoid of extremes and following the idealized contours of the course of love, Shakespeare's works portray love with impediments and imperfections, either rooted in characters themselves or resulting from the outside forces. Love between individuals is often sincere and truthful yet it is also at the same time swayed by passions or liable to be controlled by illusions. The ideal of love described above cannot be approximated, because love as portrayed in Shakespeare's repertoire is by its nature in direct opposition to reason and logic and thus completely driven by utmost irrationality. Rarely is love shown as a stable and constant emotion but it more or less changes and evolves together with the plot. In fact, falling in love in Shakespeare's works happens instantaneously and without control of the individuals. This impulsiveness and blindness of love is on many occasions throughout the plays put into the contrast with the utmost stiffness, rigidity, and narrow-mindedness of the society. In particular, love is recurrently put up against social constraints, gender stereotypes and against the whole reason-oriented, falsely moral, and emotionless patriarchal world of the nobility, which exists both in the plays as well as it did in the author's time. The closest to the idealized portrayal of the emotion, Shakespeare gets in his sonnets dedicated to the fair friend, where he speaks about true love unalterable by mutability and a sincere bond between two soulmates. Yet even there it seems like a mere presentation of an unattainable ideal.

Nevertheless, what is important to point out is the striking difference between Shakespeare's ideal of love and the idea of love put forward by Petrarch. In contrast to Petrarch's idealization of feminine figures, Shakespeare's depiction of love is actually connected with humanity and relies on real-like experience and lifelike characters. As opposed to the Petrarchan paradigm, in Shakespeare's works the bodily aspect of romantic love is omnipresent as there can be found numerous sexual underpinnings, double entendres, puns or erotic innuendoes. However, at the same time Shakespeare never stoops to blatant delineation of sexual acts and the basis of the romantic relationships in his plays is constructed mainly on innocent courtship, wooing and flirtation. The departure from the Petrarchan sublimation of

passion into worship and the mockery of Petrarchan principles of love is especially presented through exaggerated rhetoric of the young male heroes in Shakespeare's plays as well as for instance through Sonnet 130.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare's approach to love is not completely unprecedented and singular. Especially as far as the choice of characters in love is concerned, the author is strongly inspired by medieval romances. Virtually all of his characters have royal blood or are of aristocratic descent. In the repertoire we encounter princes and princesses, dukes, kings, or queens and at times even beings of mythological or godly descent. There is no place for the commoners in the stories, which corresponds to the way how the romantic relationships of Shakespearean style evolve. All of the author's lovers tend to engage in wooing rituals and aim single-mindedly towards marriage. Yet, the way how they get or not get to that marriage is what sets apart the dramatic genres of Shakespeare.

All in all, love in the sonnets is portrayed ambiguously. There is described the ideal of true love, which is best to be transferred to other generations through immortal lines or procreation. In contrast to that in the 'dark sonnets' is love portrayed as carrying virtually only lustful and corrupting characteristics and the source of that dismay is believed to be feminine sexuality. Similarly, in the narrative poems is through the mythological characters described love as connected with lust, shame, and suffering. A more light-hearted and optimistic approach to the emotion appears only in comedies. In Shakespeare's early plays love is connected mostly with positive properties, although it is at times confronted with illusions, confusions of identity or deficiencies in love. Comedic happy endings create a merry conclusion to characters' impediments in love and establish a more cheerful definition of love, in other words, the understanding of love, which finally always achieves harmony through the ultimate chaos of love. Consequently, in tragedies, love is bound to go down and is inherently connected with destructive passions such as jealousy, hatred or excessive self-love. Shakespearean 'tragic love' is an unnatural emotion, which catapults individuals against themselves and the world. It is either too passionate, or fragile and thus invariably doomed to be destroyed. Lastly, the late romances subsume all the comedic and tragic elements of love into one as they develop from tragedy to all-embracing harmony of lovers. In conclusion, Shakespeare's outlook on love evolves together with his life experience and thus naturally he moves from portraying young, naive and innocent couples to characters reminiscing about their lives and expressing hope in future generations. Shakespeare's understanding of love is apparently very varied and cannot be broken down to one single definition. Shakespeare's style allows for love to be regarded in a serious manner, that is done in particular through his tragedies, as well as it enables to think

of it as an absurd phenomenon, which is presented through his comedies. This doubleness of love permeates Shakespeare's writings and attests to the varied views on love to be found in Shakespeare's extensive poetic and dramatic collection.

Resumé

Shakespearův ideál lásky je popisován následovně: “lásky je vášně rozněčující jak srdce, tak mysl a smysly v rovnoměrné a přirozené míře, je něžná, avšak ne sentimentální, je čistá, avšak ne odříkavá, mravní, avšak ne zásadová, radosti plná, ale ne lehkovážná, veselá a duchaplná, avšak ne nedůvěřivá.” (Herford, 2011, p.18). Avšak tato norma lásky je jen zřídka nalezena v Shakespearově díle, jelikož spíše, než že by byla láska popisována jako prostá extrémů a jako dodržující ideál toho, jak se má láska vyvíjet, tak je Shakespearem líčena spolu s mnohými nedokonalostmi a překážkami, které pramení z povahy samotných postav či jsou výsledkem působení vnějších vlivů. Láska mezi milenci je sice mnohdy popisována jako opravdová a pravdivá, zároveň je však vykreslena jako snadno ovlivnitelná iluzemi a náchylná k tomu být ovládána vášněmi. K ideálu lásky, který je popsán výše se dílo autora jen těžko přibližuje, protože je v něm láska ztvárněna, jako ze své povahy stojící v protikladu k rozumu a logice, a tedy jako zcela řízena prostou iracionalitou. Jen zřídka je láska v Shakespearově díle znázorňována jako vyrovnaná a neměnná emoce, ale spíše se více či méně v dílech vyvíjí a mění spolu s tím, kam se ubírá děj. Ve skutečnosti se zamilovanost v Shakespearově díle děje okamžitě a bez jakékoliv kontroly jedinců, kteří jsou zamilovaní. Tato impulzivnost a zaslepenost lásky je v mnoha případech dávana do kontrastu s naprostou strnulostí, přísností a úzkoprsostí společnosti. Zejména je pak láska dávana do protikladu k společenským omezením, genderovým stereotypům a oproti celému rozumově orientovanému, falešně morálnímu, bezduchému a patriarchálně vedenému světu, který byl typický pro Shakespearovu dobu a který se odráží v jeho díle. Nejvíce k onomu ideálu lásky se Shakespeare přibližuje v jeho sonetech věnovaných jeho světlovlasému příteli, kde mluví o pravé lásce, nezměnitelné pomíjivosti času, a o upřímném poutu mezi dvěma spřízněnými dušemi. Avšak dokonce i zde tento popis lásky připomíná nedosažitelný ideál.

Nicméně, co je důležité zdůraznit, je zásadní rozdíl mezi Shakespearovým pojetím ideálu lásky a ideálem, který hlásá Petrarca. Na rozdíl od Petrarcovy idealizace žen je Shakespearovo pojetí lásky doopravdy spjata s lidskostí a je vystavěno na realistických zkušenostech a popsáno skrze autentické postavy. Na rozdíl od Petrarcova modelu je v

Shakespearových dílech všudypřítomný tělesný aspekt romantické lásky, důkazem čehož je velké množství erotických dvojsmyslů, slovních hříček a sexuálních narážek. Avšak zároveň se Shakespeare nikdy nesnižuje k zcela otevřenému líčení tělesných aktů, ale základ milostných vztahů postav v jeho hrách je vystaven pouze na nevinných námluvách, dvoření se a láskování. Odklon od Petrarcova přetvoření vášně v uctívání a posměch jeho principům lásky je evidentní zejména v bezduchých frázích Shakespearových hrdinů nebo například v Sonetu 130.

Přesto však není Shakespearův přístup k lásce zcela ojedinělý. Zejména co se týče výběru postav, je Shakespeare silně inspirován středověkými romancemi. V podstatě všechny postavy v Shakespearových dílech mají královskou krev nebo jsou šlechtického původu. Napříč jeho díly se setkáme s princem a princeznami, vévody, králi a královnami a někdy dokonce s postavami, které jsou mytologického či božského původu. V příbězích se nesetkáme s postavami z řad prostého lidu což odpovídá způsobu, jakým se milostným vztahy v Shakespearově díle vyvíjí. Všechny milenci v Shakespearově díle soustředěně míří vstříc manželství.

Avšak způsob, jakým se k tomuto pomyslnému cíli blíží, je to, co odlišuje autorovy jednotlivé žánry od sebe. Celkově vzato, v sonetech je láska popisována dvojnásobně. Je vykreslena jako ideál pravé lásky, který se nejlépe uchová tím, že bude předán dalším generacím skrze nesmrtelnou poezii nebo skrze potomky. A zároveň v tzv. temných sonetech je láska popisována jako mající prakticky pouze negativní a s chťíčem spojené konotace a za zdroj této hrůzy je označena ženská sexualita. Podobně je tomu ve výpravných básních, kde je skrze mýtické postavy popsána láska jako emoce neodmyslitelně spjata s chťíčem, hanbou a utrpením. Radostnější a optimističtější přístup k lásce lze nalézt až v komediích. V Shakespearových raných hrách je láska spjata převážně s pozitivními vlastnostmi, ačkoliv mnohdy také stojí tváří v tvář iluzím, záměně identit či jiným nedostatkům v lásce. Šťastné konce v komediích představují radostné ukončení překážek, stojících v cestě lásce postav, a tvoří více optimistické vymezení lásky nebo jinými slovy chápání lásky, které hovoří o tom, že láska vždy nakonec dojde přes všechen chaos k uspokojivé harmonii. V protikladu ke komediím je láska v Shakespearových tragédiích odsouzena ke kolapsu a neodmyslitelně spjata s ničivými vášněmi, jako je žárlivost, nenávisť či přílišná sebeláska. Shakespearovská tragická láska je nepřirozená emoce, která obrací jedince proti jim samotným a světu kolem nich. Je to emoce buď příliš vášnivá nebo křehká, a tedy pokaždé uvržena v zánik. Nakonec, v Shakespearových pozdních romancích jsou zkombinovány prvky lásky z komedie a tragédie do jednoho celku, přičemž dochází k vývoji z tragického děje do všeobjímající harmonie mezi milenci. Celkově se Shakespearův pohled na lásku vyvíjí společně s tím, jak postupuje životem,

a tedy se přirozeně posouvá od ztvárňování mladých naivních hrdinů k těm, kteří přemítají nad svým životem a vyjadřují naději v radostnou existenci budoucích generací. Shakespearovo chápání lásky je očividně velice rozmanité a nemůže být vyjádřeno pomocí jediné definice. Autorův styl umožňuje hovořit o lásce jak vážně, což se děje především v jeho tragédiích, tak o ní přemýšlet jako o absurdním fenoménu, což se ukazuje v Shakespearových komediích. Tato dvojznačnost v pojetí lásky prostupuje Shakespearovo dílo a svědčí o tom, že autorův pohled na lásku v jeho rozsáhlém básnickém a dramatickém repertoáru je nadmíru rozmanitý.

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