

Romeo and Juliet – Act I Scene V

The previous scene ended with Romeo's premonition that "Some consequence yet hanging in the stars / Shall bitterly begin his fearful date..." (line 108).

The Preparations

In contrast, at the opening of this scene the preparations for the party that is to take place that evening, are underway. The servants 'hurry about the stage,' cleaning up and moving the tables to create a dance floor. The atmosphere is one of happiness.

Capulet is relaxed, and appears to be enjoying himself as he welcomes his guests. Whilst he admits he is 'past [his] dancing days,' (31) he is content to watch the younger guests dance.

Romeo sees Juliet

Romeo is stunned by Juliet's beauty; his speech is rich in romantic imagery. The striking simile:

It seems she hangs on the
cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear (44 – 45).

in which Romeo compares Juliet to a sparkling jewel in a black man's ear, and the image of her as "a snowy dove trooping with crows," are in keeping with the associations of brightness and white that run throughout the play, and are often mentioned in relation to love. We now recognize that the passion with which Romeo speaks and his feelings of love for Juliet are sincere. Juliet is the one who 'doth teach the torches to burn bright!' (43). Juliet is referred to in terms of her 'true beauty.' Romeo has forgotten about Rosaline. Compare this description to Romeo's earlier description of Rosaline in which he tells us 'She will not [...] / Ope her lap to saint - seducing gold.' (A1 S1 line 212 – 213).

Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice

Tybalt enters and immediately recognizes Romeo's voice. In an echo of A1 S1, he draws his sword with the intention of 'strike [ing] him [Romeo] dead' (57). Take note of his volatile temperament.

Capulet tries to calm Tybalt with the words 'Verona brags of him [Romeo] / To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.' (66) Tybalt persists, and we see how Capulet's mood can change swiftly too. He orders Tybalt 'Be quiet [...] / I'll make you quiet.' (85–86). Think back to A1 S1 when Capulet called 'My sword.' (75) He likes to be in control, and will not tolerate anyone who disobeys him.

Romeo and Juliet meet

Line 92

This exchange between Romeo and Juliet is a **sonnet**, a popular form of love poetry in Elizabethan times. A sonnet has fourteen lines and ten syllables in each line.

The rhyme scheme is structured as follows;

The first eight lines A-B-A-B-C-D-C-D

The following four lines E-F-E-F

The final couplet G-G.

Points to note

- The sonnet uses religious imagery – 'holy shrine,' 'gentle sin,' 'pilgrims,' and 'saints.'
- Romeo describes his lips as 'two blushing pilgrims,' (94). A pilgrim is the word used to describe a person that visits a holy place to worship. For example, pilgrims visit Bethlehem to worship Jesus. So in this sonnet, Romeo is the pilgrim who is devoted to Juliet. By saying that his lips are 'two blushing pilgrims,' Romeo is using a **metaphor**.
- The word 'palmers,' (99) is another word for pilgrim. When Romeo asks Juliet 'Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?' he is asking her 'Are you not a saint who is worshipped by pilgrims?'

- Notice how the final two lines of the sonnet are shared between Romeo and Juliet.
- Juliet insists that 'Pilgrim lips [...] must be use[d] in prayer.' She does not however, move away when Romeo begins to kiss her.
- The nurse's image of love is in sharp contrast to what we have just witnessed between Romeo and Juliet. She talks about the money that Romeo would stand to gain if he married Juliet. She views the relationship as a materialistic venture, there is no mention of love or devotion.

Romeo realizes that Juliet is a Capulet, and 'fear[s] that this will lead to 'my [his] unrest.' (118). Juliet talks too of how 'If he be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed.' (134). The irony is that Juliet does die because she cannot marry Romeo.

At the end of A1 S4, Romeo appears to see that all is not well. Similarly, here the lovers both hint that their union will lead to disorder and tragedy later on in the play.

The meeting between Romeo and Juliet takes place at the same time as the party. Shakespeare makes us forget about the events that are happening around them, and we focus on the two lovers. One way Shakespeare manages to do this is by the change in language.

How does Shakespeare succeed in focusing our attention on Romeo and Juliet?

- ❖ When Romeo first describes Juliet, (43) we are forced to forget the hustle and bustle of the party that surrounds us, and we are drawn to the images of beauty.
- ❖ When Romeo describes Juliet, he uses rhyming couplets. Compare this to the blank verse that Capulet uses and the prose that the servants use.
- ❖ The sonnet (92), with the religious imagery and the metaphor of the pilgrim serve to reinforce the image of love and devotion.
- ❖ The rhyming couplets that Romeo uses, and the sonnet form isolate Romeo and Juliet from all of the other characters in the scene.

Notes