

## “Best Befits the Dark”; A World of Tragic Irony in *Romeo and Juliet*\*

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Until recently, *Romeo and Juliet* has been considered as a so-called fortune tragedy, a very conventional one, based upon the Boethian conception of fortune: “a dite of a prosperite for a time, that endeth in wrecchidnesse.”<sup>(1)</sup> And the cause of the tragedy is ascribed not to the hero's or heroine's ἀμαρτία, but to the external operation of blind fortune.<sup>(2)</sup> But if we think upon it as such, we cannot understand why such a conventional play won a great success not only among the contemporary audience but also among the modern people.<sup>(3)</sup> The reason of its success is either because Shakespeare's magic of words charms their minds or because there is intended, as I think is the case, a certain conception of a tragedy which satisfies the modern mind, however slightly, as well as the contemporary one. H. B. Charlton considers the death of the young folk to be brought about by Destiny and Fate, relating the play to the Senecan fatalism and

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\* This is an article translated from, and rewritten on the basis of, a paper which I reported at the Nineteenth Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan, Hokkaido Branch, October 5, 1974.

(1) G. Chaucer, *Boece*, ed. F. N. Robinson, London, reprinted 1974 (second edition), Bk. II, Pr. 2, 70-72.

(2) There are certainly many utterances in the play which suggest such a type of tragedy; “a pair of star-crossed lovers”; Romeo's “I am Fortune's fool”; Juliet's “fickle Fortune”; Friar Laurence's “O, unhappy Fortune”. These words in general show a tendency to impute the development of tragic events to the chance opportunity which has little bearing upon young lovers' behaviors.

(3) As for its success, see C. B. Young's Stage History in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. J. D. Wilson, London, reprinted 1966 (parpeback edition).

states in conclusion that "as a pattern of the idea of tragedy, it is a failure" and that its success is "due to the magic of Shakespeare's poetic genius and to the intermittent force of his dramatic power rather than to his grasp of the foundations of tragedy."<sup>(4)</sup> It is, however, by knitting pieces of poetry into a dramatic structure with coherence that a dramatist can attain its beauty and greatness in a drama. Shakespeare uses various devices to accomplish the organic structure of *Romeo and Juliet*, among which the use of imagery is included.

Through the analysis, therefore, of imagery in the drama, I believe we can see that it has a coherent organic unity as a whole in respect of which it transcends, though not completely, the conventional type and that Shakespeare shows to a certain degree "his grasp of the foundations of tragedy" which draws it nearer to his later mature tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*.

The play, as Spurgeon points out, abounds in the images of night or darkness and light.<sup>(5)</sup> Brents Stirling includes the image of hastiness among the iterative images of the play.<sup>(6)</sup> The important thing, however, concerning Shakespeare's use of imagery is not only that iterative images are consistently used throughout the play, but that they are interdependently combined into an organic whole, so that it produces a certain atmosphere relevant to the theme of the play and makes a contribution towards the development of its plot and its theme.

Among the significant images in *Romeo and Juliet* which have been overlooked or made light of in the criticism are an image of eyes or eyesight closely related to both light and darkness, and an image from a book in relation to both. There is also an iterative image of

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(4) H. B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Tragedy*, London, 1948, reprinted 1971, p. 61 and p. 62.

(5) See C. S. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, London, 1935, reprinted 1968 (paperback edition), pp. 310-16.

(6) Brents Stirling, *Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy*, New York, reprinted 1966, pp. 10-25.

a grave closely related to darkness. It is rather natural that the play, which tells of a passionate love between young folk involves imagery about eyes or eyesight, as it is suggested by the fact that *The Sonnets* abounds in the eye images.<sup>(7)</sup> Furthermore, as will be seen later, it is a play about difference between appearance and reality mainly concerning the love-affair. The more visual images appear in it, the more easily we feel a sense of difference between what appears on the surface of their action and what, hidden beneath, moves them.

As for the tragic effect of this drama, on the other hand, as H.S. Wilson tells us, it relies upon "anticipation and its realization"; we are told at the outset in advance that the play we are going to see is a tragedy of two star-crossed lovers moving towards their death.<sup>(8)</sup> Their choices, therefore, made in such a general framework, can be impressed upon our minds as ironical movements. It does not follow, however, that they deprive the audience of their sympathy with them and participation in the play, because they have their own qualities of nobleness, e.g. their genuineness in their love, wittiness, or loyal friendship, which, on the contrary, deserve the audience's sympathy and even admiration.

In the beginning part of the play Romeo's faulty inclination as well as his laudable quality is suggested by the image of eyes, when his love towards Rosaline is shown. He reveals "the pangs of disprised love" to his friend, Benvolio, using the image of "assailing eyes":

She will not stay the siege of loving terms,  
Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes,  
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold. (I. i. 211-13)<sup>(9)</sup>

And Benvolio repeats the same image in his commonplace advice to him:

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(7) See especially *Sonnets* 46-47.

(8) H. S. Wilson, *On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy*, Toronto, reprinted 1958, p. 19.

(9) The quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* are taken from the New Cambridge Shakespeare mentioned above, p. 97, n. 3.

By giving liberty unto thine eyes ;  
Examine other beauties.

(I. i. 226-27)

with unattainted eye  
Compare her face with some that I shall show,  
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow. (I. ii. 88-90)

This love is really cruel though it seems gentle in his eyes, and mysterious to Romeo :

*Benvolio.* Alas that Love, so gentle in his view,  
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

*Romeo.* Alas that Love, whose view is muffled still,  
Should without eyes see pathways to his will!

(I. i. 168-71)

It is an ironical description of a blind, paradoxical love, from which Benvolio tries to deliver his friend in vain. Romeo expresses his love as "the devout religion of mine [his] eye," comparing his love to religion and insists on his being faithful to his love :

When the devout religion of mine eye  
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires :  
And these who, often drowned, could never die,

Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars. (I. ii. 91-94)

His love Benvolio analogized to poison by saying, "Take thou some new infection to thy eye / and the rank poison of the old will die",<sup>(10)</sup> seems to Romeo to be nothing short of a god :

One fairer than my love! The all-seeing sun  
Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun [sic].

(I. ii. 95-96)

This reiterative use of image from eyes enhances audience's admiration towards nobleness and purity in his character while it reveals, as is strengthened by Benvolio's counsel, his faulty nature of rashness and imprudence. Furthermore, the following image of eyes, together with Benvolio's previous ironical images, produces the most ironical

(10) *Ibid.*, I. ii. 50-51.

effect in the beginning part of the drama :

Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by,  
Herself poised with herself in either eye :  
But in that crystal scales let there be weighed  
Your lady's love against some other maid  
That I will show you shining at this feast,  
And she shall scant show well that now seems best.

(I. ii. 97-102)

The suggestion here of Benvolio's will be later crystalized into a reality in his first encounter with Juliet at Capulet's ball. Yet Romeo, who does not recognize such destiny of his own in future, goes there to see his Rosaline :

I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,  
But to rejoice in splendour of mine own. (I. ii. 103-104)

He cannot prognosticate his own change of faith until it happens. The poet seems to present an ironical figure of Romeo through the judicious use of the image from eyes. And it is quite significant that Romeo takes on a role of a torchbearer and looker-on at the ball, for the image of eyes is united with that of light in the double role of Romeo :

A torch for me ; let wantons light of heart  
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels.  
For I am proverbied with a grandsire phrase,  
I'll be a candle-holder, and look on. (I. iv. 35-38)

Here in passing, to state generally about the image of light employed in the drama, it seems to be the image of light shining bright against the darkness of night, such as the moon, a candle, stars, or a torch ; it is a nocturnal light of sterility, as contrasted with the fertile light of the sun. Or it is fire which burns the heretic, "a fire sparkling lover's eyes," or sinister flash of the gunpowder. This is closely related to the fact that a course of events in the drama happens against the background of night. Romeo and Juliet, ironically enough, can achieve their love only in that night.

At the ball when he sees Juliet for the first time Romeo expresses his valediction to Rosaline and the advent of new love towards Juliet by the use of personification of sight :

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. (I. v. 52-53)

Juliet's ominous defectiveness of premature knowledge is symbolically seen in her words, "My only love sprung from my only hate! / Too early seen unknown, and known too late!"<sup>(11)</sup> where the poet shows that seeing has the precedence of knowing in her capacity of understanding. If we remember her ironical words towards her mother showing her prudence, we can feel strength of her love and at the same time her defective character :

I'll look to like, if looking liking move;  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.  
(I. iii. 98-100)

And Romeo's love in the orchard-scene is described by his friend as blind one which befits the darkness surrounding the scene :

He hath hid himself among these trees  
To be consorted with the humorous night:  
Blind is his love and best befits the dark. (II. i. 30-32)

In these words Benvolio means of course Rosaline, but the same is true of Romeo's new saint, which neither Benvolio nor Romeo himself knows.

The significance of the image of eyes in the play can be seen in the fact that in the early stage of their love their true love is violently revealed, as contrasted with the courtly love, by virtue of the darkness of the night, that their blindness brings two young lovers together.<sup>(12)</sup> The darkness image which covers almost all the scenes

(11) *Ibid.*, I. v. 138-39.

(12) The conventional figure of blind Cupid suggested here shows that the lovers cannot see the world as it is, blinded by their strong feeling of affection and that they are premature in knowing.

of the play is provoked by the sterile conflict, the feuds, between the Capulets and the Montagues, which in turn moves their son and daughter towards a violent love, "which the dark night hath so discovered".<sup>(13)</sup>

Again in the balcony-scene Romeo emphasizes the important role which eyes play in love when he says to himself, "She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that? / Her eye discourses: I will answer it."<sup>(14)</sup> And he admires her beauty with the image of eyes which take the place of the stars:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.  
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?  
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars  
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven  
Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing and think it were not night.

(II. ii. 15-23)

The images of night, eyes, and light are united together in this passage, to which the image of birds is added; eyes are compared to the stars shining in the dark night, of whose brightness an artificial day is made. And the birds singing in such an artificial daylight seem to be symbolically Romeo and Juliet, which will become clearer in the bird images as the play goes on; Romeo did "o'erperch these walls" "With wanton bird's light wings"<sup>(15)</sup> and to Juliet he seems a "wanton's bird" which she might kill "with much cherishing",<sup>(16)</sup> and her Nurse identifies Juliet's chamber with "a bird's nest".<sup>(17)</sup> Romeo uses the eye image again in his admiration of Juliet, where he compares his love on the balcony above his head to an angel and

(13) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 106.

(14) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 12-13.

(15) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 66.

(16) See *ibid.*, II. ii. 176-83.

(17) *Ibid.*, II. v. 74.

himself to a man who gazes upon it with "white up-turned wondering eyes".<sup>(18)</sup> Thus by the judicious use of imagery Shakespeare describes their attainment of love which cannot flourish except in the night changed into an artificial day by the brightness of their own love.

The risk and adventure which the lovers run are expressed by the terms of eyesight. That Romeo, a Montague, is caught sight of in the orchard of the hostile enemy, Capulet, means his death, as is said by Juliet; "If they do see thee, they will murther thee."<sup>(19)</sup> But Romeo shows purity and strength of his love towards her by answering:

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye  
Than twenty of their swords. Look thou but sweet,  
And I am proof against their enmity. (II. ii. 71-73)

And Shakespeare makes him add immediately, "I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes"<sup>(20)</sup> and suggests his faulty nature of rashness and blindness. And, ironically enough, the same cloak of the night plays an important role in revealing Juliet's "light love":

And not impute this yielding to light love,  
Which the dark night hath so discovered. (II. ii. 105-106)

Shakespeare shows brightness of her love as contrasted with the dark night and moral lightness in her behavior by the use of quibble upon "light". This consciousness of their own faults of rashness and lightness justifies the strong and seemingly early misgivings on the part of Juliet, when she says with the images of hastiness and light:

Although I joy in thee,  
I have no joy of this contract tonight:  
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,  
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be  
Ere one can say 'It lightens.' (II. ii. 116-20)

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(18) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 29.

(19) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 70.

(20) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 75.



Here the image of haste is united with that of light and rash hastiness prepares the audience for the early and sudden fall of their love. This image of rashness is repeated throughout the play, as Brents Stirling points out<sup>(21)</sup> and forms the undertone of the play. And furthermore, if we do not forget the prediction of their unnatural death at the outset of the play, it produces a very ironical situation that the lovers hasten towards the fulfilment of their love, while the audience knows that they hasten towards their ruin. Hastiness in the imagery, however, does not continue with the same speed to the end of the play, but its speed is occasionally reduced by slowness of the old Friar Laurence in the third scene of the second act and by the old Nurse in the two scenes immediately after it. The scene where the Friar plucks the herbs is a world of fertile nature full of sunlight and there the image of the "burning eye" of the sun is emphasized<sup>(22)</sup> and it is in such wholesome nature that the Friar accuses Romeo of faithlessness, saying:

So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies  
Not truly in their hearts but in their eyes. (II. iii. 67-68)

He expresses his despise towards Romeo's rashness, using the image from a book; "Thy love did read by rote, that could not spell".<sup>(23)</sup> And he gives him the warning: "Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast." On the Juliet's part, on the other hand, in her monologue

(21) Brents Stirling, pp. 10-25.

(22) See his following speech:

The grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,  
Check'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light:  
And darkness fleckéd like a drunkard reels  
From forth day's pathway, made by Titan's wheels:  
Now ere the sun advance his burning eye,  
The day to cheer and night's dank dew to dry,  
I must upfill this osier cage of ours. (II. iii. 1-7)

Here Shakespeare brings out in striking contrast the conflict between light and dark, between day and night, and besides shows the consistent use of eye image.

(23) *Ibid.*, II. iii. 88.

when she waits for her Nurse she sends to Romeo, the image of hastiness is used and likewise contrasted with slowness of old folk :

Had she affections and warm youthful blood,  
She would be swift in motion as a ball ;  
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,  
And his to me.  
But old folks, many feign as they were dead—  
Unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead. (II. v. 12-17)

And the old Nurse accuses Juliet of rashness, just as the Friar did Romeo :

Jesu, what haste ! Can you not stay awhile ?  
Do you not see that I am out of breath ? (II. v. 29-30)

When Juliet impetuously urges her to tell her whether her news is good or bad, the Nurse makes a very lengthy answer ; after she makes a long comment upon Romeo's character, she starts to speak, " your love says ", but soon deviates from the right way to answer :

Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a  
courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant,  
a virtuous—Where is your mother ? (II. v. 55-57)

Thus a pace with which Romeo and Juliet hasten towards their ruin is slackened by the old Friar and the old Nurse, respectively. But it does not come to a full stop. Both of them do not listen to their advice but hasten again. For after the advice of the Friar Romeo says, " O let us hence ! stand on sudden haste," and likewise Juliet says, " Hie to high Fortune ", after the Nurse's advice. And what is more, the image of hastiness becomes more outstanding in the scene following these three scenes again :

These violent delights have violent ends,  
And in their triumph die like fire and powder  
Which, as they kiss, consume. (II. vi. 9-11)

and,

Therefore love moderately ; long love doth so :  
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow. (II. vi. 14-15)

And this image of hastiness, as was mentioned above, has a double function ; as Clemen says of the function of the imagery,<sup>(24)</sup> it gives the audience the foreshadowing of the future events in advance and at the same time suggests the inner defective quality in the lovers, that is to say, it gives a certain degree of inner necessity to the tragic fall of the lovers, showing that it is not merely worked out by a mere chance.

Viewing from the general structure of the drama, it is quite significant that these above-mentioned three scenes where the lovers' movements towards their culmination are slowed down are set in the background of daylight, whereas almost all other scenes are played in the night. We might as well say that while the world of the night is a romantic and unnatural world of the passionate lovers, that of the fertile and natural daylight is a soberer and more realistic world, where, as is shown by the hastiness image, Romeo and Juliet cannot inhabit with ease, and from this world they must be driven by the feuds between their parents. So the sixth scene of the second act, where they flourish for a while in their mutual love in the daytime, has little more than thirty-seven lines.

There is another realistic world in the drama, that of the glaring sun, where nothing and no one can beguile the eyes, the world of Mercutio, so to say :

I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire ;  
The day is hot, the Capels are abroad :  
And if we meet we shall not scape a brawl,  
For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.

(III. i. 1-4)

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(24) W.H. Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, London, reprinted 1967, pp. 81-86. Also see another book of his, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, London, 1972, pp. 1-95, in which he includes the use of imagery among many devices of preparation.

In this scene as in others, Shakespeare, maybe consciously, uses the image of eyes :

Thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes. What eye but such an eye would spy out such a quarrel?

(III. i. 18-21)

And in reply to Benvolio's words betraying his evasive attitude :

Either withdraw unto some private place  
And reason coldly of your grievances,

Or else depart : here all eyes gaze on us, (III. i. 50-52)

Mercutio gives a realistic and cynical answer : " Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze." In a realistic world like that Romeo, whose eyes lose the light of judgment, fails in facing the real fact in the daytime. Thinking " all for the best ", he tries to stop the quarrel between his friend and his new " cousin ", but Mercutio is slain under his arm by the sword of Tybalt. Then he fails again in true judgment, for the same honor as Mercutio's awakened in his heart, he cries, " fire-eyed fury be my conduct now," and combats with, and eventually slays, Tybalt. The death of Mercutio forms a turning-point of this drama. His repeated cries at his death, " A plague o' both your houses!" make every one face the rigorous fact of the feuds hung upon him throughout the play, of which cursedness stares him in the face. His eyes clouded by the death of his familiar friend, Romeo kills Juliet's cousin, and he himself turns the wheel of fortune in the direction of the tragic course. For the death of Tybalt in its turn banishes him from Verona and the Capulets urge their daughter who seems to mourn for her cousin to be married to the Count Paris. All these turns of the events derive their origin from the death of Mercutio, who lived in the realistic world.

Next comes the most ironical scene in the drama. In the second scene of the third act Juliet is waiting for the coming of the night and his lover, never knowing that her lover has already begun to

move towards the tragic ruin. Since her monologue contains many of those significant images combined together which appear repeatedly and coherently throughout the play, I will quote it at full length, though considerably long :

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
Towards Phoebus' lodging! Such a waggoner  
As Phaëton would whip you to the west  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.  
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,  
That runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo  
Leap to these arms untalked of and unseen.  
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites  
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,  
It best agrees with night. Come, civil Night,  
Thou sober-suited matron all in black,  
And learn me how to lose a winning match,  
Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.  
Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,  
With thy black mantle till strange love, grown bold,  
Think true love acted simple modesty.  
Come, Night! Come, Romeo! Come, thou day in night;  
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night  
Whiter than snow upon a raven's back.  
Come, gentle Night; come, loving, black-browed Night:  
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night  
And pay no worship to the garish sun.  
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,  
But not possessed it; and though I am sold,  
Not yet enjoyed. So tedious is this day  
As is the night before some festival  
To an impatient child that hath new robes  
And may not wear them. (III. ii. 1-31)

Here Shakespeare presents us the most beautiful poem in the drama, and its beauty is mostly derived from the coherent use of imagery, from the fact that almost all the images which embellish the poem

are ones used repeatedly in the drama. Here the images of night, light and eyes are closely knitted together to impress the main theme of the play upon the audience's mind.

Again when she hears the ambiguous news of Nurse about the death of Tybalt, Juliet impatiently asks:

Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but 'ay',  
And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more  
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice.  
I am not I if there be such an 'I',  
Or those eyes shut that makes thee answer 'ay'.  
If he be slain, say 'ay', or, if not, 'no'.  
Brief sounds determine of my weal or woe. (III. ii. 45-51)

In this passage she expresses her despair paradoxically by the use of a triple pun upon 'eye', 'I', and 'ay', and moreover, when the Nurse adds another 'eye', saying "I saw the wound, I saw it with mine eyes", and so enhances the tension of despair in her mind, Juliet bids her eyes, "to prison, eyes: ne'er look on liberty." Here is an ironical figure of the young lover who falls down in despair, supposing impetuously that Romeo is dead.

In the meanwhile, Romeo, too, stricken by the rash despair, falls upon the ground and will not listen to the solacing words of the Friar in his cell. And when they hear someone knock at the door of the cell, the Friar tells him to hide, but he answers:

Not I, unless the breath of heartsick groans  
Mist-like infold me from the search of eyes.  
(III. iii. 73-74)

He is too desperate to mind exposing himself to the eyes of others which signify his death because of the fatal feuds. His lack of prudence is suggested here and more profoundly in a dispute between them which occurred immediately before this passage:

*Friar.* O then I see that madmen have no ears.  
*Romeo.* How should they, when that wise men have no eyes?  
(III. iii. 62-63)

In the next scene where the Capulets consult with each other to fix the date of their daughter's marriage with Count Paris earlier than anticipated, the image of hastiness is used and it is significant that the scene is immediately followed by the aubade scene, for in the latter scene the young lovers, unaware of the fixing of the marriage date, are parting, urged by the "morning-eye", throwing little doubt upon their reunion. And in the aubade, the daylight threatens their romantic love which seems to stand for the night:

Look, love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.  
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops. (III. v. 7-10)

And the defective character of their love, which can be only performed in the "love-performing night", is ironically described by the use of a clear contrast between light and darkness:

*Juliet.* More light and light it grows.  
*Romeo.* More light and light, more dark and dark our woes.  
(III. v. 35-36)

Furthermore, they mention their ill-divining souls, never knowing that the situation they are uttering now will become a reality, making use of united images from a grave and from eyesight, and so Shakespeare increases an ironical pathos in the audience's mind:

*Juliet.* O, God, I have an ill-divining soul!  
Methinks I see thee, how thou art so low,  
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.  
Either my eyesight fails or thou look'st pale.  
*Romeo.* And trust me, love, in my eye so do you.  
(III. v. 54-58)

From this time on, the turn of the wheel is more quickened and accordingly the images of hastiness and of a grave seen in the passage above, are more often repeated. The image of a grave is one of the significant, iterative images in the drama and plays an important role in enhancing the tragic irony by degrees as the drama moves forward.

At first it was, quite ominously, identified with a marriage bed :  
 "If he be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed."<sup>(25)</sup>  
 It was again seen in the Friar's words when he accused Romeo of  
 inconstancy in love ; "Not in a grave / To lay one in, another out to  
 have."<sup>(26)</sup> To these can be added the two examples of personification  
 of death :

Then love-devouring death do what he dare ;  
 It is enough I may but call her mine. (II. vi. 7-8)

and

Come, cords ; come, Nurse : I'll to my wedding bed,  
 And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead !  
 (III. ii. 136-37)

Romeo was "Taking the measure of an unmade grave"<sup>(27)</sup> in the  
 Friar's cell. Juliet's mother, when she hears her daughter announce  
 her refusal to be married to Count Paris, wished ; "I would the fool  
 were married to her grave !" <sup>(28)</sup> Juliet herself, when she saw the mar-  
 riage cannot be postponed, declared :

Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed  
 In that dim monument where Tybalt lies. (III. v. 200-201)

Threatened by the imminent marriage with Count Paris, Juliet says  
 that she dares to endure whatever horrible things might fall upon  
 her, in order "To live an unstained wife to my [her] sweet love" :

Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,  
 O'ercrowded quite with dead men's rattling bones,  
 With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls ;  
 Or bid me go into a new-made grave  
 And lay me with a dead man in his shroud—  
 Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble—  
 And I will do it without fear or doubt. (IV. i. 81-87)

(25) *Ibid.*, I. v. 134-35.

(26) *Ibid.*, II. iii. 83-84.

(27) *Ibid.*, III. iii. 71.

(28) *Ibid.*, III. v. 140.



Every point of the description which she makes here of an imaginary grave will later become a reality and so produces a very strong feeling of irony. In this predicament of their love in which they have to be afraid of the eyes of others and can dwell with ease only in the darkness of the night, Juliet takes on "borrowed likeness of shrunk death" under auspices of the Friar, but her death in disguise results in deceiving the eyes not only of others but also of Romeo's, and eventually in the actual death of the two lovers. Thus the image of a grave, and personified death serve to develop the plot and suggest the main theme of the difference between appearance and reality.

It is also ironical when Romeo hears of Juliet's death. In reply to Romeo's words, "Nothing can be ill if she be well," his servant says:

Then she is well, and nothing can be ill.  
Her body sleeps in Capel's monument,  
And her immortal part with angels lives. (V.i.17-19)

This situation is similar to the situation in *Macbeth* where Rosse informs Macduff of his lady and children, saying "they were well at peace."<sup>(29)</sup> But the situation here is even more ironical than it is in *Macbeth*. For Juliet's death is only a "borrowed likeness" and she is really "well", and "nothing can be ill", only if Romeo is not deceived by the appearance. But he is. And he utters very ironical words, "Tush, thou art deceived", to his servant who advises him to "have patience", being afraid of his eyes. Furthermore, even though he knows that Balthasar does not bring the Friar's letter, he says briefly, "No matter." And soon he takes it into his head to attempt suicide:

O mischief, thou art swift  
To enter in the thoughts of desperate men!  
I do remember an apothecary. (V.i.35-37)

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(29) *Macbeth*, ed. J.D. Wilson, London, reprinted 1969 (paperback edition), IV. iii. 179.

His rashness here shows the same kind of faults in his nature as those suggested by the image of eyes including blindness and now it makes him take a last, fatal step towards the ruin of their love and bodies.

His monologue which he utters to himself before the beautiful dead body of Juliet contains the impressive image full of light, in virtue of which an artificial daylight is brought about in the darkness of the grave, just as it was in the darkness of the night in the Capulet's orchard:

A grave? O no!—a lanthorn, slaught'ed youth:  
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes  
This vault a feasting presence full of light. (V. iii. 84-86)

and,

A light'ning before death! O how may I  
Call this a light'ning? O my love, my wife!  
(V. iii. 90-91)

And immediately after this passage Shakespeare uses the united images of death and beauty, as if he tried to show that a series of grave images which have been often used, united with a marriage, come to a climax here:

Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,  
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.  
Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.  
(V. iii. 92-96)

Here death seems to be unable to destroy the beauty, but ironically it is not yet really destroyed by the death, which Romeo could not recognize, who lacks the penetrating insight and calmness, blinded by passion of love. The appearance here seems to him nothing but a reality. He cannot choose but kill himself in order to achieve eternity of his love and attain his own self-fulfilment. It is, therefore, symbolically significant that Shakespeare uses the images of

night, of stars, and of eyes in his monologue of his last moment:

And [I'll] never from this palace of dim night  
Depart again. Here, here will I remain  
With worms that are thy chambermaids. O, here  
Will I set up my everlasting rest,  
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!  
(V. iii. 107-12)

For these images in general suggest such a defective quality of his love that it cannot be fulfilled except in the darkness of the night, ultimately, of the grave, where eyes need not look.<sup>(30)</sup>

At the outset of the play the defective capacity of self-realization is suggested mainly by the images from eyes and blindness, which, on the other hand, indicate the passionate nature of the young lovers. And they are driven from the realistic world of daylight into a romantic world of sterile light in the night. Their love, which has been violently revealed by virtue of the darkness of the night, "best agrees" with the night and it is others' eyes in the daylight that have driven them there. And they cannot attain their self-fulfilment anywhere but in the darkness of the night, eventually, in the darkness of the grave, as is suggested by the several images in Romeo's monologue above. The situation surrounding their final death is also quite ironical, for only after their death, the real state of their love can be exposed to the eyes of the Capulets and Montagues in the daylight; they, as well as Prince, can see the real aspect of the young lovers fully in the daylight for the first time after their death; "Look and thou shalt see."<sup>(31)</sup>

So far I have examined the imagery in *Romeo and Juliet* in the order of appearance. Shakespeare uses the images of eyes or eyesight and of a grave, with some relevance to the dramatic structure, in

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(30) This can be hinted at by the emphatic repetition of the expression that love, being blind, best befits the darkness of the night. See II. i. 32 and III. ii. 9-10, quoted above, p. 102 and p. 109, respectively.

(31) *Ibid.*, V. ii. 213.

addition to those images of light and darkness, day and night, and hastiness which have been hitherto treated in the criticism of the drama. These images, united with each other into an organic whole, serve to develop the theme of the drama, an ironical representation of discrepancy between appearance and reality. What is more, we can observe that the tragedy is moved not merely by the external operation of fortune; some of the images used in it show symbolically the tragic flaws in the nature of the hero and heroines, and therefore, we can feel that there is a certain inner necessity in the course of events that culminates in the death of the young lovers and that the drama obtains an organic unity through the dramatist's repetitive and coherent use of several significant images.