

Changing Romance Text
Tiffany Chen

Author's Note

Earlier this semester, I wrote that my poetics are based on the human experience. They're based on emotions we experience every day; they're based on moments we go through by being human. But what defines these emotions, these moments?

My final project ties into this idea of questioning what defines these moments. It does so by changing the main thing we expect of famous historical romance stories (e.g., *Pride and Prejudice*): a heterosexual couple. What happens when we change the gender of the main love interest (e.g., Mr. Darcy)? Akin to

did not like her the worse for that; on the contrary, I felt better pleased than ever. The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: so much the better my position was all the freer.

Sphinx by Anne Garreta, the love between the main characters should not change. And while the emotions of it do not, the realities of the love do shift since many of these books were written before the 20th century. There's an additional clandestine part to their love, being two people of the same gender.

This project also tackles gender norms of the time. By changing all characters' genders, this project comments on expected gender norms. Take the beginning line of *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." When we change everyone to female, for example, this changes

to: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." It brings women into power in 19th century England while normalizing lesbian relationships in history.

This project thus comments on expectations on famous historical romance texts. In doing so, it comments on the human experience and how universal human emotions are, regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

mother was a Fairfax, and second cousin to my wife: but I never presume on the connection in fact, it is nothing to me; I consider myself quite in the light of an ordinary housekeeper: my employer is always civil, and I expect nothing more."

"And the little girl my pupil!"

"She is Miss Rochester's ward; she commissioned me to find a governess for her. She intended to have her brought up in shire, I believe. Here she comes, with her 'bonne,' as she calls her nurse." The enigma then was explained: this affable and kind little widow was no great dame; but a dependent like myself. I

Of course I did not - I had never heard of her before; but the old lady seemed to regard her existence as a universally understood fact, with which everybody must be acquainted by instinct.

"I thought," I continued, "Thornfield belonged to you."

"To me? Bless you, child; what an idea! To me! I am only the housekeeper the manager. To be sure I am distantly related to the Rochesters by the mother's side, or at least my wife was; she was a clergyman, incumbent of Hay that little village yonder on the hill and that church near the gates was her. The present Miss Rochester's

Pride and Prejudice, First Line

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. (original)

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. (all female)

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a husband. (all male)

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a husband. (all flipped)

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single person in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a partner. (all nonbinary)

Jane Eyre, Chapter 11

"Yes," she said, "it is a pretty place; but I fear it will be getting out of order, unless Miss Rochester should take it into her head to come and reside here permanently; or, at least, visit it rather oftener: great houses and fine grounds require the presence of the proprietor."

"Miss Rochester!" I exclaimed. "Who is she?"

"The owner of Thornfield," she responded quietly. "Did you not know she was called Rochester?"

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Miss Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards her. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene V

ROMEO.

What gentleman is that, which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder knight?

SERVANT.

I know not, sir.

ROMEO.

O, he doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems he hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

As yonder gentleman o'er his fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch his place of stand,
And touching his, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

TYBALT.

This by his voice, should be a Montague.
Fetch me my rapier, boy. What, dares the slave
Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,
To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?
Now by the stock and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

CAPULET.

Why how now, kinsman!

"Oh! she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" and turning round, she looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, she withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

"I would not be so fastidious as you are," cried Bingley, "for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening; and there are several of them you see uncommonly pretty."

"*You* are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," said Miss Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

Wherefore storm you so?

TYBALT.

Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe;
A villain that is hither come in spite,
To scorn at our solemnity this night.

CAPULET.

Young Romeo, is it?

TYBALT.

'Tis he, that villain Romeo.

CAPULET.

Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone,
A bears him like a portly gentleman;

And, to say truth, Verona brags of him
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth.
I would not for the wealth of all the town
Here in my house do him disparagement.
Therefore be patient, take no note of him,
It is my will; the which if thou respect,
Show a fair presence and put off these frowns,
An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast.

TYBALT.

It fits when such a villain is a guest:
I'll not endure him.

CAPULET.

He shall be endur'd.
What, Goodman boy! I say he shall, go to;

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Miss Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between her and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes, to press his friend to join it.

"Come, Darcy," said he, "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would

themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Miss Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of her own party. Her character was decided. She was the proudest, most disagreeable woman in the world, and everybody hoped that she would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against her was Mrs. Bennet, whose dislike of her general behaviour was sharpened into particular resentment by her having slighted one of her daughters.

Am I the master here, or you? Go to.
You'll not endure him! God shall mend my soul,
You'll make a mutiny among my guests!
You will set cock-a-hoop, you'll be the man!

TYBALT.

Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.

CAPULET.

Go to, go to!

You are a saucy boy. Is't so, indeed?

This trick may chance to scathe you, I know
what.

You must contrary me! Marry, 'tis time.

Well said, my hearts! You are a princox; go:

Be quiet, or More light, more light! For shame!

I'll make you quiet. What, cheerly, my hearts.

TYBALT.

Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting
Makes my flesh tremble in their different
greeting.

I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall,
Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall.

[*Exit.*]

ROMEO.

[*To Julius.*] If I profane with my unworthiest
hand

This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

great admiration for about half the evening, till her manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of her popularity; for she was discovered to be proud, to be above her company, and above being pleased; and not all her large estate in Derbyshire could then save her from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with her friend.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. Such amiable qualities must speak for

Pride and Prejudice, Chapter 3

Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Miss Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by her fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after her entrance, of her having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced her to be a fine figure of a woman, the ladies declared she was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and she was looked at with

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIUS.

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO.

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIUS.

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO.

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

JULIUS.

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

ROMEO.

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

JULIUS.

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Deny thy father and refuse thy name.

Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

JULIUS.

Ay me.

ROMEO.

He speaks.

O speak again bright angel, for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-puffing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIUS.

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

ROMEO.

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urg'd!

Give me my sin again.

JULIUS.

You kiss by the book.

Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene I

ROMEO.

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
Julius appears above at a window.
But soft, what light through yonder window
breaks?
It is the east, and Julius is the sun!
Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou his maid art far more fair than he.
Be not his maid since he is envious;
His vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
It is my gentleman, O it is my love!
O, that he knew he were!

He speaks, yet he says nothing. What of that?
His eye discourses, I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me he speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat his eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if his eyes were there, they in his head?
The brightness of his cheek would shame those
stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; his eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not
night.
See how he leans his cheek upon his hand.
O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek.