Trabajo Fin de Grado

Fortune, Fate and Destiny in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet

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0. Abstract:

This End of Degree Dissertation focuses on different themes in the play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. In line with the fact that this is a tragedy, the chosen themes are fortune, which through two emblems will be related to the Goddess Fortuna, fate and destiny. These last two concepts will be related to the world of Greek mythology and will be analyzed and described by different interpretations of scientists, philosophers and philologists over time. After presenting definitions and conclusions about differences and similarities between the terms *fate* and *destiny*, they will be interpreted through Shakespeare’s play in a chronological order to observe explicit and implicit references to these issues. These in turn will be divided into positive or negative manifestations of these terms as well as references where *fate* and *destiny* seem to have a similar meaning.

**Key Words:** *Romeo and Juliet*, *Shakespeare*, *Tragedy*, *Fate*, *Destiny*, *Fortune*.

0. Resumen:

El presente Trabajo de Fin de Grado (TFG) se centra en distintos temas presentes en la obra de William Shakespeare, *Romeo y Julieta*. Al tratarse de una tragedia, los temas elegidos son la fortuna, la cual mediante dos emblemas se relacionará con la Diosa Fortuna; la fatalidad y el destino. Y estos se van a relacionar con el mundo de la mitología griega ya que se analizarán y describirán por medio de distintas interpretaciones de científicos, filósofos y filólogos a lo largo del tiempo. Tras dichas definiciones y conclusiones sobre las diferencias y semejanzas que tienen “fatalidad y destino”, se interpretarán por medio de la obra de Shakespeare siguiendo un orden cronológico en el cual se puedan ver referencias explícitas e implícitas a dichos temas, con los distintos significados que adquieren a lo largo de la obra, ya sean vistas por medio de una condición positiva, negativa o expresando un significado similar entre ambas (fatalidad y destino).

**Palabras Clave:** *Romeo y Julieta*, *Shakespeare*, *Tragedia*, *Fatalidad*, *Destino*, *Fortuna*. 
1. **Introduction:**

This End of Degree Dissertation aims to illustrate the concepts of fortune, fate and destiny through Shakespeare’s tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Furthermore, the main similarities and differences between them will be explained. Regarding these concepts, I will work with specific issues related to them. And also these concepts will be explained by dividing the play chronologically and then according to positive or negative manifestations of the concepts, to understand better what Shakespeare’s vision about them was. In order to analyse the play, I am going to focus on several critics’ views about these concepts. The play’s tragic nature will be central to the explanation of the three elements studied. Indeed, according to Kottman (2012: 5) *Romeo and Juliet* can be interpreted as having a philosophical root whose primary model of the “tragic” involves tension between social duties, not a tension of sexual love. This idea will be taken so as to prove that the tension in the play is caused by the protagonists’ families’ hate, and with all that this implies as regards the fact that their destiny is fixed by their fate. Closely linked to this idea, is that of the protagonists’ freedom and whether they are really free to decide their future or are mere puppets of forces beyond their control.

1.1 **William Shakespeare**

William Shakespeare was born in 23th April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, and died in 23th April 1616. He is known for being an actor, poet and playwright. He is considered one of the greatest writers of the English language. Shakespeare is also called England’s national poet. He married Anne Hathaway at the age of eighteen. They had three children called Susanna, Hamnet and Judith. And it is thought that he wrote *Romeo and Juliet* in the wake of Hamnet’s death, so he had suffered the death of a child, just like the Capulet and Montague families do at the end of the play.

Among his works, we can find thirty-eight plays (divided into Comedies, Tragedies and Histories), two long narrative poems, and one hundred and fifty-four sonnets. His best works belong to the period between 1589 and 1613. He was part-owner of a company of players, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, which was later called the
King’s Men. Among his comedies we can highlight *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, among his tragedies *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, and finally among his history plays *Richard III*, *Henry VI*. His two narrative poems are *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. In 1623, two friends of W. Shakespeare, called Henry Condell and John Heminges published the *First Folio*, which is a posthumous collected edition of his dramatic works.

### 1.2 Romeo and Juliet

*Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare, in 1597. The story, according to R. Weis (2012: 2), is based on the poem called *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, written in 1562 by Arthur Brooke. Moreover, it could be based on a play by Lope de Vega, called *Castelvines y Monteses*. Pedro J. Duque has studied it in *España en Shakespeare* (1991). The setting is Verona, Italy in the 15th century. In Verona there are two rival families; the Capulets and the Montagues. Romeo and Juliet belong to these families and they fall in love with each other despite the hatred of their families. They were married in a hidden way by Friar Laurence, and after several misfortunes, both commit suicide leading their story of love to a tragic end. Both protagonists are presented as victims of fate, but unlike other tragedies concerning the falling of great men, the protagonists Romeo and Juliet belong to two leading, well-off families of Verona which are not part of the aristocracy (Holbrook: 2015:8). In my opinion they are presented as tragic heroes. According to The *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*), “hero” can be seen as

the central character or protagonist (often, but esp. in later use not necessarily, male) in a story, play, film, etc.; esp. one whom the reader or audience is intended to support or admire.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the main protagonists (heroes) are trying to fight against adversity during the whole play, and because of that they can be considered “tragic heroes”, due to their fate, because they are predestined to fall. According to Weis (2012: 3), Juliet is presented as a tragic heroine due to her age. The word “thirteen”, and the real age of Juliet never occur in the play. But Juliet is 13 years old, and she speaks thirteen lines in Act 5, in which each line represents every year of her life, and it ends with the thirteenth ending on “die” (V, iii, 170). These facts about the unlucky number thirteen in Juliet’s age was studied by J.K Franson (1996: 244-249), who stated that this

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1 I have used the online version of this dictionary.
number amplifies the drama of Juliet’s progress from innocence (childhood) to suicide (maturity). In Elizabethan England, youths under fifteen were still considered children and the earliest age for marriage was fourteen. Franson also stated that Shakespeare was writing this play to warn about the dangers of love and marriage among boys and girls. In addition, he presents some correlations with Juliet’s age; her full name has 13 letters, she is the 13th named character to enter in the play, Romeo refers to her by name 14 times during the play and finally, there are 13 proper names in the list of Capulet’s Ball (244-249).

2. Definitions

2.1. Tragedy

*Romeo and Juliet* is a representation of a tragedy. According to Peter Holbrook (2015: 8) this literary genre is older than drama itself. Traditionally, a tragedy deals with the fall of a great man or woman. But in most of the tragedies, it is a man. This individual belongs to a high degree/social rank. However, this is not always the case, because in *Romeo and Juliet* we find young people from wealthy families but as mentioned above, they are not aristocratic families.

Considering the abundant publications on the topic of tragedy, my explanation of this term will be somewhat brief but will serve as a necessary introduction to the topics of fortune, fate and destiny in the play. The *OED* defines “Tragedy” as a classical or Renaissance verse drama, written in an elevated style and dealing with the downfall or death of the protagonist, typically a political leader or royal personage who is brought to ruin because of his or her own error or fault, or because of a conflict with a greater force (such as fate or the gods). Later also: a drama of a similar nature but typically written in prose and dealing with people of any social level; (also) any literary or dramatic work dealing with serious themes and having an unhappy ending.

Furthermore, the *OED* continues by saying that tragedy is “An event, series of events, or situation causing great suffering, destruction, or distress, and typically involving death”. According to the *OED*,

Definitions and characterizations of tragedy have been greatly influenced by those in Aristotle's *Poetics*, such as that a tragedy arouses pity and terror and effects a purgation or purification of
these emotions […], and that the crisis in a tragedy is brought about by the protagonist's flaw or error.

In accordance with Holbrook, in tragedies, the most important topic is death, and this is even seen as a mysterious topic, (2015:22). However, tragedy is not only focused on a single death but on the destruction of the main protagonist, and of his or her individual consciousness (22). Holbrook states that tragedy reminds us we are not godlike masters of our destiny. We are born into a scene we never chose and cannot control, the ultimate limit on our autonomy being life-span […] tragedy reminds us of the countless ways in which our agency, or ability to get done what we wish to get done, is subverted by forces outside our will. (22)

Besides, in tragedies we can find some mythological references dealing with this topic of outside forces. For instance, in Romeo and Juliet we notice how the protagonists’ lives are ruled by an abstract entity and it appears that they are predestined by the stars, stars which can control their lives as if they were puppets. In addition, they are presented from the very beginning in the Prologue as being “star-crossed lovers” (Prol.1.6). In this tragedy, the flaw of the protagonists’ which leads them to their tragic end lies in their families’ hatred of each other. It is not their own particular flaw of nature, unlike Hamlet’s indecisiveness, but the lovers are affected by it and must adopt a stance towards this situation (Holbrook, 2015:23). Moreover, in my opinion, something to be added to the tragic circumstances of the protagonists is the fact that Juliet is not only controlled by the stars, but by the tyrannical orders of her parents, because she must always behave as they tell her. Consequently, Juliet is never ruled by her own decisions. This aspect will be later explained in detail with examples from the play.

2.2. Fortune

The term “Fortune” is another element that appears during the play, and it is related to the lovers’ destiny or future events. The term comes from the Latin fortuna. It can be defined according to the OED as

Chance, hap, or luck, regarded as a cause of events and changes in men's affairs. Often (after Latin) personified as a goddess, ‘the power supposed to distribute the lots of life according to her own humour’ (Johnson); her emblem is a wheel, betokening vicissitude.
Likewise, Cesare Ripa (1987: 440-443) states that Fortuna is also personified as a goddess, her emblem is a wheel, and it is presumed that she has the power to disperse the lots of life according to her own mood.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, we can find references to “Lady Fortune”. For instance when Tybalt is killed by Romeo, the latter cries “O, I am fortune’s fool” (III, i, 124). Romeo is expressing with that sentence that he is Fortune’s puppet and has not been able to control the situation. Also, Lady Fortune’s changeability or fickleness, usually referred to in a negative sense, is what gives some glimmer of hope to Juliet when Romeo is exiled. She says

O, Fortune, Fortune, all men call thou fickle
[...]Be fickle, Fortune,
For then I hope thou wilt not keep him long,
But send him back. (III, v, 60-64).

Fortune’s reputed ability to change seems to offer Juliet a vague hope for her future. Besides, Friar Laurence also makes a hidden reference to Lady Fortune, using the word “Adversity” when he says to Romeo:

I’ll give thee armour to keep off that word,
Adversity’s sweet milk, philosophy,
to comfort thee though thou art banished. (III, iii, 54-56).

Friar Laurence is telling Romeo that as a defence against his bad fortune or adversity he can use philosophy to protect himself against this bad fortune, as a spiritual comfort. And finally, there is another reference to Fortune in the last act of the play, in which Fortune has totally turned against the main protagonists and a tragic event is predicted. It appears in Friar Laurence’s speech when he realises that Romeo has not received his letter

Unhappy fortune! [...]  
The letter was not nice but full of charge,  
Of dear import, and the neglecting it  
May do much danger (V, ii, 17-20).

By means of these sentences he curses their fortune that has again turned against this couple of innocent lovers. And this change has grave consequences on them.
Moreover, if we consider the fickle character of Fortune we can see how Fortune changes throughout the tragedy. At the beginning, fortune smiles on Romeo because while he was sad because of his love for Rosaline, he went to the Capulet’s ball and he fell in love with Juliet, they shared their first kiss and he heard Juliet’s declaration of love at her balcony. However, there is a tragic turn of events at the beginning of Act III when he is challenged to fight by Tybalt.

Interestingly, Ripa (1987: 440-443) claims that Fortune is thought to be a quality and power of the stars, which change depending on the nature of human beings, and which modify their feelings, obliging them to do what the stars want. He also describes fortune as blind, showing that it does not favour one entity more than another. Consequently, it can change the future of good men turning it into a disaster and misery.

After this general introduction about Fortune it is interesting to look at examples of some emblems of Fortune and Fortune's Wheel:
The emblem of Fortune is an emblem which is typical of Shakespeare’s day. The first image above, as Ripa (1987: 441) stated, is represented by a woman carrying a celestial globe above her head, and a Cornucopia in a hand (showing abundance, plenty). The globe shows that Fortune is in constant movement, as she always goes from one person to another: while she determines to raise one person she takes down another one. The motto “And, as the Moone, so changeth She” portrays her as being similar to the moon, as the moon is ever-changing, as Juliet herself tells Romeo when during the balcony scene he is about to vow by the moon that he loves her:

O, swear not by the moon,
th’ inconstant moon
That monthly changes in her circle orb” (II, ii, 109-110).

In the second image, we see a representation of Fortune’s wheel. The main difference between both images is that in the first, Fortune is standing upon the celestial globe and the second image represents fortune upon a wheel. According to Ripa (1987, 442-443) Goddess Fortuna is called Pacific Fortune in the second image. The emblem represents a good, peaceful, serene and friendly Fortune. This Goddess also was named
according to Ripa (1987: 443) “Obsequens” among the Romans. This term means that the goddess is merciful or lenient.

Consequently, we may think of Fortune as being characterized by a human being, especially a woman, and she is always standing upon something, that can be a wheel or a celestial globe, and also, she is always carrying a cornucopia in a hand. Moreover, we can observe that she is represented nude, and we can suppose that this may represent equality, as she is not only favouring rich or poor people, because she is not dressed in a rich or poor manner. Thus, fortune favoured both aristocracy and homeless people. Besides, I would like to point out the fact that each of the ladies in the different images is looking to opposites sides. Also, the fact that the first emblem can change her wish and that she is in constant movement favouring the person that she wants, can be the opposite of the second one that is called Pacific Fortune, whose only wish is to favour your life (Ripa: 1987: 442-3). So, while the first could bring you both good and bad things, the second one will only bring you the best. Therefore, we can think that Romeo and Juliet are more related to the first Goddess Fortuna, than to Pacific Fortune, because as both protagonists state, their fortune is inconstant.

2.3. Fate and Destiny

Unlike Fortune, which has few references and which I have endeavoured to explain in the previous section, the terms “fate” and “destiny” are mentioned more abundantly and deserve a larger space dedicated to them. They can be thought as synonyms throughout the tragedy, but it is convenient to analyse in depth the differences that exist between them. “Fate” according to OED is defined with several entries.

The principle, power, or agency by which, according to certain philosophical and popular systems of belief, all events, or some events in particular, are unalterably predetermined from eternity. Often personified.

The goddess of fate or destiny; in Homer Moïpsa

pl. In later Greek and Roman mythology, the three goddesses supposed to determine the course of human life (Greek Moïpsa, Latin Parcae, Fata). In Greek the three Fates are called Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos; these names were adopted by Latin poets, but the mythologists give as native names Nona, Decuma, and Morta.

That which is destined or fated to happen.
What will become of, or has become of (a person or thing); ultimate condition; destiny. Often to decide one's fate, to fix one's fate, to seal one's fate. A fate worse than death.

Death, destruction, ruin.

The *Cambridge English Dictionary* (henceforth CED) states that “fate” is “what happens to a particular person or thing, especially something final or negative, such as death or defeat” and also it is “a power that some people believe causes and controls all events, so that you cannot change or control the way things will happen”. In my opinion, the entry that best defines the concept of fate as it appears in *Romeo and Juliet* is that of the CED, because in the play the concept of fate can be considered as the fatal incidents that happen to both protagonists. Besides, as they are presented as “star-crossed lovers” (Prol. I. 6), they are supposed to be controlled by the stars, and these stars represent the external power that they cannot change. This definition of fate is very similar to that of “death, destruction, ruin” of the *OED*, because these fatal incidents destroy the protagonists’ lives and take them to an imminent death.

Besides, as the online *OED* states, Fate comes from the Latin word *fātum*. This meaning expresses the doom or sentence of the gods (= *Greek θέσφατον*). There were three goddesses, Clotho, Atropos and Lachesis, of Greek Mythology, also called the Fates, who were thought to manage the birth and life of people on the earth. They were thought to move human destiny. And according to Bargdill (2006: 205), the words fate and destiny come exactly from the same word in ancient Greek and that word is Moira, corresponding to the name of the goddess of Fate and Destiny in Homer. We can contrast this with the information given by the *OED* in which we are told that the three goddesses mentioned before were called Moirae and these goddesses decided if the life of people would be positive or negative. As Bargdill states (206), Clotho decided the major features of everyone’s life. Lachesis calculated the length of the lives. She dispensed the fortunes. And Atropos was the worst, because she decided when the threads of mortal lives must be cut.

“Destiny” according to the *OED* is defined also with several entries,

That which is destined or fated to happen; predetermined events collectively;

That which is destined to happen to a particular person, country, institution, etc.; (one's) appointed lot or fortune; what one is destined to do or suffer

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2 I have used the online version of this dictionary.
The power or agency by which, according to various systems of philosophy and popular belief, all events, or certain particular events, are unalterably predetermined; supernatural or divine pre-ordination; overruling or invincible necessity = fate.

The CED states that it is “the things that will happen in the future” and also “the force that some people think controls what happens in the future, and is outside human control”.

We can apply these concepts of destiny to Romeo and Juliet’s destiny, as it is clear that these “star-crossed lovers” are predestined from the very beginning when they are named as such by the Chorus. (Prol.1-14). Both protagonists realize that there is a supernatural power in the stars that controls everything, and Fortune is mentioned by both as being decisive about their future. Destiny is defined in the OED, as “the appointed lot or fortune” of an individual, but as I said before, Lady Fortune is in constant movement, so the protagonists’ destiny is also in constant movement.

2.3.1 Main similarities and distinctions between Fate and Destiny

The terms “Fate” and “Destiny” can easily be confused because they both refer to the path of someone’s life or the inevitable death of a person. So, they are used as synonyms in many contexts, and as seen above, even in the definition of dictionaries one term is used to describe the other. However, there is a slight difference between them, as Destiny can be described as an incident that will necessarily happen in the future to an individual or thing, while fate can be what occurs to an individual or thing in the future, particularly, but in a more negative or final way, implying defeat or death. Besides, as the OED states, Destiny is an unknown “power or agency” that is thought to control future incidents, whereas Fate involves the occurrence of events that are predetermined. Consequently, if both destiny and fate are at work, one cannot alter or command the way in which things and events will occur.

According to Bargdill (2006: 205), there are some historical distinctions between both terms. As stated above, they came from the same word, “Moira”, and the three goddesses who control humans’ destiny are also called Moirae. As a consequence, in Ancient Greek both terms were interchangeable. Bargdill (205-6) also states that Ancient Greeks did not see any difference between fate and destiny in their times. In Latin, “fates” comes from the verb “to speak” and destiny comes from the verb meaning
“to make firm, or to fasten down”. Both terms are commonly used as synonyms in English and this is why they even appear included in the definition of the other. As stated by Doob (1988) and Bollas (1989) (in Bargdill, 2006: 206) fate has in general a more negative connotation, and so refers to bad results of an event, whereas destiny could have a more positive meaning.

However, there are some authors who affirm the opposite idea, such as May, (1981: 89) who states that destiny is often associated to secret doom, catastrophe, and irrevocable ruin. Moreover, Doob came to the conclusion that the term “fate” has a negative connotation due to its relationship to other words like fatalism, fateful, fatal, all these being expressions implying unpleasant incidents (206). Besides, Bargdill says, fate and destiny appeared in Ancient Greek frequently in their myths. Fate is used to value the often-incomprehensible mystery of human fortune. In ancient Greek myths there were two ways of knowing about one’s fate. The first one was in which the three goddesses appear just after the child’s birth or even directly to the person’s parents and so these women create this child’s destiny. They decide the type of life that this person will have (206). Besides, Bargdill says that they decide for how long that person would be alive and how that person would die. In consequence, the three decide if this child will have a glorious or quiet life, with a tragic or peaceful death. And the second way of learning about one’s fate was by visiting the Oracle. This character represented the mediator between human beings and Gods. And through the Oracle humans could find out a little about their future fate, so their destiny was not fully pre-determined (207).

Furthermore, the distinctions between both terms depend on the culture and attitude of philosophers, psychologists and scientists towards their analysis of fate and destiny. Thus, as Bargdill states (217), those people who consider that the events of their lives are informed by “fate”, are supposed to adopt a passive attitude towards life, and even “fatalism” means to have a predetermined view of life, in which events cannot be altered. Whereas, “destiny” suggests a more active attitude towards life in destiny there is a foreknowledge of what is to come, that is to say, the expectations about the future by others or by oneself. There are even different views for the same concept of fate, for instance, the Romans accepted the concept of fate through the fact that they adapted the Greek myths, but even to a greater degree than the Greeks. While Romans felt that fate controlled everything, the Greeks felt that fate only controlled major life events. Besides, early philosophers began to look for “causes” instead of “fate or
destiny” as they became dissatisfied with the explanations of the behaviour of Gods (208-9).
3. Elements of Fate and Destiny in Romeo and Juliet

The different elements of fate and destiny will be by following the chronological order of the play so as to explain the references included according to the story line.

3.1. The Prologue

In the Prologue, the Chorus refers to the tragic ending, and both protagonists are described as being born from “the fatal loins” of the two enemies, Capulet and Montague, indicating the fact that the hate between their families contributes to the flaw related to their tragic story. It also implies that their fate was determined since their birth. This is why the “star-cross’d lovers take their life” (Prol. l. 5-6). So from the very beginning this idea of fate, and the invisible power of malign stars on the protagonists’s lives is highlighted. It gives very important information about the sequences of events to the audience and introduces the idea that the lovers are unable to do anything to change the course of events. The Chorus hence introduces us to the main characters as unfortunate, because they are the unlucky descendants of “fatal loins”, being predestined from the very beginning to have an unfortunate death that will change their parents’s feud. As a consequence, they will be foes too. It is also explained how this story ends in tragedy, The Chorus’s words “The fearful passage of their death-mark’d love” (Prol. l. 9), gives us the idea that their love is marked by death due to fate, or destiny. So, fate and fatalism is present from the very first seconds of the play, because their relationship is doomed to end in death. This inevitability is thus made clear.

3.2. Act 1

In order to analyse both concepts of fate and destiny in Act 1, they are going to be grouped into 3 different groups:

1. Elements of fate and destiny with a positive meaning
2. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation
3. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms
1. Elements of fate and destiny with a positive meaning

By a positive meaning here I refer to the fact that fate and destiny are mentioned alongside positive events, such as the first kiss between Romeo and Juliet. This is described as a gentle sin, when Romeo states:

If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss (I, v, 92-95).

This light-hearted description, unknowingly for Romeo, implies that as the sin is committed, their lives will be condemned. As another symbol of fate, Romeo states that the owner of his life is his enemy, Juliet Capulet, so his life belongs to her and his reason for living lies in the hands of Juliet, his foe. The bad feeling that he had before going to the ball, now becomes embodied in his new lover, who also represents his bad luck. However, we cannot say that this was something negative/bad for Romeo, because this fatal feeling was converted into his first real love.

Besides, when Juliet wishes to discover who this man is, she utters a dark premonition when she utters “My grave is like to be my wedding bed” (I, v, 134). This premonition is already known by the audience because at the beginning the Chorus explains the fatal love of the protagonists who are destined to die. And Juliet starts to despair thinking that this man could be married and if he is married, she could not marry him, and so she will die because she will not marry him. But the audience sees that she will die, having married him and that her words will prove true, but not because he was already married, as she imagined.

2. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation:

In the first dialogue between Benvolio and Romeo, both speak about fatal love, and Romeo is unhappy with his life because he feels lovesick for Rosaline, Juliet’s cousin, who is also of the Capulet family. Benvolio makes a reference to Cupid saying that he has a mild and meek appearance, described as the irrational god of love, “Alas, that love, so gentle, in his view” (I, i, 167). Cupid is blind because he can choose people from very different positions in life to fall in love with each other. It is a reference to Romeo and Juliet falling in love, as both fall in love at first sight. As a consequence, we
could compare Cupid with Lady Fortune; as both can affect everybody due to their blindness. Cesare Ripa says (1987:441) that Fortune is painted “blind”, with respect to the majority of gentile authors, to show that she does not favour more one person than another (Iconologia. I, 1987: 441). Weis (2012: 136) states that Cupid is blindfolded because love is always irrational. Cupid in his blindness joins the two lovers. Even, when Romeo goes to the Capulet Ball, he is not in a festive mood, so Cupid does the job for him. Romeo’s changing nature is also clear. One moment he is in love with Rosaline and the next he is in love with Juliet. He is the perfect target therefore for fickle Fortune and Cupid to act.

Furthermore, Capulet, when speaking to Paris, predicts that girls who marry too young, could finally end their lives damaged and ruined “And too soon marred are those so early married” (I, ii, 13), perhaps implying that this is what happened to his wife So Paris will have to wait a little to marry Juliet, because she is still only thirteen. However, Capulet’s Wife considers Juliet old enough to have a baby. Besides, she tries to convince Juliet to marry Paris. In consequence, Juliet will love according to her parent’s rules and consent. Here Juliet cannot choose.

The life of Juliet is marked by fate from the very beginning, because it was her Nurse who took care of her instead of her parents. According to Weis (2012:150-151), Juliet’s parents were in Mantua when Juliet was being weaned, and so, she was not with her parents in that especial moment of her life due to her fate or destiny. And after that, Romeo is also exiled in Mantua after marrying Juliet. Hence Weiss highlights that Juliet is alone on the most important days of her life. (150-151).

And finally, we can observe how Juliet feels when Nurse discovers who this masked man was. However, Nurse does not want to say who this man was, and when she asks her his name, Juliet despairs even more than if he were married, because her first and only love belongs to her only enemy “Go ask his name -If he be married / My grave is like to be my wedding bed” (I, v, 132-134). But, this feud was made by their parents, not by them. She is complaining about her destiny, even before actually knowing that her destiny has allowed her to fall in love with a hated foe “My only love sprung from my only hate…Prodigious birth of love it is to me / That I must love a loathed enemy” (I, v, 137,139-140).

3. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms:
Moreover, Romeo appears to foresee just before the Capulet ball: I, iv, 106-113.) that something bad will happen because he fears about the consequences of this night which are predestined by the stars to end in an “untimely death”. What he does not know is that one of these consequences will be his own untimely death, because of his destiny that is ruled by the stars:

I fear too early, for my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night’s revels, and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my suit (I, iv, 106-113).

Also, when Tybalt tries to expel Romeo from the ball, his uncle forbids it and Tybalt says that this intrusion will turn later into deepest sorrow, because Romeo is trespassing on something sacred. Tybalt could see the exchange of courtly love between Romeo and Juliet. However, as Weis stated (2012: 5) Tybalt’s resentment of Romeo is caused by Rosaline and not for having courted Juliet. Rosaline is presented as Juliet’s cousin, and therefore we assume she is also a relative of Tybalt.

3.3. Act 2

This act starts with the Prologue where the Chorus states that Romeo and Juliet are supposed to be foes, because their families are foes. So, they assume that they must be foes too. However, despite this, Romeo is able to see Juliet in Act 1 as a “snowy dove trooping with crows” (I,v, 43, 45-47), evidently describing everything that surrounds her, her family and other girls as the crows. This point is interesting because it implies that the “snowy” white Juliet is surrounded by dark, black, negative sounding crows. This image thus also adds to the negativity of her fate.

1. Elements of fate and destiny with a positive meaning:

An element of destiny is represented in Friar Laurence’s cell. When Romeo goes to look for Friar Laurence, the latter is distilling a potion that will be the potion that could be the one that Juliet will drink, or a similar one. Romeo goes there because he
wishes to prepare his marriage with Juliet. Romeo asks for help, but also he asks for help from his main enemy, telling the Friar that they are equally in love, but as they cannot love each other, they are wounded by Cupid’s arrow. So, they need a remedy for both. Friar Laurence says that Juliet is his destiny, and because of that, Romeo was always crying due to the rejection of Rosaline, because his real love was Juliet, not Rosaline. Besides, he thinks that this love can be the cure of the hatred between their families, so he is in favour of this love. It is thus implied that Juliet is Romeo’s destiny.

2. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation:

Fatality is even represented in their surnames so Juliet demands that Romeo changes his name and his surname when she tells him “Deny thy father and refuse thy name” (II, ii, 34) and if he does this she also promises to “no longer be a Capulet” (II, ii, 36) (Romeo must deny his family and familiar name because it represents what causes pain in her, thus by removing his name he will change his destiny. The fatal characteristics of Romeo and herself are those of their names which represent the rival family names. They want to be together and the only impediment to their love is their fatal symbolic names. When Juliet claims that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (II,ii, 43-4) she is remarking that the name of a person does not change their good qualities Consequently, if Romeo were to be called by another name, he would continue to be the same person but without that fatal weight of his name on him. So, Romeo must be renamed and so he will be reborn and they can love each other freely, changing their fatal destiny. In reply to Juliet’s desire, Romeo says that if his name were written, he would break it into small pieces, because he hates his name as it represents the enemy of his lover. As a consequence, when she asks him if he is Romeo or a Montague, he replies that he is neither Romeo nor Montague, because his name displeases her. Also, Romeo is afraid of the fact that this wonderful night could be a dream, because his life is marked by fate and it is too good to be true. He has found his true-love and they make secret arrangements for their marriage.

In Act two, scene four, another chain of misfortunes begins because Tybalt has sent a letter to Romeo’s house, challenging him to a duel because Romeo went to the Capulet ball, forcing Tybalt to defend his honour and reputation, as they belong to enemy families. Therefore, the fatality will start due to this letter that is also a symbol of
fate and destiny. Mercutio and Benvolio know that Romeo will reply to Tybalt’s duel with another one and when they hear this news they predict “Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabbed / with a knife a white wench’s black eye” (II, iv, 13-14). Tybalt is reputed to be a good fighter and he has never lost a challenge, leading Mercutio and Benvolio to envisage that Romeo will die at Tybalt’s hands:

“He fights as you sing pricksong…
the very butcher of a silk button
a duellist, a duellist, a gentleman of the very first
house… Ah, the immortal passado, the punto reverse, the hay! (II, iv, 20-21, 23-26).

When the marriage is going to take place, Friar Laurence says that after this holy act, there should not be any reproach on their conscience, because they will be joined in marriage for the rest of their lives. But Romeo says that the consequences of this act cannot be compared with the total amount of happiness that they have. However, Friar Laurence is again warning them, saying that they must love each other with some degree of moderation, because the only permanent love is the moderate one. And such love that is taking place without any moderation and very fast, will die very fast too. He makes a comparison of passionate love with fire and gunpowder, because if both come together, together they become consumed. Indeed, equally their love will die because they are marrying after a mere 2 days. These are the Friar’s prophetic words:

“These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder
Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,
And in the taste confounds the appetite.
Therefore love moderately; long love doth so,
Too swift arrives as tardy too slow (II, vi, 9-15).

The balcony scene of this act also represents the distinction between the two families. The balcony is an architectural element of the Elizabethan theatre. Juliet is always on the balcony, and Romeo is below, in her garden; as G.W. Williams states (1964: 144) this is a division of social classes or even of families. They will try to break this fatal division, although it is presented from the first instance.
3. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms:

In Act II, scene ii, early Monday morning, leading up to dawn, Romeo, approaching the balcony of Juliet’s bedroom, describes Juliet’s eyes as “Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven” (II, ii, 15). Indeed, apart from highlighting Juliet’s stellar beauty, the idea enclosed here is that Romeo’s destiny is dictated by stars, and thus, as Juliet is compared to being part of the constellation, his destiny is dictated by Juliet. As a consequence, if Juliet guides his destiny together with the stars, she also represents the reason for his fatal fate. Romeo’s luck changed when he met her and due to this love he is condemned to die young.

Moreover, in Act II, scene iv, Mercutio speaks with Benvolio about Tybalt’s challenge to Romeo, and when Romeo enters, Mercutio compares Romeo’s women with tragic legendary lovers “She had a better love to berhyme her – Dido a downy, Cleopatra a gypsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but, not to the purpose” (II, iv, 40-43). As R. Weis states (2012: 212) Dido, was Queen of Carthage, and became the lover of Aeneas and finally, she committed suicide. Also Cleopatra, was the lover of Antony and Caesar and she killed herself. And due to Helen of Troy’ being kidnapped by Paris the Trojan war was accelerated. Besides, Hero’s lover drowned in the Hellespont while he was trying to visit her; Ovid’s lovers Thisbe and Pyramus were also doomed. Thus, all these legendary women lead themselves and their lovers to a fatal ending. So, Mercutio predicts that a woman will bring a fatal destiny to his friend Romeo.

Finally, there is another reference to destiny and fate, in which Mercutio’s death is predicted. As Mercutio is talking only to Romeo warning him about his lover, and not to Benvolio, Mercutio tries to involve Benvolio in their conversation. Mercutio says “Come between us, good Benvolio, my wits faints” (II, iv, 66-67). It is an ironic reference to the fatal destiny of Mercutio to be later caused by Romeo (III, i, 89), because he comes between Mercutio and Tybalt, causing Mercutio’s death (Weis, 2012: 214).
3.4. Act 3

1. Elements of fate and destiny with a positive meaning:

As the Prince had promised death to either of the two families for starting another fight in Act 1, scene I, (79-95), when Tybalt is killed by Romeo in Act 3, scene I, (133), Capulet’s wife is asks for death to the person who killed Tybalt. However, the Prince does not kill Romeo, but sends him banished outside Verona. It is like a second opportunity not to kill him, although for Romeo it is even worse than death, because he will not be able to see Juliet. So here we see an apparent change in Romeo’s fortune. But his fickle fortune will change in the future again.

2. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation:

The fact that there is a death on Romeo and Juliet’s wedding day, actually perpetrated by Romeo himself, is a symbol of fate, and the resulting pain is only just representing the beginning of the pain that will come later, which will be even worse. Romeo is also suggesting that he is at the prey of Lady Fortune, as she has turned his life into a tragic event “O, I am fortune’s fool.” (III, i, 138). As Mackenzie (2007: 33) states, Death has challenged the city of Verona and because of that, some characters in the play start to be killed, like Mercutio. Mercutio has died before Romeo can tell him that he has married Tybalt’s cousin and as a consequence, he cannot accept Tybalt’s challenge, and Romeo could not say anything because Tybalt was present.

As Romeo has killed Juliet’s cousin, he is banished, but Juliet herself is also condemned to unhappiness. She thinks that Romeo is responsible for her change in fortune, and she describes him as the worse enemy that she has by calling him O serpent heart hid with a flowering face!” (III, ii, 73) and …”Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical” (III, ii, 75) and continues with this idea when she asks him “When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend / In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh? (III, ii, 81-82).

Juliet here is implying that as she fell in love with Romeo’s external beauty, she did not look at his interior. And for Juliet, her fate is to fall in love with a pitiless man, and she remembers what her mother said about Paris. Juliet's mother told her to marry Paris because she must look at the inner beauty of men, like a book and only looking at its cover page (I, iii, 80-95). And here, Juliet talks about the external beauty of Romeo, reasoning that as he is a handsome man, he cannot be a good person. Connecting both
passages, as Juliet ignores her mother's advice about Paris, she regrets having ignored her mother. However, Juliet quickly realizes that Romeo is her husband and she must defend him even more than her own cousin. And she says that her lover was not born to suffer from misfortunes or fatalities, although fatality is written in his destiny:

He was not born to shame;  
Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit  
For 'tis a throne where honour may be crowned  
Sole monarch of the universal earth (III, ii, 91-94).

Besides, the fatal punishment of Romeo is also seen as worse than death for Juliet, because banishment also destroys and kills people, even those who are not banished but who suffer from Romeo’s banishment, meaning herself.

Furthermore, at the beginning of Act 3, scene III, on Monday evening after Juliet hears about Tybalt's death caused by Romeo, the latter enters Friar Laurence’s cell, and the Friar -tells Romeo that he is “wedded to calamity” (III, iii, 3). In the destiny of Romeo it is written that calamity is his marriage partner. They are newlyweds and they cannot enjoy their love. Romeo thinks like Juliet, because for him there is no life without her. So, there is no life out of Verona’s walls. His exile from Verona is an exile from his world, and he is sent to hell, torture and purgatory itself. As a consequence, to be exiled is like being buried alive. Romeo states that the word “banished” “Is death mistermed” (III, iii, 21).

We already saw that Romeo and Juliet are mutually fateful due to their names, Juliet representing the stars and Romeo wed to calamity. Yet there are more instances of this mutual dichotomy, and an example of this is in their grief. Weis highlights this fact too (2012: 263). The Nurse tells the Friar that both lovers are equally grief-stricken and Weis points out that they cry at the same time due to their fatal destiny, because they also share the same kind of destiny, and that they are perfectly mutual in every aspect of their life, for happiness and even for fate (263). Besides, when Romeo asks the Nurse “What says /My concealed lady to our cancelled love?” (III, iii, 97), because they were married in a hidden way; there is a stress falling on the first syllable, and that is an anticipation of his “cancelled love” (Weis, 2012: 264). As he is banished, his love is cancelled too by the Prince. As Romeo cries because of his fatal exile, he starts to
implore suicide, because the only way of not being a Montague any more is to be killed. Romeo wants to kill the Montague part of his life.

There is another reference to Friar Laurence’s warning that everything which goes fast is destined to stumble, because Capulet wants to get Juliet married to Paris in a couple of days, even without her consent. So, this marriage agreed with Paris will be condemned to failure, and the wedding will not take place as Capulet agreed with Paris. However, the cause of this failure is not destiny, but Juliet, because she does not marry Paris because she is married to other man already.

Moreover, when Romeo and Juliet say farewell because Romeo was preparing to leave for his exile, they have a fatal feeling. Juliet looks at Romeo as if he were dead, while Romeo is leaving. She predicts once more:

O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
Either my eyesight fails, or thou look’st pale. (III, v, 54-75).

It is a comparison of their lives, as they are only alive when they are together and at the moment of their separation they die, because as Weis states (2012: 275) Romeo also had the same feeling about Juliet. Romeo’s words to Juliet on his farewell, are “Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu, adieu! ” (III, v, 58-59), implying that their grief stricken situation is sucking the blood from their lives.

Juliet refuses to marry Paris for two reasons. Firstly, because she is in love with a Montague, and secondly, because she is already married to him, so she cannot marry anybody else. If she marries Paris, her bridal bed will be transformed into her deathbed. She could only marry Paris if Romeo dies, but he is only in exile. As a consequence, she has many reasons not to follow parental orders. Besides, Nurse tells her that this Montague only brings her misfortunes. Due to that, Juliet says that her heart and Nurse have broken forever, because Nurse does not seem to accept Romeo as Juliet’s husband. So, Juliet only has Friar Laurence in her favour, and she will need him to find a remedy, but if this remedy fails, she will die. She may be thinking of committing suicide because when the Nurse leaves her alone, she states: “I’ll to the friar to know his remedy. / If all else fail, myself have power to die. (III, v, 242-243)According to Weis, “remedy” has a
final stressed vowel, a diphthong rhyming with die, because this Friar’s remedy will kill her. (287).

3. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms:

Late Monday afternoon, an hour after the marriage of Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio and Benvolio joke about Benvolio’s easiness to get into a fight, although they did not know that Mercutio would die in a fight started by Mercutio. After that, Mercutio challenges Tybalt by insinuating that Tybalt is a coward, and Tybalt starts to fight Mercutio, because Tybalt is goaded on jokingly by Mercutio. But when Mercutio is wounded and is going to die, he curses the feuding families “A plague a’both houses! I am sped” (III, i, 108-) as their feuding has caused his death.

Destiny and fate seem one and the same here, as this day was the day of Romeo’s marriage to Juliet and he says that the happiest day of his life has turned black because of the death of his friend. So, destiny has changed his happiness and he predicts, correctly once again, just like all the predictions in this play, that this fate will be extended to the rest of the days: “This day’s black fate on moe days doth depend, / This but begins the woe others must end (III, i, 121-122).

Another symbol of fate is represented when Juliet falls into despair thinking that the person who has died is Romeo instead of her cousin Tybalt. Her destiny allows her to suffer as if he were killed, and her soul is buried too by her loss of Romeo. Her words:

Is Romeo slaughtered and is Tybalt dead,
My dearest cousin and my dearer lord?
Then, dreadful trumpet, sound the general doom,
For who is living if those are gone? (III, ii, 65-68).

show that she expects to hear the trumpet calls of Judgement Day, thus again envisioning her death. Her fate is used as a synonym of her destiny. When she realizes that it is Tybalt who has died, she thinks that her destiny has changed and the “general doom” is coming, so the fate of Tybalt and Romeo announce the end of time.

As S.T. Coleridge once said (in Hawkes, T. 1969: 138) “All deep passions are a sort of atheists, that believe no future”. This is a perfect description of Romeo and
Juliet’s Love, because it appears that just like atheists do not believe in God, deep passions do not believe in a future together. Indeed, when Romeo is told he is banished by Friar Laurence, he calls exile “torture not mercy” because “heaven is here/ Where Juliet lives” (III, iii, 29-30) (We can also connect this idea with Friar Laurence’s warning before their wedding (III, iii, 132) in which he tells them not to love very fast, but with moderation, because only moderate loves last forever. Besides, Weis (2012: 266) states that Friar’s earlier dread of the violence of the young lovers’ passion (II, vi, 9-15), like fire and powder they will be destroyed at the moment of consummation. In my point of view, that idea refers to the moment when they will finally manage to be together and their marriage spiritually consummated. This moment will be achieved only in their last minute of life because they commit suicide to be together for the whole of eternity. Therefore, they are the originators of their fatal destiny as they both commit suicide. Thus, their lives are destroyed by their own decisions, not by stars, and nobody obliges them to commit suicide.

Romeo laments his bad luck stating that even cats, and dogs or “every unworthy thing” even “flies” (III, iii, 29-33, 41-42) can be free and easily together with Juliet, and he cannot do that “and every cat and dog / And little mouse, every unworthy thing, / Live here in heaven and may look on her” Flies have more luck than himself, a human He is against his fatal destiny, criticizing it and he desires to be like an animal. Perhaps the implication is that animals are not controlled by stars so they can easily kiss Juliet’s hand, and he cannot, because he is human.

Furthermore, Friar Laurence is the person who names and chooses the place for Romeo’s exile (III, iii, 148) Weis points out that this is the first reference to Mantua as the place of Romeo’s exile. The Prince banned him from Verona but did not proclaim a place. The Friar’s choice may be determined by its proximity to Verona. We were also been told that Juliet’s parents also stayed in this place the day when she was weaned (I, iii, 25-29). She is going to become a woman or adolescent because her birthday is in a couple of days time and Romeo will be in Mantua. As a consequence, in every special and important moment of her life, the most important people for Juliet are in Mantua, far from her. The choice of Mantua is also anticipating the fatal destiny that will come as it is the fatal place for Juliet’s life, so in Mantua Romeo will be exiled.
Their dichotic destinies seem set to be linked always, so it is natural that Mantua establishes yet another link to their fate. Besides, the Friar's letter could not reach Romeo's hands in Mantua. And he will decide, during his stay in Mantua, to kill himself because Balthasar reports to him that Juliet has died and also Romeo will buy the fatal potion in Mantua. As a consequence, Mantua could be considered as the hell and fatal place for the lovers.

Besides, another element of fate is present in the action of Nurse, because she tells Capulet's wife that Romeo is going to be exiled to Mantua. Nurse was present when Friar Laurence chose Mantua for Romeo's banishment. As a consequence, we can notice that she is not in favour of that love and she also wants to destroy it, because Capulet's wife will send somebody to Mantua to kill Romeo. As Juliet listens to her mother's intentions with Romeo, she offers herself to take revenge for Tybalt's death and kill Romeo “Ay, madam, from the reach of these my hands, / Would none but I might venge my cousin's death” (III, v, 85-86). She proposes to give him a potion and kill him, although what she really wants is to save his life and give him a sleeping potion, so she wants to render it harmless.

… Madam, it you could find out but a man
To bear poison, I would temper it,
That Romeo should, upon receipt thereof.
Soon sleep in quiet.” (III, v, 96-99).

This is a reference to the end of the play, because at that moment she did not know that she would use a sleeping potion too in order for her to join her life with Romeo's life. However, in my point of view, this sleeping potion will lead them to death, because they play with death so many times and they finally will die.

And finally, Juliet's fatal life is not only ruled by the stars, but also by the tyrannical strictness of her parents. Nevertheless, Juliet does not want to marry Paris, so she does not always follow her parents’ orders. She is changing to only being ruled by the stars. Capulet says to her that she is dead for him, because she betrays him by saying she does not wish to marry Paris and for him it is even worse to have a daughter that is disobedient than to have a dead daughter. Hence Juliet appears to have died for him. However, Capulet does not know that Juliet has betrayed her parents even more with her marriage to a Montague. Capulet says that a daughter must be a blessing from God,
but there is a curse on his daughter because she is out of control. The play also presents us with another universal problem such as the parent-child conflict (not only the problem of a forbidden love, destiny ruled by supernatural powers...), in which adolescents must behave as their parents order, but they always do the contrary. As said before, Juliet is not only controlled by supernatural powers/stars, but by the tyrannical orders of her parents. And, as she refuses to follow their advice, their parents become infuriated with her. Nevertheless, Capulet only wants to marry her with Paris, because Paris will soon inherit a fortune, so Paris will also change his social position. Capulet is only accepting this marriage because it is good for him, not for his daughter. Thus, Capulet consciously wishes to control Juliet’s destiny.

3.5. Act 4

As the tragedy will start in this Act, Not one positive connotation of fate or destiny is found. However, there are negative ones and also they are used sometimes as synonyms.

1. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation:

As Mackenzie (2007: 34) states, Juliet wants to escape from marrying Paris. And the only possible solution to her problems is death. Thus, she wants a “Marriage to Death”, but the Friar brings her a better solution, that is a temporary or reversible death. The possibility that Friar presents is known among the Elizabethan audience as “Life in Death”. However, as Targoff (2012:17-30) states, in this play there is no love after death. Shakespeare eliminated any vision of posthumous love, and by doing this, he is representing the significance for love to be mortal. It has long been believed that death and love are inseparable in Romeo and Juliet but Targoff states the opposite idea. Juliet must be alone one night to be able to drink the sleeping potion, to carry out her “remedy” to the whole situation, so Nurse leaves her because it was the night before her marriage with Paris and she needed to sleep. Juliet is afraid of the potion’s role, because if it does not work well, she will have to marry Paris. Besides, she starts to think that she can get up earlier and Romeo will not be in the tomb to rescue her, so she could wake up alone in the middle of the night in the Capulet’s catacomb. So, the best option for her is to keep a knife by her side (IV, iii, 22-24) and if something goes wrong, she will kill herself “Shall I be married then tomorrow morning? / No, no! This shall forbid
it. Lie thou there. / (Lays down a knife.”) (IV, iii, 22-24) Juliet decides to drink it because of her love for Romeo. Juliet’s doubts about Friar Laurence are caused because she is alone and she is fearful of his real intentions. She thinks that this potion could kill her and so Friar Laurence could not be condemned for marrying them clandestinely “(IV, iii, 24-29). The knife is the symbol that represents her freedom from a marriage to Paris.

The next morning, Nurse sees her lying in her bed and she regrets not having been with her during this night to avoid her death. Capulet’s wife laments for her daughter, and she says that she will die too with Juliet (IV, v, 19-20). Capulet is complaining about his own behaviour with Juliet, because she is now dead and he cannot ask for forgiveness, so he even asks for his tongue not to let him speak any more. Juliet “dies” the night before her wedding, and this is a symbol of fate too, because a wedding represents happiness, but this day has turned into tragedy. According to Mackenzie (2007: 29), Capulet announces that Death is now his son-in-law and so, there is a consummated marriage between Juliet and Death, instead of being married with Paris, who has taken her to her tomb.

O son, the night before thy wedding day,
Hath death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
Flower as she was, deflowered by him.
Death is my son-in-law, death is my heir,
My daughter he hath wedded. I will die. (IV, v, 35-39),

So Capulet is also responsible for his daughter’s death. Indeed, as said from the beginning the feuding of the lovers’ parents is behind their final deaths.

2. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms:

In this Act Paris says he wants to marry Juliet and as she is always crying and saddened due to her cousin’s death, she needs his company in order not to drown in grief. But, she is not crying for Tybalt, she is crying for Romeo’s exile and so if she marries Paris, she will be even sadder. This arranged marriage is a symbol of the fatal destiny of Juliet, although she changes it by avoiding marrying him. Paris makes a reference to Venus, saying that Capulet’s house is full of tears and shame “Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt’s death / And therefore have I little talked of love / For Venus smiles not in a house of tears” (IV, i, 7-8), and as Weis states (2012: 288),
this is mentioned in connection to one of the Chorus’s lines, “There is no scope for love in a grieving household” (Prol.6), and it is a reference to the planet Venus, as each of the twelve zodiac parts of heaven is called a “house”, and both lovers are presented as star-crossed lovers (288).

Juliet is without hope and needs help from Friar Laurence. As Weis agrees, Shakespeare’s u and a are a notorious source of confusion, like for example in Juliet’s speech, “Come weep with me, past hope, past cure, past help” (IV, i, 45). Here cure seems right as Juliet pleads desperately and hopelessly for a helping hand, and so, the pleonasm of cure and help (Weis, R. 2012: 290). She starts to think about suicide, because if she does not obtain a remedy, she will commit self-destruction. She says to the Friar: “If in thy wisdom thou canst give no help, / Do thou but call my resolution wise, (showing her knife) / And with this knife I’ll help it presently” (IV, i, 50-54). As Duncan-Jones states (1998:314-315), “Elizabethan ladies sometimes wore small household knives at their girdles” (314-315). She prefers even to kill herself than to be unfaithful and disloyal to her love with a marriage with Paris. When Juliet says; “Twixt my extremes and me this bloody knife” (IV, i, 62) this expression of “bloody knife” according to Brooke, means cruel or possessing the power to draw blood (in Weis, 2012: 291). She is under intense emotional pressure.

As she is desperate, her remedy must be desperate too, and what the Friar offers her is a desperate cure, offering the “distilling liquor” in the vial he gives her to fain sleep. (IV, i, 89-94). This remedy is not thought, or premeditated, but Juliet is willing to risk her life. This action is again a reference to what the Friar said at the beginning (II, vi, 9-15), and as this remedy is a fast one, it will have a bad ending because they have not thought about it slowly. Therefore, the remedy that the Friar chooses is one of his distilling liquors that he was preparing when Romeo came to ask him about his marriage with Juliet. Juliet will risk her life with this potion, so again she is playing with death and destiny.

3.6. Act 5

According to Weis, (2012: 323) there is a motto for this play, “Tempus edax rerum”, reflected in Act 5, that Romeo makes reference to (V, iii, 46) to describe his personal situation. As Weis states, the references to the time of the action during the play show how precipitated the action is, as the action starts on a Sunday morning and
ends at dawn the following Thursday (25). Romeo suggests that time is the devourer of things (V, iii, 46); however his time is ruled by an abstract entity which decides which things are going to be destroyed. In his case, what have been destroyed are his own life and his love. Their passionate love will last only four days, because of the destructiveness of time. According to Weis, Romeo is suggesting that time is the devourer of things by saying: “Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth” (V, iii, 46), which means that death is a grisly banqueter feasting off the living is a leitmotiv in the play whose motto is ‘Tempus edax rerum’ (323).

1. Elements of fate and destiny with a positive meaning:

Romeo is finally ready to drink the potion that will let him die and be joined again with Juliet. He says that this poison will not take his life, but on the contrary it will give him life, because it can give him the only solution to his problems and save him by carrying him into eternal life. So, he wishes that the effect of this potion will be quick and he can be liberated of the heavy burden that was ordered by fate (Weis: 2012: 327), the stars in this case, as he says “And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars” (V, iii, 111) and rest forever with his love. Weis states that in the verse “Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die” (V, iii, 120), the word “quick” is a pun meaning also “alive”, and so this deadly potion will transport him to the only life that he now begs for, a life of death because Juliet (as he believes) has gone there ahead of him, (Weis, 2012: 327). Again, the symbol of the potion is used as an element for the lovers’ salvation, so here Romeo thinks that to die is to live with Juliet, and fate has a positive meaning to him. Due to destiny, Romeo finally dies and lies in Capulet’s tomb rather than in his own family tomb.

2. Elements of fate and destiny with a negative connotation:

Friar Laurence realizes that both lovers are in danger because the letter that he sent to Romeo by Friar John could not reach Romeo’s hands, and it will have a fatal consequence according to the Friar, as he reacts when he finds out with: “Unhappy Fortune!” (V, ii, 17). He is afraid of Romeo’s actions and also fears for Juliet’s life, because she could wake up alone in her tomb and so he curses their fortune, because Romeo and Juliet’s fortune has changed again and Friar realizes that both lovers cannot be happy together. Their love is destined to have a fatal ending, as Juliet is still locked in her tomb). As a result, he tries to help Juliet for the second time and goes to take her
out of the tomb. She is a poor living dead body, locked in a dead man’s sepulchre. Friar Laurence is responsible for the union of both lovers, and he is always trying to join them, and it seems he is also partly responsible for their deaths, but as it is destiny and the stars who rule over their lives, perhaps the blame should be lifted from him as he, just like Romeo and Juliet can do nothing. They are puppets of their destiny, which nobody can change.

After killing Paris, Romeo opens Capulet’s tomb, and sees Tybalt and Juliet lying there dead. He describes her as if she were not dead, because he says that she is as beautiful as when she was alive. The dramatic irony here is that he does not know that she really is still alive. In his descriptions, death is also personified as a grotesque lover. As Marrone (Marrone, 2007: 1849) states, a grotesque love is the deformation of characters in which a passionate love story is turned into a tragic-comic situation. The protagonists do not know how to control or command their passions. Both protagonists are decreased to mere puppets or marionettes and so they cannot force reason on reality.

Friar Laurence goes to the Capulet’s Catacomb too late, because Romeo is already dead. As a result the Friar foresees that something bad will happen. He tries to rescue Juliet and take her to a convent and save her life. However, when Juliet wakes up from her drugged sleep, she blames Romeo for drinking the entire potion and so she cannot even drink a sip to die with him. She also tries to kiss him with the intention of soaking up any residue of the potion. She curses her destiny, because if she had woken up a little earlier they could be together and alive; as she notices “Thy lips are warm!” (V, iii, 162-167). This is another symbol of fate, because she wakes up just when Romeo has died from the potion. As a consequence, she uses Romeo’s dagger to kill herself “O happy dagger! / (Takes Romeo’s dagger). / This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die” (V, iii, 168-170). As they commit suicide, they cannot go to heaven because it is a mortal sin in the Christian doctrine, and Shakespeare’s view of suicide is that of a Christian. Both protagonists cannot grow old together because they are presented as the “heroes” of the tragedy, as they manage to join their families and end their feuding with their deaths. So, they must die young to preserve their beauty so it can never fade. Although he was always trying to help both lovers, Friar Laurence loses control over events. And he only had the single intention to restore harmony to Verona with a dynastic union. Finally, this union will happen, although it will cost more than two lives, as we must also include Tybalt’s, and Mercutio’s to the tragedy. Thus, there have
been more victims apart from the Capulet and Montague children due to this ancient grudge.

After all the tragic events, the Prince goes there too and wishes to investigate what misfortunes had happened there during the dawn and who is responsible for the murders of the children. Both families go there too and Lady Capulet says that this tragedy will lead her to death with her daughter “O me, this sight of death is as a bell / That warns my old age to a sepulchre” (V, iii, 206-7), and even Romeo’s mother had died the day before because of a broken heart caused by the pain of losing her son in his exiled from Verona, “Alas, my liege, my wife is dead tonight; / Grief of my son’s exile hath stopped her breath. / What further woe conspires against mine age?” (V, iii, 210-212). This tragic event also affects their families and destroys them even more. Besides, Montague curses his fate, because he has survived his son and must send him to the grave. As Kottman states (2012: 2):

The familiar interpretation of the lovers’ fates is a kind of Liebestod, by which “their deaths celebrate the strength and intensity of their devotion to one another,” offers a version of this general conflict. Because the lovers’ desires cannot be reconciled to the life of the family or society from which they spring, they must extinguish themselves. Nothing vindicates a society’s demands so much as the lovers’ self-destruction.

In the play, there were more characters who were responsible for this fatal ending than Capulet’s and Montague’s parents, because Friar Laurence, Nurse and the apothecary let both lovers end their lives in tragedy. The tragedy ends with the accusation that those responsible for that fatal tragedy were Friar Laurence and Nurse because they allowed Romeo and Juliet to marry in a hidden way, even to simulate Juliet’s death, and the apothecary is also responsible for selling the potion to Romeo. But, the guilt also lies in the Montague and Capulets parents. Friar Laurence tells the truth of what has happened and he is granted a pardon. According to Brooke’s version (The Historical Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, 1564), we can guess how Shakespeare’s play would end. In Brooke’s version of the tragedy, Nurse is banished for hiding Juliet’s marriage from her parents, whence “a mischief great is grown” (1564: 2987-90); Friar Laurence is granted a free pardon, and he becomes a hermit and dies five years later (2995-3005); and the apothecary, “high is hanged by the throat” (2993). In addition, after having resolved the plot, the Prince blames both families because they are the source of this tragedy. The hatred between them has caused the death of their children,
and their only sin was to love each other in a secret way. The ancient grudge between Capulet and Montague had cursed everyone in this play because there are more victims like Tybalt and Mercutio, as they were killed due to Juliet and Romeo’s romance. Their hatred is responsible for all the deaths of the play. Both families should have enjoyed the love and happiness that their children had given them, instead of having to cry over their deaths.

3. Elements of destiny/fate as synonyms:

On Wednesday afternoon in a street of Mantua after the funeral of Juliet in Verona, and during Balthasar’s ride to Mantua to warn Romeo, the latter has a premonition about his lover, which will occur finally and join both lovers at the end of the play,

I dreamt my lady came and found me dead
Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think
And breathed such life with kisses in my lips
That I revived and was an emperor (V, i, 6-9).

In his premonition Juliet finds him dead and kisses him in order to revive him. Another element of fate is the fact that Friar Laurence’s letter was not received by Romeo, and instead of that, Balthasar goes to Mantua and tells him the terrible news of his love. Romeo says that he will defy the stars “Is it e’en so? Then I defy you, stars” (V, i, 24), which means that he is going to change his written destiny and he will come back with his love and die with her. He is trying to defeat the stars that rule his life and prepares his return to Verona challenging his fatal destiny. He wants to die and lie with her. And Balthasar, who helps him to return, predicts a fatal event due to Romeo’s return.

After that, Romeo finds an apothecary who sells him a drug and he will use it to destroy himself (V, i, 59-62). He wants to be with Juliet, so as she is dead and they cannot be together as they wanted, he can change his destiny and be together with her in the same tomb and in heaven.

As a consequence, both families ask for forgiveness from each other and build two golden statues for Romeo and Juliet, and so they will be joined together in eternity. So, this tragedy has a moral ending to teach that hatred will not bring you any happiness and that you cannot change your destiny, and as the protagonists of the tragedy tried to
play with it, their destiny won the battle. Both were destined to meet each other, but not to be happy together.

4. Conclusions:

Throughout this dissertation I have tried to analyse how fortune, fate and destiny are presented in the play, and I have presented them with the help of dictionary definitions and grouped them into different sections by which we can conclude that Shakespeare’s use of fate and destiny has a major percentage of negative meaning rather than a positive one. Besides, Shakespeare used both terms as synonyms throughout the play. His view of fortune is mainly concerned with a lack of freedom, although the protagonists will eventually choose their way of life, and will decide by themselves to commit suicide. So in the end, Shakespeare allowed them not to follow the tyrannical orders of their parents, and even not to be ruled by stars. Both lovers obtain freedom thanks to their self-destruction (committing suicide). Thus, they manage to follow their own decisions, even though this will result in their death. However, we can also interpret that freedom in an opposite view. Bargdill (2006: 206) suggests that one of the three goddesses called Astropos, who decides when the threads of mortal lives must be cut, could be responsible for Romeo and Juliet’s suicide. Nevertheless, this play could not finish in another way, because as said before, one of the most important topics in tragedy is death.

In relation to the content of each of the sections, the following conclusions can be drawn: Lady Fortune always appears during the play, although she is not always mentioned. But the protagonists’ lives are in constant movement. However, this movement is always carried to the bad side of life; they are closer to death than to life. In addition, Fortune does not affect only both lovers but also the rest of the characters. Friar Laurence was also affected by Lady Fortune, as he was trying to solve Romeo and Juliet’s problems, and the Friar’s remedies always turned into catastrophe. Also, Capulet’s and Montague’s lives will be turned into disaster due to the fact that their children die. Moreover, we can observe many symbols of bad luck which announce Romeo and Juliet’s imminent death, such as the number thirteen in Juliet’s age, the potion, letters which always arrive late, such as Friar Laurence’s letter to advise Romeo
in Mantua. Romeo’s fate is always negative, because from the very beginning, he is suffering from lovesickness, first from Rosaline and then from Juliet. Another symbol of the fate of Romeo is that of falling in love with his own enemy, who will be the owner of his life. Besides, at the end of the play Juliet’s destiny is doomed to failure as she wakes up just a minute after Romeo’s death. In conclusion, we can observe that both terms (fate and destiny) are interchangeable during the play. And the best definition that represents both terms in Shakespeare’s play is that of the CED, “A power that some people believe causes and controls all events, so that you cannot change or control the way things will happen”.

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