The Act of Being a Mother Versus The Act of Mothering: Analytical Essay

In Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet, the audience is introduced to a large variety of characters. Most of the characters have aspects that can compare and contrast with one another. Juliet has two mother-like figures throughout the play. Her mother is still alive, giving no reason for her not to be in her life. As well as Juliet’s other mother-like figure, the Nurse. The Nurse is a more engaged in Juliet’s love affair and her personal well-being than her own mother.

Lady Capulet is introduced in the story at the same time both the Nurse and Juliet are. She is shown to be obedient, and very disconnected with Juliet. So disconnected that the Nurse has to tell Lady Capulet what age Juliet is of. Lady Capulet overlooks her daughters pleas not to marry, and instead says, “Well, think of marriage now. Younger than you, Here in Verona, ladies of esteem, Are made already mothers.” (Shakespeare, Act I, Scene III.) She disregards Juliet’s feelings because it is what she had to do, and many others the same age or younger than Juliet. The Nurse instead of making this an obligation that Juliet has to fill, she makes it seem enjoyable. The Nurse loves the idea of Juliet marrying, but not simply because she was told to be married off. The Nurse states in response to Lady Capulet's about marriage that the man she is supposed to be marrying is a “man of wax”(Shakespeare, Act I, Scene III.) Juliet's mother seems to want Juliet to go down the same path she herself did, while the Nurse encourages her to “seek happy nights to happy days.”(Shakespeare, Act I, Scene III.)

While Lady Capulet isn’t so much a bad mother, she doesn’t exhibit as many motherly characteristics as the Nurse does. The nurse shows a deep understanding or at least a connection to Juliet. Her going out of her way to ask Juliet’s family’s enemy’s son about marriage for Juliet shows just a small part of this love that she shows. The Nurse has raised Juliet since birth, so that definitely is a huge role in the relationship between them verses the relationship between Juliet and her mother. Though the Nurse in the second half of the play “betray” Juliet, she still sees Juliet as her own daughter. When everyone believes Juliet to be dead, the Nurse mourns her just the same as everyone else. When learning that Juliet was “dead” the Nurse states, “O woe! O woeful, woeful, woeful day! Most lamentable day, most woeful day, that ever ever I did yet behold! O day! O day! O day! O hateful day! Never was seen so black a day as this. O woeful day! O woeful day!”(Act IV, Scene V.) Though her mother did as well feel extremely sad, this just shows how the Nurse feels. She feels remorse for taking the side of Lady Capulet and Capulet. While even though Lady Capulet is stricken with grief, she still shows no signs of remorse. Lady Capulet told Juliet, “Well, girl, thou weep’st not so much for his death, As that the villain lives which slaughter’d him.”(Act III, Scene IV.) This quote shows how much Lady Capulet wishes her daughter was like her. She is pushing her own emotions on to Juliet instead of comforting her. She talks about her own grief, and passes it on as how Juliet should feel.

Though the Nurse and Lady Capulet are different, they are still both so similar on many things. Like previously mentioned, the Nurse had “betrayed” Juliet, telling her, “I think it best you married with the County. O, he's a lovely gentleman! Romeo's a dishclout to him. An eagle, madam, Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye, As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart, I

think you are happy in this second match, For it excels your first, or, if it did not, Your first is dead, or 'twere as good he were, As living here and you no use of him.”(Act III, Scene V.) She goes along with the plans of Lady Capulet. Asking for Juliet to reconsider her love for Romeo and just marry Paris instead. She may not understand what kind of emotions Juliet feels towards Romeo, she may have instead just thought of the idea of love to be more physical.