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Mara Andersen
University of Nebraska at Kearney

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THE CONSTELLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S JULIET: A PSYCHOANALYTIC AND FEMINIST CRITIQUE LOCATING THE POWER OF JULIET'S RESISTANCE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty of the English Department

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Kearney

By

Mara Andersen

April 2022

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in English, University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Supervisory Committee

Name	Department
(Susan Honeyman)	English
Amanda Glades	English
Krista Forrest	Psychology

Marguerite Tassi
Supervisory Committee Chair

March 24, 2022
Date

To my mom, for inspiring a lifelong love of learning

and for supporting this dream.

To my husband, for encouraging me, carrying me at times,

and for being my lighthouse.

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ABSTRACT

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* Juliet is a passionate figure who expresses her "willingness to surrender the conscious self to the impersonal forces that stir within it . . . [as] a kind of ontological trust in sexual experience and the world which opens with its relinquishments" (Snow 175). Juliet's resistance of Verona's patriarchal system is fueled by her rebellious desire for selfhood which enmeshes erotic and physical death. She violently emerges from childhood to womanhood.

My research applies Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic and feminist theories of abjection and "malady of ideality." Kristeva situates the maternal figure as the site of desire and death where the mother must be replaced with a proper sexual love object. This adolescent process of transference is explained by Dorothy Tennov's theory of limerence. Once Juliet's passion is awakened, she becomes the most dangerous character of the play. Juliet's desire for separation and selfhood manifests in a preoccupation with Romeo's death which marks her as a feminine monstrosity. In their adolescence, "passion lends them power" (Prologue.13) to temporarily subvert their external realities. Examining their spatialized gendered inversions reveals the power of their private world which inspires them to "take their lives" (Prologue.6) when external realities impose.

I conclude by examining western popular culture representations of Juliet by Franco Zeffirelli (1968), Baz Luhrmann (1996), and Simon Goodwin (2021). These films present a Juliet far from Shakespeare's character. Where Verona memorializes Juliet within a golden statue, examining other modern experiences of Juliet outside the bounds of Shakespeare's play finds a similar golden warning against female rebellion. The

realization of her as the constellation of Shakespeare’s play memorializes her resistance to Verona’s system and locates her power, not within the subterranean space of the earth, but within what I call a “meta-maternal” sphere of the stars.

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Juliet as the Constellation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep. The more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite
(Shakespeare 2.2.133-5)

Juliet as a celestial body is first identified by Romeo, the Petrarchan lover, at the Capulet ball. In search of love and aware of "some consequence" from his pursuit, he beholds Juliet and declares she has "Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear" (1.5.45). Later, spying her on her balcony he says, "Two of the faintest stars in all the heaven, / Having some business, do entreat her eyes / To twinkle in their spheres till they return" (2.2.15-7). Longing to reach her and touch her, he refers to her as a "bright angel" (2.2.25), a "winged messenger of heaven" (2.2.28) upon which he, a mortal, "sails upon the bosom of the air" (2.2.32). A familiar Petrarchan figuring of his love, Romeo idealizes her as an angelic, beautiful object to strive for though the attainment and pursuit will cause suffering because it is "Too flattering sweet to be substantial" (2.2141). He gazes at Juliet as he would the stars, as a figure of light within the darkness, in a sphere beyond earthly Verona. Romeo, immediately hypnotized and magnetized by this celestial body, dares to approach her, dares to touch her, and dares to possess her. In doing so, he awakens a desire in her that unlocks her inherent power, passion, and agency. His "trespass sweetly urged" (1.5.107) inspires their boundless love where Shakespeare illustrates Juliet as a passionate figure aligned with night and Romeo as an effeminate lover, a "day in night" (3.2.17).

In anticipation of her wedding night, Juliet demands, "Give me my Romeo. And when I shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars, / And he will make the face of

heaven shine so fine / That all the world will be in love with night / And pay no worship to the garish sun" (3.2.21-5). Though she earlier rebukes Romeo's attempt to vow his love "by the moon, th'inconstant moon, / That monthly changes in her circle orb" (2.2.109), Juliet idealizes the constellation of Romeo in the nightly sky in celebration and memorialization of her lover as well as their sexual consummation. Juliet's desire to cut Romeo into little stars is a longing indicative of her "willingness to surrender the conscious self to the impersonal forces that stir within it . . . a kind of ontological trust in sexual experience and the world which opens with its relinquishments" (Snow 175). However, Juliet's "violent delights" will have "violent ends" (2.6.9) because her passion is proportional to her desperation for selfhood and her possession of Romeo as the conduit. Juliet's sexual death enmeshes with physical death as she uses Romeo's dagger to penetrate herself. Her death propels her into the sky, beyond Verona's reach, to produce the memorial of the "little stars" (3.2.22) she desired for Romeo. Her effort to harness this power enmeshes passion with death as an "incitement to recurrence . . . the switch by which reiteration begins" (Campana 165). Death is a satisfactory ending, then, producing a recurring, eternal satisfaction which indicates her violent emerging from childhood to womanhood to her "I." For Juliet, these intensely passionate deaths are accomplished and "in their *triumph* die, like fire and powder, / Which, as they kiss, consume" (2.6.10-1, emphasis added). Juliet, immortalized in the stars, locates her within the sphere of power and possibility, the sphere both Romeo and Juliet idealize and where Romeo initially identified her.

Her passion awakened, Juliet becomes the most dangerous character of the play because she destroys the names and systems of Montague and Capulet. She expresses this desire to the night: "Thou art thyself, though not a Montague . . . Romeo, doff thy name, / And for thy name, which is no part of thee, / Take all myself" (2.2.39-49). From her balcony, her internal space of power and confidence, she births forth the creation of an internal, private world and inspires them to "take their lives" (Prologue.6) and exist separately from the society that denies their union. If the whole earthly system is as Friar Laurence explains, ("The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb. / What is her buying grave, that is her womb" [2.3.9-10]), Juliet's celestial grave is where she possesses her love, her passion, and her independence. From that celestial resting place, she reanimates nightly in her celestial union with Romeo. Her diffuse desire in the stars indicates her success and possession of it fixed within the celestial sphere, untouched, and out of Verona's fatal reach.

Verona would deny her diffuse, rebellious and successful possession of her Romeo within her ethereal sphere and endeavors instead to contain her within a golden statue and sanctify her consequent death. Earlier, Romeo conjures Juliet's desires recognizing her as the sun, saying, "Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon" (2.2.4). The sun, earlier responsible for causing chaos in the streets ("For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring" [3.1.4]), is gone from the sky the morning after their deaths (5.3.305-10), and remains fixed, entombed in Juliet's golden statue on the streets of Verona. The golden effigy makes her a possession of all who behold her, but as a constellation, she is recognized as possessing a diffuse ability to permeate all spaces with

her desire. The subsequent sanctification of her statue is blasphemy to her intent and her celestial being. The recognition of her existence in the primordial space of the stars is a heavenly worship, one that locates her power, and in doing so, identifies and locates the blasphemy of Verona with potential to eliminate it. Just as Juliet desires Romeo to be memorialized as a constellation, her constellation would likewise have power to inspire "all the world will be in love with night / And pay no worship to the garish sun" (3.2.24-5). Rebuking the garish, Veronese sun rebukes the "son," the patriarchal order and its collective consciousness of masculinity that eliminates or marginalizes femininity.

A reading of feminist scholar and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's concept of the *chora* situates the research of this thesis. The *chora* is the space of the maternal womb prior to existence, prior to the emergence of language, and prior to the symbolic Law of the Father – a space of defining crisis (Oliver 46-7). Juliet as a constellation within the primordial space of the stars represents the primordial maternal space of Kristeva's *chora* and presents an opportunity to locate Juliet's power. Her rebellion against Verona's patriarchal social order can be memorialized not within a subterranean tomb, but diffuse among the original, maternal space of the stars. As the personified maternal space, Juliet's constellation locates her power to embrace passionate, romantic love tragically outside of Verona and in death immortalized in a "meta-maternal" space of agency and opportunity. Operating from this framework of understanding, Juliet's character has the power to expose the toxicity of Verona's patriarchal system, challenge its meaning, and threaten the named systems of Montague and Capulet – and beyond.

In this thesis, I investigate a psychoanalytic reading of Juliet's process of self-development, recognizing her adolescence and implications of feminine abjection. Her desire, once realized, is a monstrosity in Veronese society which exposes the inherent feminine abhorrence in patriarchal society. Examining the spatialized gendered expectations and inversions, Juliet's spaces of creative and destructive power illustrate her internal chaos and her mounting desire and desperation. Ultimately, Juliet's escape from Shakespeare's play into other modern encounters in western popular culture demonstrates the exponential tragedy of the story: Juliet's process of selfhood is a process impelling her death as she reacts, realizes, and violently rebels against the cultural expectations of Verona. Modern retellings of her story insist on her containment within her golden statue by idealizing her in roles as hyper-sexual, objectified, subjective and subdued, preferably silent or dead. The realization of her as the constellation of Shakespeare's play realizes her power to destroy the system that idealizes such an earthly, golden saint, the actual monstrosity of her true femininity, and her power to create and rectify her position, representation, and trajectories of future Juliets.

Using Shakespeare's invocation of the Liebestod motif as the entry point to this research, I explore the psychoanalytical framework using Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection and "malady of ideality" in Chapter 1. As a foundational element of self-development, Kristeva situates the maternal figure as the site of desire and death. At the beginning of the play, Friar Laurence warns, "The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb. / What is her burying grave, that is her womb, / And, from her womb, children of divers kind" (2.3.8-10). By defining and embracing *I* in terms of what is opposed to it,

what is opposed to being, the mother must necessarily be made "abject" and replaced with a proper sexual love object. The adolescent process of identifying a new love object is explained by Dorothy Tennov's theory of limerence whereby adolescents fantasize about such a union with an extreme eagerness and blindness to any negative attribute or risk. Through this process, adolescents lose their maternal desires and transition to a love object that generates excitement, rebellion, and sexual desire. The obstacles the lovers face serve to heighten satisfaction, maximize limerence, as well as heighten sexual desire in Juliet specifically.

Through Kristeva's "malady of ideality," limerent adolescents commit to the belief of an ideal, absolute love object. Adolescents tend to overlook flaws in their lover because of this strong, committed belief. Inevitably, this causes potentially fatal disappointment when adolescents realize the impossibility of such an ideal. Their committed belief, however, leads to extreme and drastic behavior, even a satisfaction in the destruction of the absolute object. When society denies Romeo and Juliet of ownership of their love objects, their ideality becomes perverted. Juliet is particularly preoccupied with Romeo's death as well as her own. Juliet, her desire awakened through maximized limerence with Romeo, recognizes her ability to cause destruction. She says to Romeo, "Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing" (2.2.184). In several instances, Juliet's "ill-divining soul" (3.5.53) predicts as well as relishes the thought of sexual consummation and union with Romeo even, but especially, in death.

Adolescence, then, is a process of selfhood, but is also a time of abjection. It is both a necessary process whereby social order is reinforced as well as challenged.

Masculinity is often excused from responsibilities of committing or suggesting sexual violence, while violence *against other men* is heralded by Capulet and Prince Escalus as unacceptable. Romeo, committing the social crimes of effeminate love and murdering another male, becomes Kristeva's *deject* figure. Where he should adhere to the social order and "abject" these behaviors, he commits to union with Juliet in death and "dejects." For Juliet, it is a zero-sum game: to live she must be obedient and subordinate and deny her selfhood. Her desire becomes as much satisfied by death as with rebellion. Juliet embraces her abjection and violently jettisons herself from Verona's order where she becomes a symbol warning against the dangers of female rebellion. Shakespeare exposes the subterranean tomb, the mother's womb, as the "fatal loins" which are dominated, "marred," and perpetuated by patriarchy. Kristeva's *chora* suggests the primordial space prior to existence and patriarchal subjectivity is a maternal space. Juliet memorialized as a constellation within the stars recognizes her agency within the "meta-maternal" space of the stars to effect patriarchal systems, locate and restore maternal power and feminine desire.

Chapter 2 explores Verona's anxieties surrounding feminine desire and the power of the maternal figure to bring forth life as well as destroy it through willful abandonment originating from such irreconcilable sexual desire. The tension within the female to adhere to social duties and her awareness of her desire's ability to overwhelm and overpower masculinity is present especially within Shakespeare's Juliet. As the insurgent of Verona, she is the most dangerous figure of the play. Representing to Romeo the lost mother during the process of selfhood as well as the inspiration of his sexual desire and

object of his subsequent effeminizing love, Juliet is bound within abject liminality. Between childhood and adulthood, daughter and wife, wife and mother, she is caught within this liminal space of life infested with "the ferments of death" (Bronfen 66).

Veronese masculinity, most apparently represented during Gregory and Sampson's opening dialogue, is primarily focused on domination of women through physical death or sexual death. Ultimately, the ability to execute these standards becomes both the gauge and protection of masculinity. Femininity is then the prefigured enemy to masculinity despite its inextricable dependency. It becomes necessary to require obedience from young Juliet through marriage though "too soon marred are those so early made [wives]" (1.2.13). Juliet's feminine duty requires her obedience to "fall backward when thou comest of age" (1.3.56). Verona's "social arrangement . . . contrives to divorce the sexual aspect of motherhood from the figure of the wife, and confine it to a domestic sphere where it will serve rather than threaten the male order that depends on it" (Snow 184). Upon meeting Romeo, however, Juliet instead falls forward with an abandon which clearly marks her desire as more developed, more desperate, and more apparent than "lusty young men." The creation of their blasphemous religion of romantic love disrupts social order, fuels their desire for one another, and creates satisfaction with increasing "conscious erotic commitment" (Snow 178).

Juliet's desire for separation from Verona manifests in a preoccupation with Romeo's death; her awareness of her desire's ability to effect it and her commitment to it, nonetheless, marks her a femme fatale within that system. She employs deception, desires possession of Romeo, and maintains her resistance in destroying and separating her body

from Verona. Ultimately, it is Juliet's awakened feminine desire that consumes Romeo's masculinity, inspires the murders of Tybalt, Paris, and the violent trespass of her tomb. Her alluring (sleeping) corpse draws Romeo to her in an erotically charged union. Romeo kisses her and dies; Juliet penetrates herself with Romeo's dagger leaving her "still bleeding in death when it has so recently bled in love" (Whittier 39). Her death becomes the ultimate achievement of her desire: separation from and resistance to Verona through union with Romeo. Tragically, her body memorialized in a golden statue is evidence of Verona's desire to subdue her body in public, eternal silence. Forever mourning the lost legacies of Montague and Capulet, they solidify her body in gold further objectifying her existence to warn against future rebellion and serve as catharsis and purification. As a feminine monstrosity in Verona, she lives perpetually in liminality inspiring fear, anxiety, desire and jouissance – the tension between them ever bound within an earthly state.

Chapter 3 takes a spatialized approach to understanding gender expectations within Veronese society. The pervading masculine ethos is evident in external places where sexual dominance using phallic weapons of war wreaks havoc on Verona's streets. Feminine ethos operates pragmatically in external and internal spaces. Lady Capulet, as the example of authoritative femininity at the play's outset, is concerned with minimizing male violence, upholding justice, and accomplishing her duties of supporting the Capulet legacy in private places. As an age of liminal passions and proclivities, adolescent development is influenced by these polarized ideals. Romeo and Juliet, who navigate external expectations and discordant internal desires, fail in their civil duties, but succeed

in defying the Veronese system that is unable to facilitate their adolescence, a system that would eliminate it.

The feud between the Montagues and Capulets situates the play's characters (Tassi 57). Where masculinity employs weapons on the streets, femininity employs words or "private means" according to Verona's "revenge ethic" (Tassi 57). The feminine understanding of internal, subversive power to embrace justice and uphold honor and duty is evident in Lady Capulet as well as Juliet. For Lady Capulet, feminine duty is arranging Juliet's marriage, and thereby securing the Capulet legacy, as well as defending it against its violators – namely, Romeo for Tybalt's murder. Juliet, however, wholly restricted to increasingly internal spaces (i.e., her house, bedroom, balcony, and her tomb), pledges her fealty to Romeo. As a result of her adolescence and desperation for familial love and connection, Juliet's duty shifts to her Romeo.

Driven together by threat of the feud, Romeo and Juliet create a fragile and temporary internal, private world of love and union. Despite their perceived unreasonable and desperate choices, Romeo and Juliet's world is ordered, reasoned, and governed by their mutual love. In contrast to the feuding external world of chaos in Verona, theirs is a world of desire, self-actualization, and fulfillment through adolescent union where "passion lends them power" (Prologue.13) to temporarily subvert their external realities. Eventually, their private world, fragile and unsustainable, tragically erodes with the external realities of Romeo's banishment and Juliet's impending marriage. Within the internal space of Juliet's tomb, the lovers unite, consummating their marriage in their blood. Juliet's death, with Romeo's masculinity thrust inside of her, becomes her ultimate

rebellion to the society that would deny her the possession of her passion. Her tomb becomes the site of her greatest agency, their union their greatest defiance. By spatializing adolescence and gender within Verona, this analysis locates Juliet within internal spaces, but establishes her inherent power to overtake masculinity by strength, passion, reason, and undeterred dedication to her own defined honor and duty.

My research concludes in Chapter 4 by examining the portrayal of Juliet in popular films and other modern representations where Juliet escapes the bounds of the play. The failure to recognize the strength and agency of Shakespeare's Juliet permeates popular culture and tragically idealizes Juliet's abjection. This contaminated and misinterpreted Juliet, then, is manipulated to reinforce the system that inherently desires her eternal punishment in her golden statue. The popular representations of Juliet by Franco Zeffirelli (1968), Baz Luhrmann (1996), and Simon Goodwin (2021) prefer masculinity at the expense of femininity in varying degrees. Through these films, audiences idealize the lovers which is the evidence and malady of our ideality. Audiences idealize Romeo as the god of our idolatry (2.2.113), and idealize a subdued, silent, and dead, Juliet. Our perpetual adolescence idealizes the lovers' destruction finding their violent ends satisfying because of their satisfying impossibility. Our ideality is what makes any production's Verona indicative of our society.

Where Shakespeare invites audiences to judge society for their "fatal loins" that disallowed their union, these film adaptations distract and reject the abjection of society. Audiences, instead, participate and perpetuate a system that idealizes female abjection in favor of dominant patriarchal order. The evidence of which is found in what Reynolds

and Segal refer to as “R&Jspace” which examines how Juliet, the archetypal figure of love, has escaped the bounds of Shakespeare’s play and lives on without requiring Shakespeare at all (38). This internal realm within our culture “accounts for the diverse social, cultural, political, and historical spaces generated, inhabited, and affected by Romeo and Juliet” (Reynolds & Segal 41). What audiences idealize in the lovers, the ultimate figures of tragic, romantic love, enables them to permeate all other spaces in Western popular culture. Juliet lives on referenced, relegated, abhorred, and hyper sexualized. In these “accidental encounters” (Hendershot-Kraetzer 14), Juliets of today are anything but indicative of Shakespeare’s Juliet. Because people are always learning explicitly or implicitly, Hendershott-Kraetzer warns these modern iterations affect the way modern audiences conceptualize her (17-8). His research suggests a regression of popular western culture to the kind of Veronese conditions that first produced Juliet.

Whether it is Shakespeare who lends the lovers such power, or the audiences that idealize and consume them, their story is continually “doing the work of culture, instigating and perpetuating the production of socially necessary formations of desire” (Callaghan 107). Because Shakespeare’s Juliet remains an inspired reflection of culture, the more urgent is a critical and ethical approach toward those representations. In a culture chronically and compulsively obsessed with youthful, dead females, the audience likewise youthful and growing younger, is especially sensitive and vulnerable to the portrayal of internalized female voices. Continued silencing of Juliet and the audiences who, in turn, internalize and idealize these portrayals, will result in the eternal production of the “fatal loins” that first created Shakespeare’s Juliet. Through an ethical approach to

Shakespeare's Juliet, recognizing her as the constellation of his play, we can not only correct the misinterpretations of her, but we can correct the silencing, sexualizing, and manipulation of females and identify the toxicity within the hegemonic culture that promotes their subjugation. Juliet as the constellation of Shakespeare's play memorializes her death as an opportunity to inspire civil peace. Juliet's fertile loins possess the power to create social bodies of triumph for future Juliets and their Romeos.

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A Kristevan Analysis of Abjection and Ideality in *Romeo and Juliet*

> The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb.
> What is her burying grave, that is her womb,
> And, from her womb, children of divers kind.
> (2.3.8-10)

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is foundationally a story of two "star-crossed lovers" who navigate the adolescent process of love and self-development. Out of Verona's "fatal loins" (Prologue.5), society, incapable of successfully nurturing these adolescent "seeds of renewal" (Faber 180), produces such toxicity it facilitates their destruction. Within this context, Romeo and Juliet develop self-concepts with propensities for suicide as their only viable option for selfhood. The combination of and tension between desire and death indicates the Liebestod motif that undergirds the entire story. It also serves to ground the analysis of the story within the basic human drives psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva explores. Within a psychoanalytic framework, Kristeva recognizes the maternal figure as the origin of desire and death. It is within this figure's power both to bring forth life (via her womb) and to destroy it (via passion). Specifically, Kristeva's theory of abjection informs Romeo and Juliet's process of self-development as well as Juliet's identification with the maternal figure – both of which governs and predicts their inevitable deaths. Relevant to this analysis is an examination of Juliet's newfound desire amid the adolescent process of limerence, the natural development and idealizing of love objects. Kristeva's "malady of ideality" explains the lovers' contagious, alluring, and committed satisfaction with death in the name of their ideal. Juliet, in full awareness of feminine abjection, becomes Kristeva's "jettisoned object" of society. Her violent embrace of it indicates the inherent power of the female to inspire

destruction as much as she inspires male desire. Romeo pledges fealty to Juliet, the "jettisoned object," effecting his demise as Kristeva's deject. The lovers, products of the society they wish to escape, ultimately use the prescribed means and methods to achieve it.

Shakespeare infuses such emotional intensity into the story by invoking the Liebestod motif, it remains a timeless archetypal story of romantic love. In her exploration of the Liebestod theme in *Romeo and Juliet,* scholar Maria Bijvoet explains the relationship between intense love and external obstacles which indicates the human experience inextricably linked with desire and death. She writes, "By the very nature of its composition the Liebestod pattern implies certain thematic particularities: absolute romantic love incapable of compromise and therefore in conflict with the world; engendered, threatened, and eventually destroyed by fate because of the inevitable transience of life and all things human" (Bijvoet 5). In effect, what the lovers find in their own union is inevitably in conflict with the world around them. But Liebestod couples "are well aware of the opposition between the religious terms of their exchange and the nature of their own interest in each other, and it is not a matter of mere convention. Their burgeoning love, though intensely sensual, aspires to a union beyond the physical" (Bijvoet 96). Because the lovers possess a transcendent-type love, they are willing to risk, even desire, death for eternal union. Subversion of the social law, familial featly, and life itself describes a love worthy of death, the love of Romeo and Juliet. Intense love and a desire for death is also evidence of the Liebestod tradition:

> The lovers resort to secrecy and deception, transgress human and divine laws, and thus jeopardize their safety for the sake of love. There seems to be no way out of the quandary and through the workings of fate, exterior and interior, signaling and incompatibility of the ideal with life, the story culminates in the more or less simultaneous voluntary death of both lovers following some tragic error or accident. These are Liebestod tales par excellence. (Bijvoet 7)

Obstacles and objections to Liebestod lovers proportionately increases their desires and demise. The feud and its requirements of social allegiances and expectations present the ultimate objections to their union. The compression of time in *Romeo and Juliet* (five days into the stage's "two hours traffic" [Prologue.12]) intensifies both desire and the tragedy of the feuding households. As a result, the lovers have "no opportunity for introspection, no time to assimilate their new experiences or to develop strategies enabling them to deal effectively with each new situation that arises" (Bijvoet 90). Romeo expresses his fear that their immediate, intense burst of passion is potentially "Too flattering sweet to be substantial" (2.2.141). Juliet, however, reacts immediately to her newfound desire and is rather unsuspicious and surprisingly committed. She desires Romeo to "Deny thy father and refuse thy name" (2.2.34), "Take all myself" (2.2.49), and to "swear not by the moon" (2.2.109) but "purpose marriage" (2.2.144). The intensity of her desire mixed with the intense reality and threat of the feud establishes a secret union and private world driving the lovers closer together and more dependent upon one another.

Importantly, they do not act alone in the subversion of social rules and expectations but require the assistance of others in the play. The assistance from Juliet's Nurse and the Friar dangerously reinforces their subversive behavior and helps them justify it. Two of the lovers' most trustworthy confidants not only council the lovers, but aid and abet them as well. Bijvoet writes:

> the helpers and the confidante belong entirely to the world and ideology which the lovers find themselves in conflict. The Nurse and the Friar temporarily bridge the gap between passion and society and enable the lovers to carry on, but the Nurse, who fails to understand the nature of Juliet's feelings for Romeo, soon withdraws her aid, while the Friar, unable to control the course of events, remains ineffective in his attempts to assure the lovers' survival. (86)

Juliet's Nurse is motivated to help Juliet fulfill her social duty through marriage. Achieving romantic love and autonomy is impossible for women in Verona as she well knows. The Nurse, most articulate of the female experience, understands the duty of marriage and childbearing: "'Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit'" (1.3.44), "Women grow by men" (1.3.97). The Nurse, understanding her social station and the loss of husband and child, enables Juliet to seek the romantic love she no longer possesses. However, she ultimately understands the duty that must be reconciled. She withdraws her aid at Juliet's critical hour by suggesting bigamy, effectively betraying her on both accounts. The Friar, "Acting as a politician rather than as a priest . . . in fact fails in his task

as a spiritual guide, for he seems more concerned with the well-being of the state than with the soul of his proteges" (Bijvoet 107). The Friar, like the Nurse, manipulates the young lovers as a catharsis for social crises. His response to Romeo's banishment and Juliet's grief is to offer a plan to assist their subversion of life in Verona. Both, however, are "personified agents of the obstacles" (Bijvoet 10). The Nurse, evidence of inescapable social duties, and the Friar, evidence of inescapable religious duties, though assisting their dependents, are two ideals inherently at odds with one another. As Bijvoet explains:

> the personified agents of the obstacle are figures of authority who represent moral and religious codes which must be respected. This conflict with the norms of the community is an essential ingredient of the [Liebestod] theme, symptomatic, on one level, of the conflict between individual desires and the common good, and, implicitly, of the incompatibility of complete personal fulfillment and life, the ideal and the reality. (10)

The consummation of Romeo and Juliet's marriage is the ultimate defiance of their family and society. In defiance of the feud (Verona and their households), in defiance of death (the balcony scene, their wedding night, Romeo's banishment), and in defiance of life (Tybalt's and Paris' deaths and their own), they remain fatally committed to one another where a union in death becomes their hope and purpose. Their story is not merely a tragedy of fate, passion, and morality, but a tension between them. Layered into that context is their process of adolescent development which influences, intensifies, and

accelerates their actions and demise. Adolescence, then, amplifies the Liebestod experience. Bijvoet argues Liebestod "lies within the protagonists themselves. In their impatience, in the intoxicating mutual longing for sexual satisfaction of the beginning, they refuse to accommodate to the situation as it is, fail to investigate the possibility of a compromise, and resort to secrecy and deceit to forge a contract whose exigencies they cannot meet in the circumstances" (Bijvoet 113). An adolescent caught within a Liebestod context spawns a psychoanalytic discussion.

Understanding self-development from a psychoanalytic perspective explores inherent human drives that conceptualize what is naturally attractive and alluring about "death-marked love" (Prologue.9). Psychoanalyst and theorist Julia Kristeva prioritizes the maternal figure as the primeval site of both desire and death. Particularly, her theory of abjection grounds the discussion. Kristeva defines abjection as, "the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost" (*Powers of Horror* 15). At the foundational level, the initial object lost is the connection with the maternal body through birth; something felt ongoing and realized in moments throughout the process of individuation. These moments of realization occur during what Kristeva refers to as a "narcissistic crisis" (*Powers of Horror* 14) where infants feel divided – simultaneously mourning and yearning for the maternal body while recognizing and craving separation. The process of becoming, as Kristeva explains, requires children to "abject" their mother, to disassociate from the oedipal love object, the maternal, which generates feelings of disgust and hatred. The maternal body, though credited for creating and birthing the child, must be recognized as disgusting and repulsive to prevent forbidden, incestuous

feelings. The no-longer-child, not-yet-adult longs to remain with the object now hated, and thus "abjects" himself as well as the mother "to avoid both separation from, and identification with, the maternal body – both equally painful, both equally impossible" (Oliver 49). Feeling repulsed by the maternal protects the *I* in progress.

Placing the maternal within the realm of abjection results in ascribing the quality of the abject as that which is "of being opposed to *I*" – a "something" a "weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me" (*Powers of Horror* 1-2). Vomit, for example, is the product of the body which exemplifies the expulsion of a bodily threat. The process of vomiting is a safeguard against that which is being expelled, making the vomit both a threat against and a safeguard for life. In this way, the maternal figure is a safeguard for life *and* a threat against it as a site of continual (sexual) desire. Once expelled, we are both disgusted and fascinated, repelled yet enraptured by recognition of the *I* as separate from the "jettisoned object" (2). Naturally, "Men must abstract themselves from the maternal world as they separate from mothers in order to acquire a license to enter the patriarchate, and they consequently adopt a violent and aggressive posture toward the world left behind" (Rivkin and Ryan 767). During adolescence, the maternal must become the "jettisoned object" to facilitate self-development through the embrace of another: The maternal is thus an obstacle for humanity to overcome and an object that facilitates the overcoming. The female, on the other hand, identifies with the "abject" mother as a maternal figure herself. Thus, her identity becomes grounded in abjection.

Juliet experiences her first moments of sobering abjection when her mother proposes the idea of marriage. Her obedient response is evidence of her identification with her maternal duties despite her admission "it is an hour that I dream not of" (1.3.68). The hour to express her familial honor is upon her, however. She says, "I'll look to like if looking liking move / But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it fly" (1.3.99-101). She experiences abjection again when she learns Romeo is a Montague after he approaches her at the Capulet ball as she declares, "My only love sprung from my only hate, / Too early seen unknown, and known too late. / Prodigious birth of love it is to me, / That I must love a loathèd enemy" (1.5.136-9). Contrasted to her earlier obedience to her mother and her Nurse regarding marriage, this moment becomes a "'prodigious' coming-into-selfhood" for Juliet (Snow 174). For her, the simultaneous gain and loss of her first love within the same instant, provides her first moment and experience as an *I*. Her simultaneous love for Romeo and her hatred of him as a Montague solidifies her as both independent (Capulet) and dependent (lover) *I*. Abjection happens again when she is betrayed by her father, mother, Nurse, and Heaven itself: '—Alack, Alack, that Heaven should practice stratagems / Upon so soft a subject as myself" (3.5.209-10), "Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain / I'll to the Friar to know his remedy. / If all else fail, myself have power to die" (3.5.240-2). At her desperate hour, with Romeo dead beside her, she embraces her abjection: "Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger / This is thy sheath. There rust and let me die" (5.3.169-170). Juliet exemplifies Kristeva's definition of abjection. Whether the object mourned for is her

identity, her lover, or her existence, it has "always already been lost" (*Powers of Horror* 15).

Romeo's quest to overcome the maternal object is already ventured and lost at the play's start. It is Rosaline's rejection of him that establishes his identification with the feeling of abjection as evidenced by his depression and solitude. He says, "Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here. / This is not Romeo; he's some other where" (1.1.191-2). For him, rejection of his first love object, Rosaline, inspires feelings of melancholy, social and physical separation. Though Benvolio and Mercutio advise Romeo to respond to this rejection with violence ("If love be rough with you, be rough with love. / Prick love for pricking, and you beat love" [1.4.25-6]), Romeo remains aware of "Some consequence yet hanging in the stars . . . By some vile forfeit of untimely death" (1.4.105-9). After his fateful meeting of Juliet, he maintains his ethereal identity and awareness: "Can I go forward when my heart is here? / Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out" (2.1.1-2). Though Romeo's replaces the maternal object with Juliet, he too, remains in a state of constant mourning over "that [which] has always already been lost" (*Powers of Horror* 15). At the news of his banishment, even the Friar recognizes Romeo is "Too familiar . . . with such sour company" (3.3.7-8). For Romeo and Juliet, abjection remains a continually crushing force. Their continued identification with abjection as part of their inherent identities suggests their impending doom as well as indicates their adolescent age.

Both a liminal age and psychological state, adolescence is a process akin to abjection. Both nostalgically and socially abhorrent, yet necessary to achieve

individuation, adolescence is mourning both what was lost (the maternal, childhood, dependence) and what is desired (adulthood, autonomy, independence). Separation from the maternal figure generates experimentation, rebellion, lamentation, excitement, and sexual desire. Recovered in union with a new love object, limerence is the "ecstatic union" and possession of a new, liminal love. Theorist and psychologist, Dorothy Tennov explains limerence as, "Yearned for, dreamed about, and, for the fortunate, reveled in, limerence [is] . . . 'the pleasure that makes life worth living . . . the experience that takes the sting from dying'" (Tennov 21). Basic components of limerence include obsessive, intense feelings to the detriment of other concerns, the reconfiguring of negative attributes into positive, mood dependency on the limerent object (LO), as well as a feeling of weightlessness, "buoyancy" mixed with a heart ache – that of defying obstacles, fear of rejection, and a blissful hope of reciprocity (Tennov 23-4). Limerents view each other "in the most favorable light" overlooking any negative "defect" in their LO which can borderline on believing a lie or is rather "a matter of emphasis" (30). This is called crystallization and is the evidence of the trite understanding that "love is blind." Differing from idealizing, crystallization suggests "these [negative] features are seen, but emotionally ignored" (Tennov 31).

Romeo's first limerent love object was Rosaline, a Capulet, which he pursues aggressively precisely because there is more reward when more is at stake. As Liebestod couples encounter intensifying external obstacles, so do limerent adolescents. As Tennov explains, "there can be some enjoyment in this preoccupation with and longing for returned feelings when the limerent recognizes from the outset that the possibility of

mutual commitment is low" (82). Romeo seeks Rosaline as his love; as a Capulet, an inherent obstacle suggests limerent potential. He recounts her rejection to Benvolio: "She will not stay the siege of loving terms, / Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes, / Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold" (1.1.206-8). His imagery of a siege marking his attempts to woo her, demonstrates why he fails. As Tennov explains, "Indeed, too early a declaration . . . may prevent the development of the full limerent reaction. Something must happen to break a totally positive interaction" (Tennov 26). Where some obstacle to overcome intensifies limerence, Rosaline, who outright rejects him for his repeated and incessant pursuit, sends Romeo into a state of despair. Romeo is then distant from his family and friends: "One of the strongest limerent feelings is a wish to hide the condition . . . as an inevitable part of the 'game' . . . disappearance from customary places . . . almost anti-social" (Tennov 121).

At the beginning of the play, Juliet's mother and Nurse gauge her readiness for marriage. Though she denies dreaming of marriage, she obediently attends the ball to consider Paris, the picture of social order, innocence, and duty. Attending the ball in a "state of readiness," she experiences desire as it "erupt[s] in a cloudburst of feeling" once Romeo, grabs her hand (Tennov 107). This sudden explosion of limerence creates a Juliet who earlier agreed to attend the ball in obedience ("I'll look to like if looking liking move" [1.1.99]) with the Juliet on the balcony who desires Romeo to "Take all of myself" (2.2.49). Juliet, in her chaos and inexperience, admits, "I should have been more strange, I must confess" (2.2.102), and begins to make the same mistake Romeo made with Rosaline by professing her love to a stunned, overwhelmed, Romeo. But the

obstacle lacking with Rosaline, happens for Juliet when her Nurse, calling her way and interrupting this conversation, serves as the obstacle which helps progress them both to "maximum limerence" (Tennov 26). Juliet cries, "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow" (2.2.187). Limerent process and crystallization completed, Liebestod motif – their impending commitment to love at the risk of death – is confirmed.

As established, obstacles increase the lovers' desires and satisfaction. The Montague and Capulet feud, the obstacle of inaccessible familial love, the Nurse's interruptions, and the male social expectations serve to increase the anticipation, heighten satisfaction, and seal their limerence establishing their own private world. Within their desperate search for one another is also an intense desire to *feel* loved: "The 'moment of consummation,' the goal, the climax of the limerence fantasy, is not sexual union but emotional commitment" (Tennov 39). Romeo does not embrace Mercutio's sexual priorities "Oh, that she were / An open arse, and thou a popp'rin pear" (2.1.38-9). Rather, he desires union, love, and commitment: "Unfold the imagined happiness that both / Receive in either by this dear encounter" (2.6.28-9). With the intensity they seek each other, a contradiction is revealed: "each of the [limerent] lovers seek the love of the other without realizing that what they want is *to be* loved (Tennov 71). When the Friar warns "These violent delights have violent ends" (2.6.9), in limerent terms, he warns that the height of their ecstasy will reflexively, inevitably equal their misery and fear of rejection or separation both by each other *and* their environments. Though these are stakes that create obstacles with potential for satisfaction and heightened desire, they also create desperate conditions.

The positive impact of love – feeling positive, happy, complete – though initially apparent between Romeo and Juliet begins to warp and pervert under increasing pressure. Where limerence is thus an emotional process of selecting a partner, idealizing, then, becomes the process whereby Romeo and Juliet, in their adolescence, begin to navigate discordant social expectations and realities. Kristeva's "malady of ideality" recognizes adolescents' simultaneous belief in the possibility and impossibility of an ideal and emphasizes the disruptions caused by the uncompromising adolescent in such a belief. As adolescents, Romeo and Juliet are prone to emotional dramatics and intensities because of their psychological transition between parental (Oedipal) love to sexual maturity and independence. Kristeva's "malady of ideality" theory argues a committed belief to an absolute, ideal love object which becomes a cathexis for adolescents: when faced with the inevitable disappointment of their beloved ideal other, they will exhibit destructive and delinquent tendencies. According to Kristeva, this compulsion becomes perverse and "harbors madness as a potentiality" (720). As it applies to Romeo and Juliet, the denial of the ideal object in each other, causes depression, desperation, and ultimately death.

But death, destruction, and otherwise unhealthy behavior can also produce pleasure for the adolescent. For Romeo, who is fueled by such impulse, or blinded by love, his connection to the ideal object produces satisfaction. Romeo, miserable in his rejection by Rosaline, opines on familiar Petrarchan conceits:

> Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
>
> Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
>
> Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears.

What is it else? A madness most discreet,

A choking gall, and a preserving sweet. (1.1.196-200)

For Romeo, this painful, yet enjoyable, even ideal desire is a sign of adolescent development. Juliet's desire is importantly recognized as "love spung from my only hate" (1.5.136) and the recognition that destruction is suffused with it: "My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (1.5.133). Later, she warns Romeo, "Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing" (2.2.184). In her soliloquy as she awaits her wedding night, she anticipates, "Give me my Romeo. / And when I shall die, Take him and cut him out in little stars" (3.2.21). Interestingly, she already realizes her desire *is* capable of Romeo's destruction as well as her own, and she delights in it. Kristeva marks this as part of the adolescent malady: it ". . . pushes him to relish both the fantasy of an absolute Object as well as the fantasy of its vengeful destruction" (716). At the end of her long-awaited wedding night, she laments in a premonition as she sees Romeo depart: "O God, ill-diving soul. / Methinks I see thee now: thou art so low / As one dead in the bottom of the tomb" (3.5.53-5). Her love, birthed from hate, acknowledged, possessed and (sexually) accomplished, knows of its destructive properties, and she pursues them regardless – always aware of her abjection, "of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost" (*Powers of Horror* 15).

Romeo and Juliet's love, adolescent and romantic in nature, notably exists within Verona's social environment, which exhibits narcissistic love. M.D. Faber stresses Shakespeare's "dramatic interest in the readiness with which all of these loves can transform themselves into hates, into hostile, aggressive behavior capable of disrupting

the civil order and provoking all manner of disastrous deeds" (171). Juliet's love, for example, has disastrous capabilities because it is first female and second Veronese. Romeo's love has disastrous capabilities because he is a male adolescent within an environment that promotes male sexual violence. "But more deeply, what is involved is hatred at the very origin of the amorous stage. A hatred that antedates the veil of amorous idealisation" (Kristeva 78). The narcissistic love emanating from the Montagues and Capulets households (which Juliet recognizes earlier in frustration "What's in a name?" [2.2.40]) is driven by the hatred of the other. These loves and hates are two sides of the same coin. The aggressive, destructive environment of Verona creates tragedy's framework and reveals the inevitable danger of such narcissistic love fueled by hate: Romeo and Juliet, who are isolated and alienated, are driven more closely and desperately together. Though Friar Laurence views the couple as a possible remedy to this familial hate, adolescence, coupled with Verona's inability to foster healthy development, is the accelerant to an already dangerous and violent environment. The feud, regardless of its threat to social safety, is part of the social order; consequently, ending it disrupts the current established, structured order. Though it is responsible for the tragic deaths the lovers will inevitably meet, it also serves as the ultimate obstacle that drives the lovers together.

With its rebellious and problematic threats against rules, laws, and order, Kristeva's "malady of ideality" reveals the volatility of adolescence to the social order and how it, like Juliet, becomes the "abject" of Verona's society. As Kristeva writes, "On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it,

annihilates me. There abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture" (*Powers of Horror* 2). Adolescence is likewise a threat against society, but also an important safeguard to maintain through conformity. Through resignation and acquiescence, it has the power to reinforce social order which processes adolescence within Kristeva's "abject" framework. By manipulating adolescent deviance, Verona is protected and idealized, but left uncontrolled, it will annihilate the social order and chaos will rule. Tybalt, as an example, was outraged by Romeo's trespass at the Capulet ball, but was aggressively reprimanded by Capulet: "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!" (1.5.77-8). In this instance, Capulet demonstrates incredible patience and restraint towards Romeo, "I would not for the wealth of all this town / Therefore be patient, take no note of him" (1.5.71-72). He shows considerable patience towards "lusty young men" (1.2.26) and demonstrates his understanding of – clearly a preference for – male adolescence. In fact, Verona encourages or is at least complacent to sexual violence ("'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker / vessels, are ever thrust to the wall; therefore I will / push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his / maids to the wall" [1.1.14-7]), but tries to mitigate or limit passionate physical violence *against other men* ("You men, you beasts / That quench the fire of your pernicious rage / With purple fountains issuing from your veins, / On pain of torture, from those bloody hands / Through your mistempered weapons to the ground" [1.1.77-81]). The existence of some deviant behavior serves to safeguard their society; Capulet's forgiveness of Romeo safely relaxes the rigidity of society, while violent behavior in Romeo later amplifies the need

for strict rules, law, and order. Therefore, male adolescent deviance, including violence, is expected, forgiven even rationalized, depending on passion's purpose, in Verona.

Romeo commits crimes of passion against masculinity and lack of masculinity: he does not value violence against women; rather, he loves Juliet and prioritizes her equal companionship, and he murders Tybalt after first responding to the challenge against his masculinity with love. In his distress over Mercutio's murder, he recognizes his love of Juliet's "beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper softened valor's steel" (3.1.111-2). At this precise moment he chooses his masculinity and the Veronese expectations of manhood, he realizes with clarity and lucidity that Juliet – and more aptly his love for her – has made him effeminate. His rage at this threat to his masculinity, along with the death of Mercutio, sends him into a murderous rage simultaneously killing Tybalt and his future with Juliet. Romeo's masculinity, safeguarded by his wealthy families, structures, and law within Verona, becomes a combined threat against him. Because of his identification with the social system and his autonomous actions within, Romeo, as a banished adolescent desperately dependent upon Juliet, represents Kristeva's concept of the *deject:* "The one by whom the abject exists . . . who places (himself), *separates* (himself), situates (himself), and therefore *strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing" (*Powers of Horror* 8). In this transformation where he chooses murder and violence, denouncing and blaming Juliet for her interference, he becomes a "victim-monster" (Greven 198) in a blinding moment. Kristeva describes the depth of Romeo's pivotal choice and plot development:

> Once upon a blotted-out time, the abject must have been a magnetized pole of covetousness. But the ashes of oblivion now serve as a screen and reflect aversion, repugnance. The clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable) becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame. Then, forgotten time crops up suddenly and condenses into a flash of lightning an operation that, if it were thought out, would involve bringing together the two opposite terms but, on account of that flash, is discharged like thunder. The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation breaks forth. (*Powers of Horror* 8-9)

Immediately after the murder, he experiences intense revelation sending him into this "land of oblivion." His subsequent banishment both seems logical yet lenient enough to discourage, but not eliminate, masculine adolescence, yet he conceptualizes his banishment as "Much more than death" (3.3.14) – an articulated moment of abjection. He recognizes society's effort to jettison him which is both a threat to his waning masculinity as well as his ability to possess a wife in Juliet. In Mantua, away from Verona, away from Juliet, in an "abject" state he interprets as his death, his identity falters. Returning to Verona likewise demonstrates he is aware of "the danger, of the loss that the pseudo-object [Juliet] attracting him represents for him, but he cannot help taking the risk at the very moment he sets himself apart" (8). He identifies himself with the (un)dead Juliet at the precise moment he should choose separation, acknowledgement of his *I*. Upon viewing Juliet's body in her tomb, he has yet another harrowing moment of revelation:

"For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light . . . How oft when men are at the point of death . . . A light'ning before death! Oh, how may I / Call this a light'ning? – O my love, my wife! (5.3.86-91). This bright flash, he realizes and again articulates, is the realization of his goal, "his gentle desire to be 'pillowed forever' . . . on a breast he associates as much with maternal comfort as sexual desire" (Snow 180). He would lose himself to embrace the breast of Juliet – a return to the replaced maternal figure subdued within her tomb, within her womb.

When faced with the ultimate abjection of Juliet's (un)dead corpse lying in her tomb, Romeo is drawn to it, magnetized, kissing it, loving it, and choosing death for union with it. He "dejects." Juliet, as a maternal figure and a figure of sexual desire for Romeo, is, then, a threat as it relates to the "*boundary* and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin" (*Powers of Horror* 69). If she would have successfully accomplished a different fate than of the two women charged with raising her, it would make her a societal pollution: "The potency of pollution is therefore not an inherent one; it is proportional to the potency of the prohibition that founds it" (*Powers of Horror* 69). Society demands Juliet marry for the gain of her father and household. Society recognizes that she, and all other females, carries the ability to further society via creation and birth, which means society also recognizes she carries the ability to tempt it and destroy it. Therefore, she must not to act on her own desires, rather, she should be persuaded against acknowledging her own desires and realize, even idealize, her dependency on the desires of others. These external demands and conditions admit and recognize the power she inherently possesses.

Ownership of her own desire is the threat that critically inspires the objectification and subjugation of it by those around her – adults as well as men in general. Juliet recognizes her discordant internal desires as well as her abjection as an adolescent and future maternal figure, but commits to rebel and satisfy them.

Tragically, Juliet's possibilities to experience pleasure from union with Romeo were entirely lived out within her tomb as she slept. Thus, she lived in a state always existing to die as evidenced by her preoccupation with death and demise throughout the play. Joseph Campana argues Juliet "is always dying" as she recognizes her impending death many times throughout the play: first, by anticipating death by the Friar's sleeping potion which may be poison; second, by taking on the "form of death" through the potion, and third, by stabbing herself after waking in the tomb and finding Romeo "self-slain" (165-6). Indeed, death was always Juliet's eventual form in life. It ensured her the individuation she so desperately sought, and it suggests the threat of her power if she is denied possession of what she greatly desires. Kristeva acknowledges an important link between femininity and death saying, "'Because it is Juliet who reveals the infernal quickening leading to the night of death, a quickening peculiar to amorous feeling . . . feminine desire is perhaps more closely umbilicated with death; it may be the matrical source of life knows how much it is within her power to destroy life'" ("Love-Hatred" 73). Friar Laurence speaks of the volatile and toxic possibility of the womb linking it to nature and the use of nature for healing or for killing: "The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb; / What is her burying grave, that is her womb" (2.3.9-10). What brings forth life may take it, and in Juliet's case, death is the womb of existence. Juliet's waking reality, then, is

naturally fraught with the unbridled desires and compulsions of her unconscious and an understanding of her abjection:

> He who denies morality is not abject; there can be grandeur in amorality and even in crime that flaunts its disrespect for the law – rebellious, liberating suicidal crime. Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you. (*Powers of Horror* 4)

Juliet's abjection is defined and incurred by Verona's standards which would define her behavior as "sinister." Because Juliet resolutely recognizes, "My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (1.5.133) and insists on pursuing Romeo and the execution and consummation of marriage, she becomes the "friend who stabs you" (*Powers of Horror 4).* In effect, her satisfaction of the "fusion of autoerotic pleasure and pain" (*Passions* 172) is worse: she is the *mother* who stabs Verona. Her refusal to adhere to social expectations and embrace her duty, becomes sadism for Juliet: "Freed from the divine cause and the moral constraints it decrees, the infinite transcendence of our desires can only be replaced by infinite pleasures unto death: cruelty" (*Passions* 271). Thus, Juliet is obsessed with death as the only escape from and crime against Verona as much as she commands "fiery footed steads" (3.2.1) to deliver her lover. Upon news of his banishment, she begs death to take his place: "Come cords; come Nurse. I'll to my wedding bed, / And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead!" (3.2.137-8). Eventually, she stabs herself in her greatest defiance and victorious escape: "Oh happy dagger, / This

is thy sheath. There rust and let me die" (5.3.169-70). Her freedom from Verona's abjection by denial of its prescribed morality is her greatest personal morality.

Her ultimate state of bliss in her wedding bed is equally replaced with an ultimate state of bliss in her bier united in death with her Romeo. In fact, her only option for selfhood lies in death. She responds to the Nurse's news of Tybalt's death with her fear of Romeo's doom: "I am not I if there be such an "I," / Or those eyes shut that makes thee answer "Ay" (3.2.49-50). Thrusting Romeo's tool of murder into her own heart, then, satisfies Juliet's lasting urge for sexual penetration, consummation, and selfhood in death. She naturally returns to her tomb, a return to the earthly maternal origin: "The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb. / What is her burying grave, that is her womb" (2.3.8-9). Juliet's violence against herself – more violent than Romeo's choice of poison – is her utmost rebuttal to Verona's abjection of her and its refusal of her possession of her desires. The potency of her power, and her violent embrace of it, manifests as a desire to jettison herself – Romeo's original "trespass sweetly urged" (1.5.107), augmented and distorted. It marks her desperation for selfhood and her accomplishment of it. Thus, Juliet's desire for love – intensified by obstacles, objection, and abjection – champions the Liebestod motif marrying love with death: "These violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die" (2.6.9-10).

Just as the feud permeates the entire play and is not clearly ended with the deaths of the adolescents, the problem of Juliet's death remains. Processing it from the same system of understanding and experientially learned psychological processes, through the same system of power – a hegemony with an ever-present preference for masculinity at

the expense of femininity – can trace it this far: the threat of Juliet is only unleashed upon society by the male. Often overlooked in the play is the effect of masculinity on her agency to destroy. Her will to inspire and enforce death using male tools of destruction is "unleashed only with the help of masculine degradation or bankruptcy – a bankruptcy of the father and manly authority" (*Powers of Horror* 169). The events suggest this is true: Romeo first kills Tybalt, Capulet violently abandons her, the Friar gives her the potion which collectively result in her summoning Romeo to his death and subsequently using his dagger to kill herself. Society has a simultaneous fear of destruction by the female and understands it must rely on her to procreate and perpetuate it, yet it refuses a critique of its own culpability in the chaos it creates. Romeo and Juliet's deaths substantiate the Liebestod theme linking desire and death; Kristeva's "malady of ideality" likewise explains adolescent tendencies to derive pleasure from destruction, and psychoanalysis proves the potency of the maternal ability to inspire male death once she harnesses her power to embrace what society "abjects."

The archetypal story of Romeo and Juliet derives its potency from the "fatal loins" (Prologue.5) of culture in which the Liebestod motif is more of a framework than a theme. Juliet's return to her tomb is a metaphor for Kristeva's semiotic *chora,* a concept describing the *maternal* primordial space of existence that retraces the emergence of language and the symbolic order, the "Law of the Father," back through the maternal body, and into this space of defining crisis (Oliver 46-7). Before language is formed and before experience informs identity, this space is also prior to the paternal, prior to such hegemonic claim, and is situated within the maternal body, the *chora*. Tracing Juliet's

story back through Verona's "abjected" maternal space reveals the "fatal loins" that confirm: "The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb. / What is her burying grave, that is her womb" (2.3.8-9). Through the recognition of Juliet as the constellation of Shakespeare's play, her power is located in the primordial, "meta-maternal" space of the stars, the space that harnesses her maternal fertile loins. The audience, operating within and subject to a patriarchal hegemony, participates in feminine abjection as the story is propelled closer and closer to our place where meaning collapses, our *chora,* a place Kristeva, perhaps even Shakespeare, seeks to understand, a place that rectifies maternal abjection.

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Juliet as a Feminine Monstrosity

Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing.
Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow
(2.2.186-7)

Bound within Juliet is the tension linking desire and death. Within her is the power to both bring forth life thereby securing the Capulet legacy, and ultimately, social order or to destroy it through willful abandonment of social duties and rebellion. The determining factor lies within her ability to understand, harness, and possess her own desires. Either potential generates in her a monstrous female who inspires male desire, frustration, anxiety, and death. Beyond influencing Romeo's death, as the cause of Romeo's effeminacy, she also inspires Tybalt's and Paris' deaths. She subverts the authority and guidance of her Nurse, threatens the Capulet legacy, causes death, and threatens destruction of social order. The ember of such destruction is her sexual desire. Feminist scholar Elizabeth Bronfen argues, "The lack of boundaries between concepts such as womb, tomb, home is traditionally linked to the analogy between earth and mother, and with it, that of death and birth, death-conception and birth-resurrection" (65). Juliet's desire makes her inherently attracted to that which leads to her tomb. Her "only love sprung from my only hate" (1.5.136) is immediately apparent to her from the moment of her sexual awakening which births her "ill-diving soul" (3.5.53) following her wedding night. As a femme fatale, she is Verona's source of life infested with "the ferments of death" (Bronfen 66).

Psychoanalytically, women are placed in the death drive both because they represent the lost mother during the process of selfhood and are the site of fantasy and

sexual desire (63). Because of this, while Juliet is alive, she becomes the presence of death in life – the carrier of death and the object necessary to secure Verona's society and the Capulet's legacy. The fatal relation between death and desire found in Juliet places her in abject liminality. She is between childhood and adulthood, daughter and wife, wife and mother – constantly between life and death. Her death likewise maintains her in liminality as she remains between the art of the play and the reality of our lives as a worshipped archetypal female character. Her memorialization in Verona's golden statue as well as resurrection in iterations and references ongoing, Juliet lives in everlasting liminality reanimating to death and dying incessantly.

Examining Juliet as a feminine monstrosity within the Veronese system of masculinity begins with Act 1, Scene 1 as Sampson and Gregory, two Capulets on the streets of Verona, assert male values, expectations, and desires. As they casually converse, they speak of their hatred of the Montagues. Sampson, a particularly aggressive servant, fantasizes the spoils of a fight with the Montagues: "'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant: when I have / fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids / I will cut off their heads" (1.1.19-21). This sexual pun refers to female genitalia as "maidenheads" where Sampson simultaneously threatens the virginity and lives of Montague females. Founded upon the interlinkage of female sex with violence and death, male anatomy is naturally, metaphorically linked with their weapons as a "tool" and "naked weapon" (1.1.29, 1.1.31) which requires one "to stand" (1.1.8); in other words, be erect. Thus, masculinity in Verona requires violent sex, the death of virginity, the domination of females, as well as enemies. The relationship between the female and the

enemy is blurred, however: “The male bonds that form in adolescence involve phallic allegiances against women and the threats of impotence, emasculation, and effeminacy posed by the actual sexual relation” (Snow 186). The ability to dominate or impregnate becomes the measure and protection of masculinity. Risk on both fronts – female or enemy, or female *as* enemy – is a desirable challenge as the reward is proportional. Juliet, on the verge of adolescence, becomes an inherent threat to Verona’s masculinity.

Following the chaos in the streets, Juliet’s Nurse and Lady Capulet approach Juliet with the intention of informing her she is to marry Paris. This attempt is thinly veiled as gauging her predisposition towards marriage as they both intend to accelerate her inevitable future securing for themselves a future within the toxic patriarchal structure of Verona. Their promotion of social duties marks them *not* as feminine monstrosities, but as Verona’s ideal women. Lady Capulet tells her, “By having him, making yourself no less” (1.3.96) referring to Juliet’s duty to secure her future, while Juliet’s Nurse tells her, “Women grow by men” (1.3.97) referring to a woman’s growing belly during dutiful pregnancy. The Nurse and Lady Capulet conspire to convince Juliet to marry; she receives the news with childlike obedience. Without knowledge of desire, she responds: “I’ll look to like if looking liking move / But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it fly” (1.3.99-101). Lady Capulet and the Nurse, in their conspiracy to convince Juliet, focus on the duties (safety) of a female rather than admit the difference (danger) of feminine desire. Scholar Edward Snow writes, “Their very presence together before Juliet is emblematic of a social arrangement that contrives to divorce the sexual aspect of motherhood from the figure of the wife, and confine it to a

domestic sphere where it will serve rather than threaten the male order that depends on it" (Snow 184). Juliet's father admits her inherent power saying, "Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she, / She's the hopeful lady of my earth" (1.2.14-15). As the last living heir to the Capulet legacy, she either secures the Capulet future or destroys it. Though he is initially concerned with Juliet finding love in his discussion with Paris, Capulet ties up the fatal inevitability in both the Nurse and Lady Capulet's arguments: "And too soon marred are those so early made [wives]" (1.2.13). In making Juliet a wife and mother, she will be "marred" – a pun on the word married which implies through marriage she is marred, devastated, or ruined (Indeed, she will be marred by insisting on her marriage to Paris, but her marriage to Romeo likewise effects the same result). By denying Paris his male right to dominance and ownership, Capulet risks himself, his own masculinity, and his legacy. By "marring" Juliet, he avoids the issue of her monstrous, rebellious desire and instead secures his future – a cost he ultimately decides is a proper price.

Veronese masculinity requires the subjugation of female desire because it is threatened by it. As a standard safeguard, female desire must be controlled by "marring" otherwise it causes chaos, confusion, and ultimately death. Her desire inherently belongs to man as a recompense for the original, Edenic sin which "poses the idea of a fall backward into innocence, the reversal or undoing of an original fall" (Snow 176). In her nurse's initial effort to support marriage to Paris, she recounts the story of Juliet falling as a child. The nurse's husband laughs and says, "Thou wilt fall backward when thou comest of age, / Wilt thou not, Jule?" (1.3.56-7). Dutifully "falling backward" therefore expels female desire, a desire explored by Eve that (still) requires punishment. Failing to

"mar" Juliet's desire into the desire for duty to familial legacy inspires Capulet's anxiety and later scorn at her rebellion. His daughter, "the hopeful lady of my earth" (1.2.15), receives the Capulet burden of responsibility to marry well and procreate. Juliet, although obedient and aware of her familial duties, experiences powerful desire when she meets Romeo specifically when she is primed for marriage and conscious of parental and social expectations – when she is an adolescent.

Romeo, likewise, aware of social expectations and restrictions, knowingly attends and violates the Capulet ball. This trespass is tolerated by Capulet who in previous scenes understands, even encourages, young men's desire for women saying, "Such comfort as do lusty young men feel . . . Among fresh fennel buds" (1.2.26-9). Romeo, too, finds comfort in the possibilities of this ball saying, "On, lusty gentlemen" (1.4.111) despite knowing "some consequence yet hanging in the stars" (1.4.105). Though Romeo intends to search for Rosaline, a Capulet and the current love object responsible for his simultaneous desire and despair, he fatefully meets Juliet. Grabbing her hand, motivated by such lust, he violates the social code for a second time. The two engage in a dynamic, equal exchange of wits and mounting desire. In this fateful moment, Juliet abandons all duties and expectations and falls *forward* with an

> eager willingness with which she is able to give herself over to the dynamic, shelterless force-field of emotions and sensations into which desire plunges her, and experiences herself as both the object and the generative source of its metamorphic energies . . . Out of the self

> experienced as object . . . an 'I' springs, impelled by the necessity that is also its motive force. (Snow 174)

From this meeting onward, Juliet is aware of her 'I', sprung from her desire and the object of it: Romeo. Pregnant with anticipation from the outset, her desire is more apparent, developed, and ready than Romeo's lust which inspired his agreement to attend the ball in the first place. When she professes her love, she does so with such desire even she recognizes it is too "like the lightning" (2.2.119). She blurts out her confession of love, and criticizes his response saying, "Oh, swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon / That monthly changes in her circle orb" (2.2.109-10). She interrupts him, speaks of marriage, and confesses her full commitment to follow him throughout the world (2.2.148). Romeo's desire, on the other hand, "is dominated by eyesight, and remains subject to greater rational control than Juliet's" (Snow 170). Where Romeo is happy to be in her presence, Juliet requires his commitment immediately. Only hours before, Juliet was an obedient Capulet, but her immediate and imaginative desire unlocks a demanding, desperate, and emotionally driven female – a monstrosity in Verona. Juliet's intense, instantaneous desire requires Romeo to forsake life and security as her price, and he does so as willingly and obediently as a prior childlike Juliet.

The stakes of life and death enmesh throughout the play creating fear and dread as well as excitement and attraction in both Romeo and Juliet. It is these mixtures of emotions and drives that suggests Freud's theory of the uncanny. Freud describes the uncanny as: "undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror . . . what excites fear in general . . . which leads back to what is known of old and

long familiar" (Freud). The maternal figure, as described by Kristeva, inspires feelings of abjection. With her desire awakened, Juliet becomes reminiscent of the lost mother during the process of selfhood, as the site of both desire and horrific abjection. She is the figure longed for; the figure to whom it is impossible to return. With her desires repressed, she is rendered unable to threaten the existence of life. With her desires awakened, whether she is conscious or not, she causes dread, horror, abjection – even death of her lover. Yet, it is the existence of these threats which fuels the intensity of desires that marks Freud's uncanny. The lovers, aware of probable death as punishment, even accomplishment, of their union, nonetheless, pursue it with increasing passion and elevated desire. The audience feels this, too: the risk of death satisfies the test of their true love. Their death, known from the start of the play, is anxiously anticipated and causes feelings of desire and longing. There lurks something erotic within death issuing forth from the female, the figure of life.

What makes Juliet a monstrously attractive force is not only the fusion of sex and death, but her double existence as a blasphemous angel and the inversion of her Catholic religion. For Romeo, she is at first a "holy shrine" a "dear saint" worthy of prayer with ability to purge his sin (1.5.92-105). In approaching and touching the Petrarchan Lady of his dreams he says, "I profane with my unworthiest hand" (1.5.91). Romeo later calls to her in the garden, saying "speak again, bright angel" referring to her as a "winged messenger of Heaven" (2.2.26-8). Referring to her as the sun, Romeo's musings make her a figure of piety, a Virgin Mary and celestial being, but only after he has touched her

with his “unworthiest hand.” Theirs is initially a union of pure, ideal romantic love, though it quickly perverts and exposes an antithetical ideal:

> they sonneteer together . . . blasphemously conflating physical and spiritual ecstasy: she is his saint, he her pilgrim – until Juliet reverses roles to call him ‘the god of [her] idolatry’ (2.2.114) – and ultimately she is his only paradise: ‘Heaven is here / Where Juliet lives’ (3.3.29-30), the despairing Romeo pleads to Friar Laurence upon his sentence of banishment from Verona for the murder of Tybalt, calling ‘banished’ a word the damned use in hell (3.3.46-47). (Colvin 390)

Idolizing each other, they blaspheme God and Heaven by finding it within each other. In idolizing Juliet, Romeo becomes a “rebel angel fallen from grace: a demon” (Colvin 390). With Juliet as a profaned angel and Romeo as a demon, together, they create a religion of erotic death from which they cannot live apart. Their accomplished union, in life or death, becomes the pilgrimage and gain of *their* heaven. The rightness in their wrong union and wrongness within their right union, exposes the danger, but persistent desire of Juliet as a contrary, sensually angelic figure.

Juliet, as Romeo insists, is the sun, a light source and star against “the cheek of night” (1.5.43). Gazing at Juliet, he claims, “Her eye in heaven / Would through the airy region stream so bright / That birds would sing and think it were not night” (2.2.20-2). Her beauty betrays his metaphors, and he deceives himself. Indeed, it is the sun, the daylight, a revealing light source that threatens to expose and kill him, and yet he is drawn to it. Juliet, rather, longs for night with a desire that combines darkness and

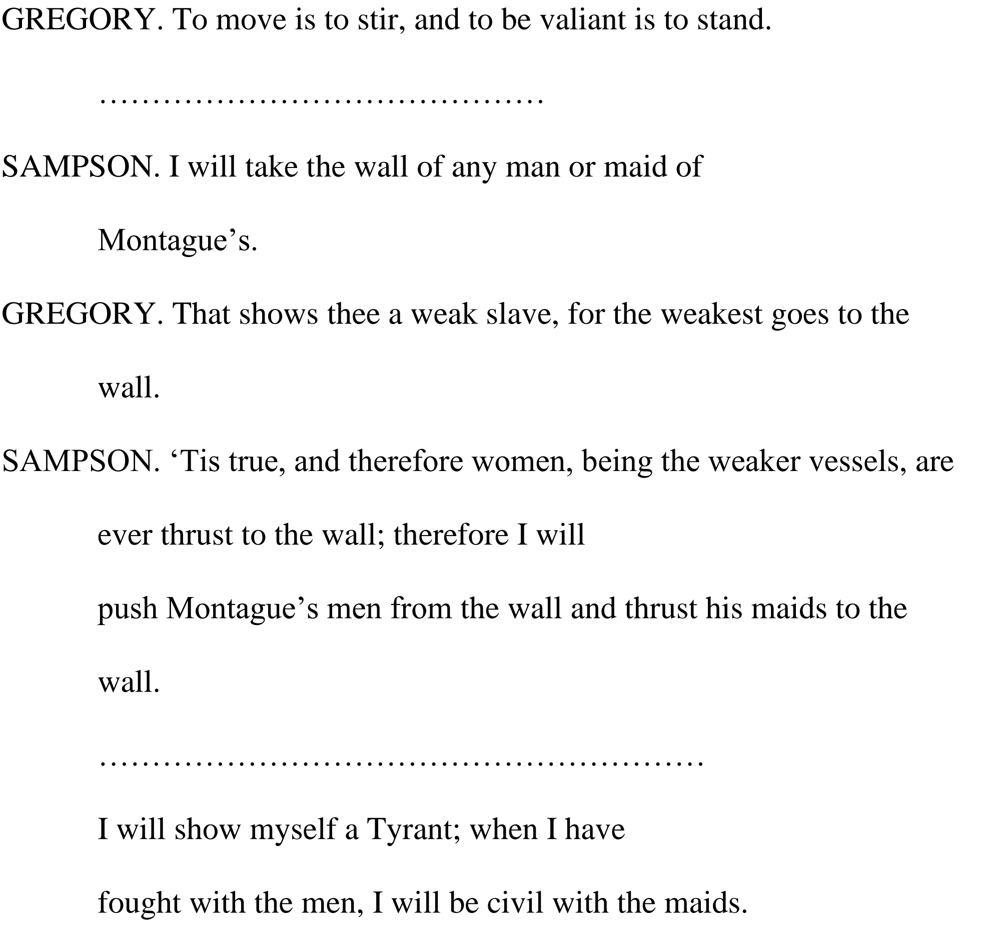
passion: "Come, civil night" (3.2.9), "Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night" (3.2.5), "Come gentle night" (3.2.20), "cut him out into little stars, / And he will make the face of heaven so fine / That all the world will be in love with night" (3.2.22-4). Romeo longs for a guiding light; Juliet longs for the safety and truth of darkness. Their love and marriage consummation take place under the shelter of night, and after their wedding night, Romeo begins to realize the threat of daylight saying, "Look, love, what envious streaks / Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east . . . I must be gone and live, or stay and die" (3.5.7-11). Juliet responds to him arguing, "It was the nightingale, and not the lark . . . Believe me, love, it was the nightingale . . . Yon light is not daylight; I know it, I" (3.5.2-12). Her inner passions, claimed and possessed, now dictate her outwardly expressed desires; she believes this deception because "the world is permanently transfigured, and the inversion of values that accompanies the change is a matter of conscious erotic commitment" (Snow 177-8). Their heavenly discoveries in one another become "the sensual call of the sepulchre [which] is the call of immortal desire and through it a heretical heaven in each other, whether in this life or after it: the call to forsake society's prescribed paradise of stasis for the passions of the vital earth" (Colvin 392).

Juliet's desire to unite with Romeo incites feelings of anxiety over the horror of her tomb. Her soliloquies expounding upon her fear and desire for death are increasingly erotic. In a moment of chaotic, climactic passion, she toasts to her death, the "call of the sepulchre." She calls for night to deliver her Romeo, and after she possesses him in sexual death, her "ill-divining soul" (3.5.53) insists she will not "be satisfied / With

Romeo, till I behold him – dead" (3.5.92-3). After learning of Romeo's banishment ("Then 'banishèd' / is death mistermed" [3.3.2-1]), Juliet expresses her fearful, passionate desire: "Be not so long to speak; I long to die" (4.1.66). Desiring death, but suspicious of the elixir, Juliet fears Friar Laurence is motivated to deny her, her Romeo or kill her. She is intuitively aware of her power and its threat against Verona, aware vaguely that she should be punished for her rebellion, but is most afraid of living without Romeo. She also panics over the potential horror of waking among her "forefathers' joints" (4.3.50) and "loathsome smells" (4.3.45) ultimately "stifled in the vault" (4.3.32) – alive in death. Her fear is driven by her guilt for marrying Tybalt's murderer and her irretractable passion, a fear Freud explains as, "the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him" (Freud). In the climax of her madness, as she fantasizes meeting Tybalt's angry, vengeful ghost, she cries out, "Stay, Tybalt, Stay! / Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink. I drink to thee" (4.3.56-7). As she awakens to Romeo's dead body, Juliet refuses rescue and instead seeks comforting death in a kiss: "I will kiss thy lips, / Haply some poison yet doth hang on them, / To make me die with a restorative" (5.3.164-6). When this fails, she uses Romeo's weapon to commit suicide desperate to remain with him in death rather than without him in life.

Juliet's corpse continues the incitement of "Temp'ring extremities with extreme sweet" (Prologue.14). In his fury, Romeo violates her tomb's entrance with his "mattock" and "wrenching iron" (5.3.22). The violence he will commit to enter this tomb is vivid with male sexual violence. Romeo explains his plan to enter Juliet's tomb by threatening

any interruption, "By Heaven, I will tear thee joint by joint . . . The time and my intents are savage, wild, / More fierce, and more inexorable far / Than empty tigers or the roaring sea" (5.3.35-9). His passion to unite with her corpse becomes increasingly violent, and with the last of his masculine energy, he vows to penetrate her tomb: "Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death, / Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth, / Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open, / And in despite I'll cram thee with more food!" (5.3.45-8). Romeo's language postulates the (female) womb must be violently entered and possessed – reminiscent of Gregory and Sampson's dialogue which opens and frames the play:



GREGORY. To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand.

……………………………………

SAMPSON. I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

GREGORY. That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.

SAMPSON. 'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall; therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall.

…………………………………………………

I will show myself a Tyrant; when I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids.

I will cut off their heads. (1.1.8-21)

Despite the terror of confronting death, Romeo, desperately committed to Juliet, reaches his climax of murderous and erotic intent by killing Paris. Bringing flowers to honor her tomb, Paris finds Romeo violating its entrance. A fight ensues and as he dies, Paris cries "Oh, I am slain! If though be merciful, / Open the tomb. Lay me with Juliet" (5.3.72-3). Romeo, now subdued from the full exertion of his violent, sexual expression, vows to honor Paris' love for Juliet inside her "lantern . . . for her beauty makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light" (5.3.84-6). Though inanimate, she retains the power to stimulate desire and lure both Romeo and Paris to their deaths.

Once inside the "rotten jaws" of Juliet's earthly "detestable maw," Romeo finds Juliet's (sleeping) corpse strangely beautiful. This moment is a triumphant climax: "As a consequence of having thrust his sword into two rivals, Romeo released the fury that underlines his love" (*Love-Hatred* 74). Juliet, "rigid but not dead, put to sleep by the potion, and more beautiful than ever in her rigidity," draws him in (*Love-Hatred* 74). He is transfixed: "Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe / That unsubstantial death is amorous / And that the lean, abhorred monster keeps / Thee here in dark to be his paramour?" (5.3.102-5). Rather than feel terror in the presence of death, he is renewed with life describing a "light'ning before death" (5.3.91) as he approaches Juliet's corpse and his final resting place. His invigorating experience of death's presence in love inside Juliet's tomb, his desired resting place, becomes Romeo's uncanny reunion and return to the lost object, the mother, the womb:

> It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. there [sic] is a joking saying that 'Love is home-sickness'. . . In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch,* familiar; the prefix '*un'* ['un-'] is the token of repression. (Freud)

Presence within this *unheimlich* place, the maternal, primordial space, results in Romeo's euphoria. Having committed his repressed violence and desire against the maternal womb and taken possession of Juliet's body, he calmly and pleasantly makes amends with Tybalt's body as he offers his own death as recompence. As he completes his lifelong unconscious desire to return to the *unheimlich* place of the womb, he proceeds to figuratively dismember himself – eyes, arms, lips – desiring "engrossing death" (5.3.115) from a final kiss that in earlier dreams produced life: "That I reviv'd and was an emperor" (5.1.6-9). Aspiring to be an emperor in life, he commits to this dream in death resulting in the same ecstasy and pleasure. He takes his "righteous kiss" from Juliet saying, "Thus with a kiss I die" (5.3.114-20). The accomplishment of death via love is a "conflation of sex and death . . . the metaphorical use of 'die' to mean the experience of orgasm" (Colvin 385). Their marriage consummated in life, is then consummated in death producing final, eternal ecstasies: "Juliet's body is found still bleeding in death when it has so recently bled in love" (Whittier 39). As Friar Laurence warned, "These

violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which, as they kiss, consume" (2.6.9-11).

Like Eve in the origin story, initiating the downfall of man, Juliet proves a dangerous attraction. Indeed, she possesses a hypnotic power, despite the danger implied between their feuding houses, making her an irresistible temptation to Romeo. Even Paris is enamored with her beauty and dies worshipping her. Because she has "Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!" (1.5.43-45), she drives the men in love with her to their graves. Though she is described with celestial connotations, these prove deceptive and dangerous rather than redemptive and liberating. As "day in night" (3.2.17-21), Juliet serves as a figure with "eyes in heaven / Would through the airy region stream so bright / That birds would sing and think it were not night" (2.2.20-2). Deception and trickery causing "all the world will be in love with night" (3.2.24), becomes a confession made as she fantasizes her wedding night. Her desire is exposed as intertwined with darkness, lust, and danger: "Death, like a final orgasm, like a full night, waits for the end of the play" (*Love-Hatred* 74). Her satisfaction and delight in death is understood as she cries, "O happy dagger! This is thy sheath" (5.3.169-70) recognizing her body as an appropriate sheath for a penetrating weapon of murder and destruction.

Female desire is naturally infused with death more so than male characters. Julia Kristeva, feminist and psychoanalytic scholar, argues "More imaginatively, feminine desire is perhaps more closely umbilicated with death; it may be that the matrical source of life knows how much it is within her power to destroy life" (*Love-Hatred* 73). Jouissance begins in infancy between baby and mother:

> The Other is the source of all of the infant's satisfactions . . . sometimes that satisfaction becomes too much, such is the case with the baby nursing to the point that she is overfed and uncomfortable. Without this intervention, the infant is unable to become a subject unto herself and remains at the whim of the jouissance of the Other. (Morris 14)

The infant places her desire and reliance on the mother. The excess desire created between them causes the baby to be overfed, uncomfortable, and potentially endangered. The pleasure the mother receives from feeding her infant can pervert into a desire to kill via her life-giving milk. The same perversion is present in the monstrous female. Her power to bring forth life establishes parallels with sexual desire as the mechanism which can threaten life. Scholar and psychoanalyst Bethany Morris, a contemporary of Kristeva, writes, "This is why jouissance should be understood as inherently tied to both sexuality and death because, while pleasurable, complete jouissance is annihilation of the subject" (*Love-Hatred* 15). Juliet seeks Romeo with such jouissance, she causes Romeo's death.

Juliet's awakened jouissance is intensely more sexual than Romeo's desire. She craves autonomy to possess it which she believes is possible through sexual and marital union with Romeo. He becomes her Object a as she comes to rely on him as her sole opportunity for achievement. Her unbridled passion first erupts at the Capulet ball. Here, she teases Romeo that he kisses "by th' book" (1.5.110), suggesting Romeo is more studious than he is freely passionate, which references her engulfing sexual desires are much deeper than his own. Consistently, she shows herself more erotic while Romeo demonstrates "wistfulness" (Snow 176). Her lurking desire exists in "an urgently desired

future, and are charged with an erotic energy that makes the experience they invoke present and actual in her imagination" (Snow 176). On her wedding night, she both foreshadows her wedding bed as her grave (1.5.133) but yearns the more pleading, "Come, gentle night, come loving, black-brow'd night, / Give me my Romeo, and, when I shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars" (3.2.20-2). Not only does she desire their sexual union, but she fantasizes over her ownership and possession of her Romeo. In her mounting desire, she refers to herself as the falconer of Romeo as a "wanton's bird, / That lets it hop a little from his hand, / Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves" (2.2.180-2). She would control Romeo's freedom "with a silken thread plucks it back again, / So jealous of his liberty" (2.2.182-3) ever desiring to "lure this tassel-gentle back again!" (2.2.163). This desire for his ownership she recognizes has destructive possibilities: "Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing" (2.2.186). In this brief exchange, Juliet simultaneously embraces her desires for Romeo as well as her ability and desire to kill him.

Juliet seeks passion and the fulfilling, obliterating climax of it. She compels "fiery-footed steeds" (3.2.1) to deliver her the wedding night she fantasizes. Juliet fantasizes losing her virginity in the dark with Romeo; desires he take possession of her; begs to "die" in sexual climax both violently (cutting Romeo up into stars) and diffusely (to make heaven shine). Sex and death, the result of excess jouissance, exists more desperately and fatally within Juliet. Her desperation for separation from her household and her union with Romeo fuels her satisfaction with her death as well as his – the ultimate form of separation:

> The fact remains that Juliet's jouissance is often stated through the anticipation – the desire? – of Romeo's death. This, long before her drugged sleep deceives Romeo and leads him to suicide, long before she turns that death wish upon herself at the sight of Romeo's corpse, driving herself to suicide, too: 'Methinks I see thee, now thou art below, as one dead in the bottom of a tomb' (III.v.55-6). (*Love-Hatred* 79)

Her subsequent premonition of seeing Romeo "as one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.56) as he descends from her room continues her subconscious perception and desire and dread of looming death. Juliet's preoccupation with Romeo's death begins before her wedding night as she dissects Romeo into pieces as she yearns for him alone on her balcony: "What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot, / Nor arm nor face, nor any other part, / Belonging to a man" (2.2.40-43). The typical blazon is "Traditionally, the spiritualized lady, . . . [who] is 'seen' only through the poet's selective presentation of her in a redeeming *blason du corps féminin,* her body heraldized . . . [which] therefore removes the woman from the human realm" (Whittier 33). In Juliet's desire for him to denounce his name and his identity, she begins to obliterate him piece by piece. Anticipating her wedding night, she says, "Give me my Romeo. And when I shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars" (3.2.21-2). This "negative blazon" dismembers Romeo by romanticizing him as a constellation instead, and "In dismissing his name, she scatters his body" (Whittier 34). After their wedding night, she attempts to convince him to ignore the daylight and stay with her. He responds, "Come, death, and welcome. Juliet wills it so" (3.5.24) knowing death awaits him should he remain to satisfy her both in

presence and sexually. Indeed, Juliet wills his obliteration, his dismemberment, and removal from Verona's claim rivaling it with her own.

Juliet's fascination with death and her desire to kill seeps through her language again upon learning of Tybalt's murder via Romeo. She cries an admission, "Indeed, I never shall be satisfied / With Romeo, till I behold him – dead – / is my poor heart, so for a kinsman vexed" (3.5.92-94). Her desire to hold dead Romeo, whether she kills him by cherishing or in revenge for familial justice, or it is her own heart dead by grief or fulfilled desire for union with Romeo, deception becomes more fully part of her identity. Equally expressing her sexual desire for a traitor, she also satisfies and validates her mother's desire for revenge as justice for Tybalt. Her satisfaction, in truth, will only come when she holds dead Romeo in her tomb. Juliet turns this death wish upon herself preferring violent death over marrying Paris. She threatens her own life saying, "And with this knife I'll help it presently. / God joined my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands; / And ere this hand, by thee to Romeo sealed, / . . . Turn to another, this shall slay them both . . . 'Twixt my extremes and me this bloody knife . . . I long to die" (4.1.50-67). Rather than marry Paris and give up her Romeo, she lists many ways she desires pain for punishment:

> JULIET. Oh, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
>
> From off the battlements of any tower,
>
> Or walk in thievish ways, or bid me lurk
>
> Where serpents are. Chain me with roaring bears,
>
> Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,

O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,

With reeky shanks and yellow, chapless skulls,

Or bid me go into a new-made grave

And hide me with a dead man in his tomb –

Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble –

And I will do it without fear or doubt

To live an unstained wife to my sweet love. (4.1.77-88)

Regardless of the predominate motive, death and punishment produces desire and satisfaction. With her threats against herself made to the friar, she forces a solution: deception will achieve separation by consuming a potion and taking the form of death. Her prior desires for punishment rather than marry Paris become fears that the friar may have deceived her. Already and secretly married to an enemy and murderer of her household, she welcomes her deserved punishment in either capacity. Sadistically and erotically charged with compulsion for desire unto death, she welcomes passionate punishment for her attempt against society. Ultimately, for Juliet, "the terror of the putrid grave [is] both preferable to and somehow purer than a passionless marriage . . . she would endure the horror of the grave in order, in her own words, 'to live'" (Colvin 388). Her tomb ultimately becomes the only place where Romeo and Juliet's existence is possible. In defiance of life, defiance of fate, united in death in "a liminal plane apart from the binary conventions of existence, a place where lovers meet when their holy, profane love is incomprehensible to the mundane world" (Colvin 389). The monstrous female subverts.

Romeo and Juliet's formation of a private existence wholly separate from society results in melancholy states which become more animated the nearer to death they come. Psychoanalytically, "Melancholia, Kristeva notes, is the inability to let go of the lost object . . . [resulting in] a loss of vitality and generativity" (Morris 90). Lack identifies with lack. Romeo lacks a love object; Juliet lacks a mother, a phallus, and a love object. The degree of her lack is greater resulting in greater, more dangerous desire. Though "we might see the play as Romeo's [the poem's] search for Juliet [the flesh]" (Whittier 34), it is Juliet's desires of the flesh that demand his death. Her inherent desire, established by her inherent lack, is more desperate and volatile than Romeo's. Kristeva points out the nuanced difference in the play: "Finally, a certain intrinsic melancholy with Juliet contrasts sharply with Romeo's solar eagerness when she expresses her own luminosity not by means of the sun but by the stars and meteors" (*Love-Hatred* 73). Juliet, Romeo's sun, is preoccupied with Romeo's death before he dies because she knows, as her intuitive melancholy suggests, she has already lost him before she can love him. She declares her love is issued forth, prodigiously birthed, from her hatred. Juliet's desire is intertwined with this melancholic death-drive because it heightens her passion and desire – something she will never really possess.

Possession becomes an obstacle she can never overcome, but an obstacle that reflexively increases her desire to sacrifice all in her pursuit. Naturally, then, Juliet becomes a femme fatale who requires the deaths of her suitors and others as collateral damage in some pursuit of or retribution for her lack. Morris defines the quintessential femme fatale as:

always remarkably beautiful, so much so that the men in her presence tend to compulsively remark about her appearance and the effect it has on them. She tends to be unaware of her beauty and her influence over men, though it is usually revealed later that she knows full well the effect that she has over men. She entices others with her sexuality to fulfill her demands, which are usually a means to her own and all involved, destruction. (90-1)

Juliet is fatally obsessed in her pursuit to satisfy her desire. She rebukes Paris because he produces no desire within her marking him collateral damage. She responds to his assessment of her as his wife saying, "What must be shall be" (4.1.21). In veiled doublespeak, she again assuages his appraisal while threatening it. She boldly avows Romeo's death knowing it is within her power to kill him: "Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing" (2.2.186). As the femme fatale figure, she "seems to knowingly plunge forward to her own demise, disregarding the lifelines that are available to her" (Morris 103). She refuses her Nurse's advice, and recommits to her union with Romeo, even if in death. For this, she inspires suspicion and fear in all other characters – the Nurse, Friar Laurence, Lady Capulet, Capulet – as well as in the audience.

The threat of her disobedience simultaneously exposes how much is within her power to destroy. The femme fatale thwarts men, is a figure of resistance, has and enjoys sexual agency – she is a disturbing character (Morris 103). As an adolescent emerging from childhood, she is haunted by her own desire, is preoccupied with death, recognizes her wedding bed will be her grave, and fantasizes the death of herself and her lover. Once

her desire is awakened by the meeting of Romeo, she refuses obedience: "Her desire is what mobilizes her and specifically why she is unable to simply behave as deemed necessary by those wielding the law" (Morris 107). She is threatening also because she reveals herself as a linguistic match to Romeo at the Capulet ball. This makes her, as the femme fatale, closer to the knowledge of the fallibility of the phallus (Morris 102). She becomes a direct threat to masculinity specifically because she submits only to her own desire.

Within Verona's social context, Juliet's seduction of Romeo, then, effeminizes him. Romeo claims Juliet has "Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear" (1.5.45). In his effort to find his Lady Petrarchan figure, he finds Juliet and says, "Did my heart love until now? Forswear it, sight" (1.5.50). He does not deny it, but rather relinquishes to her the power of his being: "Can I go forward when my heart is here? / Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out" (2.1.1-2). Reciprocity and subsequent consummation propel him yet closer and closer to his grave (within hers). Elizabeth Bronfen writes, "Rather than signifying the source of fertility and healing, Woman's body is seen as polluted, as fatal to the masculine touch, an agent and carrier of death . . . and the sexual relation with her as a form of death rather than conception" (67). Juliet, consequently, not only functions as the femme fatale, but as a monstrous female provoking terror, unconsciously and consciously, by her power to harness her desire, wield it, challenge and overpower masculinity. As Morris writes:

> the terror . . . is rather in her ability to provoke an unconscious threat to refuse to acknowledge castration and thus return the subject to the

> jouissance of the Other, and in such, feminizing the subject. This is not to say that being a feminine subject is inherently monstrous, but rather from the position of a castrated subject, who has an unconscious assumption about the nature of sexual difference and how the Other enjoys, combined with castration anxiety of losing what he never had, to become feminized in this context is to be consumed, enjoyed and devoured. It is a loss of subjectivity, at least partially. (Morris 34)

It is in this recognition, and revolt against, the feminine existing within Romeo which inspires Tybalt's murder that fuels the play's tragic trajectory. Cursing Juliet he says, "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper softened valor's steel" (3.1.111-2). The loss of his masculinity and the realization of the feminine, hostile, passionate presence within him drives him to murder. Rage subsided, the friar recognizes this new unnaturally masculine, yet feminized nature:

> But the learned priest reveals the other side of this coin, so aggressive and vengeful in its loving passion – a certain 'femininity' in Romeo. 'Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art; thy tears are womanish; they wild acts [the murder of Tybalt] denote the unreasonable fury of the beast . . . But, like a misbehaved and sullen wench, thou pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love: take heed, take heed' (III.iii.109-11, 143-5). (*Love-Hatred* 82)

The feminine ability to effect masculinity, the newfound feminine fury Romeo recognizes within himself, demands retribution and punishment by Veronese standards. Juliet's desire to be with Romeo on her own terms threatens

the order, encourages chaos, and makes her the most dangerous figure of the play. Refusing to live without him, vehemently refusing Paris and all other options for an antithetical existence and insisting on death become the defining framework of her desire as resistance. Her suicide demonstrates how death epitomizes the proximity between self-representation and self-obliteration (Bronfen 279). Thus, Juliet must destroy her body to maintain her resistance. Her tomb, which becomes a monstrous, earthly womb, is the receptacle of all related death: Tybalt, Romeo, Paris, the Capulet legacy, and her own. These "violent ends" (2.6.9) reference the dangers of female desires and points conspicuously to Verona's persistent values of male dominance and order.

At the end of the play, "surviving fathers, linking hands in poignant parody of the lovers' first meeting, agree to set up the images of Romeo and Juliet as golden effigies" (Whittier 41). With Juliet subdued in death, she becomes a golden statue, not as a symbol of eternal rest, but as a symbol of her eternal threat and her eternal consequences. Montague offers to "raise her statue in pure gold, / That whiles Verona by that name is known, / There shall be no figure at such rate be set / As that of true and faithful Juliet" (5.3.299-302). Her body is manipulated and overlayed with the ultimate symbol of monetary value; the loss of which is a tragedy though it remains as a silent object belonging to Verona. Capulet responds, "As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie" (5.3.303). Their memorialization in golden statues suggests they will remain a pillar of remembrance warning of the lost legacies of Montague and Capulet. Romeo, an

offender of the male social code, is made a relic of related tragedy, but for his effeminate love, his memorial is not quite the tragedy of Juliet. Kristeva argues homage is paid to the female through religiosity and eroticism by “statufying it” and by “leaving the mother with only one way out, that is, to kill herself” (*Passions* 110). Indeed, Juliet is “statufied” for her sins against Verona. Her memorialization is proof of the ever-present embrace of masculinity and the necessary subjugation of femininity. It is a reminder and warning against rebellion – but particularly for females *and the men who choose them above all.*

Dead Juliet, memorialized in a golden statue, protects the social order in Verona as it maintains the ideal female. It romanticizes her death and maintains her in silence, maintains the value of her body, and maintains a deterrent against future rebellion. Her statue serves as a visual grave, an objectified illustration of her dead body, golden in its constitution and containment of Juliet as “the sun” (2.2.3). This solidified corpse “effaces all traces of death’s inscription in life, it resembles its living counterpart and it generates commemorative stories . . . assuring continuity” (Bronfen 89). In death, Juliet remains liminal between fact and imagination, between her death in the play and Verona’s ownership of it. Her “timeless end” (5.3.162) threatens timelessly “whiles Verona by that name is known” (5.3.300). She haunts as both an ideal of (dead) feminine beauty immortalized and an inspiration of fascination and terror of female desires (in life). As a cautionary tale to all Juliets and Romeos within Verona and without in popular culture, “The dangerous woman as sexually alluring suggests a concern about following one’s desires too far” (Morris 99). As “the split-object of the spectator, who is both alluring and

dangerous . . . [spectators] are asked to notice the split within themselves and even momentarily, ask, what if? This "what if" ultimately corresponds to submitting to the Other within oneself" (Morris 106). Mirrored within Juliet's story is autonomous feminine identity grounded in desire as well as perpetual male anxiety. Her story, memorialized throughout time and patriarchal cultures ongoing continually "explore[s] anxiety about a woman's desire and jouissance" (Morris 106), which confirms death and desire ever bound in tension within the female.

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Spatializing Adolescence and Gender

for my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
(1.4.105)

The mixture and inversion of Verona's dichotomous volatile masculinity and vulnerable femininity in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* governs the tragic "star crossed" lovers (Prologue.6) and produces their demise. From the play's outset, Sampson and Gregory establishes Verona's masculine ethos where strength is experienced in external spaces measured in sexual bravado and violence (literal and figurative) with erotically charged tools of destruction: "My naked weapon is out. Quarrel!" (1.1.31). Verona's feminine ethos is established in two scenes: first, Lady Capulet functions as an emasculating figure ridiculing Capulet as he threatens to join the fight on the street saying, "A crutch, a crutch. Why call you for a sword?" (1.1.70). Next, from within the internal spaces of Capulet's house, Lady Capulet demonstrates her persuasively pragmatic mode of operation announcing, "We must talk in secret" (1.3.9) and proceeding to gauge Juliet's "dispositions to be married" (1.3.67). Thus, Verona's femininity threatens masculine external show of force by doubting male efficacy and finds success exercising power – even if subjected – in internal, "secret" places. These polarized genders are vulnerable to excessive displays of passion because of the violence on the streets. Ultimately, Veronese society insists on the interiority of passions and the exigency of eliminating men who exhibit it externally. This conflicting chaos infects the public and private places of Verona and lays the foundation upon which Romeo and Juliet will rise and fall.

Romeo and Juliet's adolescence, an age predisposed to excess desires, underscores the liminality and vulnerability of their forming identities within this polarized, chaotic system. Veronese adolescence aims to makes boys men through violence and sexual ownership, while girls, their desires denied and replaced with social duty, become women through birthing children. Their adolescence, then, marries the authoritarian violence of society with the extremity of their passionate rebellion – a commentary on Verona's proclivity to foster these chaotic, "violent delights" and tragic, "violent ends" (2.6.9). As members of the society they desire to rebel against, they are driven to pledge fealty to their conflicting desires. Creating their own internal, liminal place of existence, the characters demonstrate the inversion of their external gendered experiences in Verona. Romeo becomes an effeminate male, willfully submitting to Juliet's desires. Juliet, conversely, realizes her assertive agency and power to select her spouse, marry him, and consummate a marriage based on love and desire. Rebelling against Verona, its order and expectations, Romeo and Juliet fail in their external civil duties. By the play's end, their adolescence is not cured or facilitated, it is eliminated.

Principally, Verona is a society rife with violent threats and rampant fear of subordination between the respective feuding families of Montague and Capulet. Constant threats of attack, violent sex, and challenges to prove one's manhood are the prevailing and predominate activities. The opening exchange between two male Capulets centering on innuendos and puns highlight male social expectations. Sampson declares, "when I have / fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids. / I will cut off their heads" (1.1.19-21). Verona teaches men "to scorn women and to associate them with

effeminacy and emasculation, while it links sexual intercourse with aggression and violence against women, rather than pleasure and love" (Kahn 86). Youthful boys acquiesce to these standards by "defin[ing] their masculinity by violence" (Novy 100). Thus is the reality of Verona's patriarchal public: war, violence, lust, deception, order, rule, and control. The feud between Montague and Capulet becomes the "tragic force" serving as a "rite de passage that promotes masculinity at the price of life" (Kahn 84). Even if one does not directly participate in it, such as the character of Paris, one is still subject to it and potentially collateral damage (Kahn 100). Romeo's adolescent masculinity is sharply contrasted as he is in introduced not within the battle to establish dominance on the streets, but in isolation within the pains of unrequited love.

A defining characteristic of Romeo's youthfulness is his pursuit of love in Petrarchan terms which stands at odds with the masculine ethos of Verona. Against the misogynistic rhetoric of these external spaces, he expresses his frustration with Rosaline's rejection crying, "O brawling love, O loving hate" (1.1.170), placing love and hate on the same playing field as extensions of the same emotion: passion. He defines his attempt to woo her in these familiar Petrarchan terms positing love as a siege: "She will not stay the siege of loving terms, / Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes . . . when she dies, with beauty does her store" (1.1.206-10). Yet, his vivid and dramatic language suggests he embraces the passion and aggression of love poetry but fails to relish the spoils of Verona's siege against women. Conversely, Benvolio categorizes the pursuit of love as a game of target practice: "A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit," he teases. Romeo responds despondently, "She'll not be hit" (1.1.202). To revive him, Benvolio

says, “Be ruled by me: forget to think of her [Rosaline] . . . By giving liberty unto thine eyes; Examine other beauties” (1.1.219-22). Mercutio’s stance on love suggests his lamentable experience with Queen Mab who “presses them and learns them first to bear, / Making them women of good carriage” (1.4.90-2). When Benvolio chimes in, “This wind you talk of blows us from ourselves” (1.4.102), the group seems to acknowledge a universally internal and discordant value of passion, but ultimately affirms Verona’s standard of promoting male sexual violence and divorcing it from aspirations of romantic love. Passion for physical violence against one another in the streets is the remaining residue. Romeo is not converted and retains his version of love which Benvolio describes: “Blind is his love and best befits the dark” (2.1.33). In other words, Romeo’s love is an internal desire that is dangerously divergent from his external environment. Reconciling this value, too, is a “rite de passage.”

In a show of male solidarity, Romeo’s group invades the Capulet ball to teach Romeo how to “think thy swan a crow” (1.2.87). Their unified trespass upon Capulet’s public event, however, is yet another “rite de passage” opportunity of male adolescence. The difference in reception of this offense between Tybalt and Capulet suggests the rashness of male adolescence, its learned place of subjectivity to authority, but most of all, its constant sensitivity to attack. As Benvolio says to Romeo before the ball, “Tut, man, one fire burns out another’s burning” (1.2.45). Tybalt, a young member of the Capulet family, sees Romeo’s transgressive presence as an unforgiveable sin. He calls him a “villain” (1.5.63), orders, “Fetch my rapier, boy” (1.5.53), and invokes “the stock and honor of my kin, / To strike him dead I hold it not a sin” (1.5.56-7). Emboldened by

this opportunity to prove his machismo, Tybalt, who is also subject to the battle to establish his masculinity, is ridiculed by Capulet as a "goodman boy" (1.5.75). Capulet calls Tybalt a "princox" (1.5.84), a "saucy boy" (1.5.81), and threatens, "I'll make you quiet" (1.5.86) by reminding him, "Am I the master here or you?" (1.5.76). Tybalt, an immediately violent adolescent, and Capulet, an immediately dominant male figure, exhibit an identical masculine response: at once they are motivated to preserve themselves by threatening the "villain" of their manhood. Romeo, Capulet says, is "like a portly gentleman, / And, to say truth, Verona brags of him / To be a virtuous and well-governed youth" (1.5.54-6). But if Romeo's actions of subversion are tolerated and ignored by Capulet in this instance, it is an effort to establish his own superior masculinity allied with the masses over challengers. This superior masculinity, graduated from the vulnerability of petty street violence to vulnerability of dominance in title, respect, and authority, is a rank adolescent males must obey.

Like all Veronese men, Romeo roams the external spaces in Verona freely. His interactions with his peer group happen in the square just as all forms of justice for indignations between households. The streets become the place where masculinity is generated and effectuated; a place where young male adolescents chaotically converge, out of which order is continually reestablished. Mercutio, neither Montague nor Capulet, but liminal masculine byproduct of the feud, is particularly aggressive responding impulsively and proactively on the offensive. On the heels of declaring male sexual conquest as "lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole" (2.4.85), he acknowledges an approaching female, Juliet's Nurse, and greets her with sexual impudence. Chastising

her for simply being female, and thus fair game, in the market, Mercutio says, “A bawd, a bawd, a bawd! So ho!” (2.4.119). In this scene, particularly, Romeo and the Nurse identify with one another, aware of their own dissonance with such a destructive, external power dynamic. This also demonstrates Romeo’s comfortability with codeswitching. He meets Mercutio’s wit match for match, but in the presence of a female, he assumes his persona which Capulet defends to Tybalt. Similarly, when Tybalt threatens Romeo to a duel in the street, Mercutio immediately responds in kind. He fights for the masculinity of Romeo, courageously taking up his sword without a personal attack upon himself directly, because he recognizes Romeo’s, or any masculinity, is at stake. In these external spaces, it is male adolescents who learn to risk death and dying to prove their worth and power.

Prince Escalus, the ultimate masculine authority figure, declares such aggressors in the square “beasts” (1.1.77) with “mistempered weapons” (1.1.81) and “enemies of peace” (1.1.75), and like Capulet, simultaneously interrupts chaos and reasserts his ultimate masculinity and authority in its moment of challenge. He says, “If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of that peace” (1.1.90-1). His threat of violence for violence is of the same mantra, the same “rite de passage,” of all male adolescents. Though masculinity outwardly portrays force, violence, and desire for control and dominance, it makes Veronese men vulnerable: “a commitment to proving manhood by violence makes one easily manipulated by whoever offers a challenge . . . [In fact,] the code of violence that promises to make Romeo a man actually makes him its man – its pawn” (Novy 107). Successfully avenging Mercutio’s murder by (finally)

exercising his adolescent rage, Romeo, too, realizes, “Oh, I am fortune’s fool!” (3.1.133). Mercutio, who prefers violence as retribution, ultimately denounces the feud crying, “A plague o’ both your houses!” (3.1.103), realizing its proclivity for violence as his downfall. The Prince’s similar declaration is a recognition of Verona’s vulnerability to such chaos and his unsuccessful struggle to mitigate the feud’s permeating chaos. The feud’s persistence, even if periodically dispatched from the streets, fosters the development of Romeo and Juliet’s secret and internal world of rebellion, tragically subjected to and influenced by the persisting threat of external exposure.

While boys transition to manhood via combat and sexual pursuit and domination of women, girls come to womanhood through dutiful marriage and motherhood. Contrasted with external masculinity, feminine agency lies in her loyalty and dutiful subordination of her feminine will to masculine authority. Lady Capulet suggests the rewards of performing female duty as safety, security, money, legacy, even access to power by way of the union. Though feminine power in the external, public world is limited if substantive, the females in Verona leverage what they have in private. Lady Capulet’s strong sense of honor and duty within the Veronese code necessarily employs her to manipulate Juliet’s future to secure Capulet’s legacy – a legacy she defends and owns with rigor. The Nurse performs her duty to summon, present, and convince Juliet to marry Paris at the request of Lady Capulet. The Nurse’s extended explanation of her love of Susan and her husband, both deceased, and rearing Juliet is the evidence of her duties – the completion of which inspires her initial encouragement of Juliet’s pursuit of romantic love. Because Juliet does not have a peer group or anyone other than the Nurse

for counsel, she is vulnerable to her own dreams of love and its prescriptive duty. This inspires her abandonment of Veronese duty and transforms her into a dangerous agent of feminine desire.

Externally, feminine agency is limited, but restricted entirely in the case of adolescent Juliet who is kept always within increasingly internal spaces: her house, her room, her balcony, her tomb. Her only escape is to church, but even this requires permission as well as her continued submission: "Have you got leave to go to shrift today?" (2.5.66), "Having displeased my father, to Laurence's cell / to make confession and to be absolved" (3.5.232-3). The audience meets Juliet as she is called forth from the inner places of the Capulet's home to fulfill the "single purpose of her life, established at her birth" (Prusko 118). In the exchange between Lady Capulet and the Nurse, held "in secret" (1.3.9), Juliet learns it is her hour to experience the transition to womanhood, though it is "an hour that [she] dream[s] not of" [1.3.68]). Lady Capulet says, "Younger than you / Here in Verona, ladies of esteem / Are made already mothers. By my count, I was your mother much upon these years" (1.3.71-4). Lady Capulet, with the help and support of the Nurse, strategically veils the edict that Juliet is to marry Paris by seeking her "dispositions to be married" (1.3.67) and encouraging her to "examine every married lineament" (1.3.85) of her betrothed. Though she asks if Juliet can love Paris, her metaphor likening him to a book suggests her feminine duties are a learned position of obedience, composure, and restraint rather than of choice, passion, and possession. Gauging Juliet's disposition to marriage is Lady Capulet's dutiful formality: Juliet will marry Paris – her disposition is irrelevant though prompting her duty is essential. The

Nurse simply tells Juliet, “Women grow by men” (1.3.97), marriage performed for the purpose of legacy and childrearing leads from “happy nights to happy days” (1.3.107). Juxtaposing the Friar’s warning – “These violent delights have violent ends” (2.6.9) – reveals the dangerous threat of female passion on legacy and social order. It seems the whole house of Capulet and the Friar fear Juliet as the “infant rind” which has the potency and potential both as “poison” to destroy and “med’cine power” to heal (2.3.23-4).

Scheming, strategizing, conspiring, and deception do not take place in public; rather, they happen in private – and Lady Capulet is a dangerously effective agent. As scholar and professor Dr. Margueritte Tassi argues, “In the vivid streets scenes . . . male and female characters alike situate themselves in relation to feuding, some objecting and refusing to participate, others drawn into brandishing weapons to prove their manhood, and others inciting violent reprisals” (57). Lady Capulet, as the most authoritative female within Verona, is primarily concerned with “private means” applying her “angry voice of justice” in relation to Verona’s “revenge ethic” (Tassi 57). Her public and private function of “reminding the male authority of his ethical responsibilities” (Tassi 56) prevents Capulet from escalating the feud at the play’s beginning and reminds the Prince of his duty to rectify Tybalt’s death. She publicly appeals to the Prince: “I beg for justice, which thou, Prince, must give. / Romeo slew Tybalt; Romeo must not live” (3.1.177-8). Denied her justice, Lady Capulet consoles Juliet in private telling of her plans to avenge Tybalt’s death: “We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not . . . I’ll find such a man” (3.5.86-102). In effect, Lady Capulet’s efforts to rectify this injustice emphasizes the

interior domain of femininity as necessarily subversive and manipulative, though externally obedient and acquiescent. This complicates Juliet's inner conflict: she ultimately disobeys what she interprets as unjust obligations. When she meets Romeo, Juliet's lack of parental love and companionship primes the full awakening of her desire and inspires *her* response of justice, duty, and honor. Unlike Lady Capulet, Juliet is governed by her youthful desires. Both women embrace their definition of justice and duty powerfully.

Dissonance within Verona's gendered expectations is complicated by Romeo and Juliet's adolescence. Not only are they at vulnerable stages of selfhood and predisposed to emotional dramatics, but they are influenced and pressured by the family feud as they try to reconcile social expectations with their blooming desires for one another. Their adolescence is identified by the development of their romantic interests which "are associated with much emotional intensity and variability" (Davila et al. 161). The intensity of their growing passions for one another combined with "a lack of trust in the availability of the caregiver . . . [causes] low self-worth, and fear of rejection" (Davila et al. 162). In the external world, Romeo demonstrates this by his melancholic appearance and demeanor. Romeo's father describes him by saying, "Away from light steals home my heavy son, / And private in his chamber pens himself, / Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out" (1.1.138-41). The depressed adolescent "tend[s] to use hyperactivating strategies of emotion regulation, such as an excessive focus on relationships and relationship information, an excessive focus on attachment concerns, and excessive emotionality" (Davila et al. 163). The more outwardly depressed Romeo is, the more his

environmental division is evident, the more he is driven to seek relationships and attachment while displaying excessive outward emotions. Romeo will eventually let the light in as he conceptualizes Juliet as his sun. Juliet, however, displays nothing but obedience externally, though her disunity from her environment becomes increasingly apparent.

Romeo's preference for solitude at the play's opening mirrors Juliet's balcony soliloquy. Their established alienation from their parents and society is evident from the play's outset. Reflexively, lower levels of trust and communication are associated with higher levels of alienation (Davila et al. 165). The parents' attempt to raise obedient children within the ordered system of Verona divides their familial relationship further because the environment is not structured to facilitate adolescent connection:

> Instead of providing social channels and moral guidance by which the energies of youth can be rendered beneficial to themselves and society, the Montagues and the Capulets make weak gestures toward civil peace while participating emotionally in the feud as much as their children do. While they fail to exercise authority over the younger generation in the streets, they wield it selfishly and stubbornly in the home. (Kahn 85)

Idealizing obedience in Verona's society is the parents' best opportunity to keep their children alive; yet, as a result, Romeo and Juliet are compulsively, if not perversely, driven to one other which likewise accelerates their demise. The threat of familial opposition to and interference in relationships, serves to increase desire and encourage it the more (Driscoll et al. 1-2). The mere knowledge that Romeo and Juliet's relationship

would be forbidden; therefore, magnetizes them together with each lover withdrawing from their respective families and further into seclusion with one another. Conclusively, their adolescence becomes an accelerant of desire, rebellion, and passion revealing in each other the hope of love and acceptance fulfilling what they crave within their own households.

An adolescent tendency to draw inward suggests “they not only possess, but also work to conceal, inner selves” (Prusko 115). The lovers become more independent selves the more they conceal and deceive the external world. Though Romeo and Juliet seem chaotic and unreasonably dangerous to the Friar and Nurse, their internal world is ordered, reasoned, and governed by the self. The external world ruled by chaos including the “feud, patriarchy, and despotic parents,” further highlights “the teens’ shared, private narrative, consisting in secrets, lies, and confessions . . . [and] the incipient awareness of the play’s teens” (Prusko 114). The characters begin to self-regulate according to their own desires in direct contrast to the expectations of society. Both characters, emotionally open because of their external familial rejections, rationalize their secret, mutual love as their only conduit for self-actualization. At odds with their external circumstances and values, they create an internal world where their hope for agency lies. Though Verona idealizes a dualistic and polarized gendered society, Romeo and Juliet, driven to explore their interior selves within their private world, become inversely masculine and feminine in their behaviors. Their inverted gendered response within their private world predicts the tragic fragility, liminality, and impossibility of their sustained union externally.

The typical Shakespearean transition from boyhood to manhood is usually established first through war and second by women (Kahn 82). Romeo, however, does this in reverse by sexual consummation with Juliet first, violence second. Benvolio and Mercutio embrace masculine definitions of love agreeing, “If love be rough with you, be rough with love. / Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down” (1.4.27-8). Contrasted with his defeating experience with Rosaline, Romeo’s first glimpse of Juliet inspires him to idolize her and endeavor on a worthy, spiritual journey rather a warring, aggressive pursuit. His pilgrimage with his “unworthiest hand” (1.5.91) places Juliet in a position of worship, spatially above him as “the sun” (2.2.4) and on her balcony as a “bright angel” (2.2.26). She is not his enemy and as a lover, she is a reciprocating equal. Rather than a conquest for sexual domination, he views her as equally wounded: “Where on a sudden one hath wounded me / That’s by me wounded. Both our remedies / Within thy help and holy physic lies. / I bear no hatred, blessed man, for, lo, / My intercession likewise steads my foe” (2.3.50-4). As Romeo falls in love with Juliet, he exhibits effeminate love and wholly rejects the feud’s reciprocities of violence and murder saying, “Doth grace for grace and love for love allow” (2.3.86). Instead, he expresses his desire and acknowledgment of ideal, reciprocal love saying, “Unfold the imagined happiness that both / Receive in either by this dear encounter” (2.6.28-9). Love is no longer a “mark” but an injury; no longer primarily concerned with sexual union but to respect her beauty and honor her with marriage. Romeo defies the social expectation of masculine superiority, sexual violence, and dominance and embraces equally reciprocal effeminate love.

Romeo’s initial private confession to Juliet that he would refuse his name, his house, and his essence to be with her (2.2.51), progresses into a public betrayal of the very masculinity Mercutio defends mercilessly. Tybalt, enraged by Romeo’s bold trespass against the Capulet’s ball, publicly challenges the masculinity of Romeo and his group saying, “Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo” (3.1.42). The term “consort” referring both to a “menial servant” or a “’sodomitical’ relationship” (DiGangi 180), threatens Romeo and Mercutio’s masculinity and social standing. Benvolio, who previously identified with Romeo’s initial melancholy, responds advocating to “withdraw unto some private place” (3.1.48), but is unsuccessful to facilitate peace. As Romeo’s cousin, he understands the requirement and price of defending one’s masculinity, and as such, prefers to avoid confrontation and adhere to social rules of order. For him, passions are best avoided altogether. Mercutio, however, draws his sword prepared to defend masculine honor. Romeo, on the other hand, responds to Tybalt’s accusation of being a “villain” (3.1.58) aiming to usurp his aggression with love saying, “the reason I have to love thee / Doth much excuse the appertaining rage . . . I do protest I never injured thee, / But love thee better than though canst devise” (3.1.60-6). Romeo fails in his attempt to assert his feminized love within Verona’s masculine space and predefined masculine relationships. Ultimately, he tragically recognizes what effeminate love costs him with the death of Mercutio. He laments, “O sweet Juliet, / They beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper softened valor’s steel” (3.1.110-12). Romeo, in his passionate revenge, pursues the life of Tybalt with a feminized fury to reclaim masculine honor.

Juliet's insidious femininizing effect including a strong sense of justice and honor on Romeo ignites the play's tragic ending. At the death of Mercutio and Tybalt, Romeo's inverted, internal gendered difference becomes more and more public. Romeo's emotional reaction to his banishment unsettles the Friar, and he questions Romeo's manhood saying, "Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art; / Thy tears are womanish. Thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a beast. / Unseemly woman in a seeming man" (3.3.108-12). Additionally, the Nurse recognizes both Romeo and Juliet respond to the news the same way:

> Oh, he is even in my mistress' case,
>
> Just in her case. O woeful sympathy,
>
> Piteous predicament! Even so lies she,
>
> Blubb'ring and weeping, weeping and blubb'ring
>
> –Stand up, stand up. Stand, an you be a man.
>
> For Juliet's sake, for her sake, rise and stand.
>
> Why should you fall into so deep an O? (3.3.84-90)

As Romeo lay on the floor, exposed as an effeminate man, the Nurse begs him to "Stand, up, stand up. Stand, an' you be a man / For Juliet's sake" (3.3.88-9) which is understood as a hope for his masculine composure infused with sexual innuendo referring to Verona's prescribed principles. Tragically, Romeo, as an effeminate man, is arrested within the internal space of the Friar's cell amid the external world's expectations having failed to defend his masculinity with his love. This event not only provides the turning

event of the play and Romeo's struggle to reconcile his effeminate self but also reveals the masculinity budding within Juliet.

Though she attends the ball with the obedience of a child, she leaves it with the defiance of an adolescent on the cusp of adulthood. When she encounters Romeo, she explodes into limerence and becomes magnetically aware of her possibilities and desires. Juliet's immediate recognition that "My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (1.5.133) as Romeo exits, marks her budding understanding of passion's currency and price. Her later counsel with herself and response to Romeo's trespass is chaotic but rife with evidence of her grasp of the game's terms. She seeks private counsel with herself on her balcony, her innermost space, and freely says to the darkness around her, "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" (2.2.34-6). This secret thought, shared with the night, expresses her desire to subvert the entire social order of Verona as she pledges, "take all myself" (2.2.48). Juliet explores the strength of her desire within her internal space, but her recognition of its fragility and limitations, as well as Romeo's death if he were discovered, "they will murder thee" (2.2.70), establishes her embrace of aggressive rebellion. Suddenly, and by storm, she admits her passion, demands his verbal testament to his own, and arranges their marriage committing to "follow thee my lord throughout the world" (2.2.148). She recognizes the space to which she is relegated, but her desire emboldens her to subvert, deceive, and verbalize it. Her immediacy speaks to her primary function as an agent of desire: "But passion lends them power" (Prologue.13).

Juliet's growth in response to her awakened desire reveals a more masculine than feminine assertiveness. As Juliet awaits her wedding night, she speaks of their exchange both in masculine and financial terms: sexual consummation is a "winning match", her sexual climax is death, their relationship is a transaction relating the purchase and enjoyment of "the mansion of love," and she equates herself with "an impatient child that hath new robes" (3.2.12-30). Her imagery suggests she knows the terms of the game, that she has met a worthy opponent, and is proof of her refusal to go without enjoying it. As most male characters previously related love and sex with a violent game of domination, Juliet attacks Romeo with violence understanding she could "kill thee with much cherishing" (2.2.189). Likewise, she is preoccupied with his death, obsessed over removing him from external society, removing his name, and denying his affiliation. At his departure, she challenges fortune to "send him back" to her (3.5.62). This exchange makes clear Juliet's possession of Romeo, his existence to please her both sexually and as a companion, and her rejection of anything that presents itself as an obstacle to her happiness including the sun, the lark, and eventually her Nurse and social position. In essence, she rejects her previously subordinate, feminine life with the same vehemence Romeo decrees at the death of Mercutio.

Where masculinity in the external, public world is violent and dangerous, the effeminate love of the internal, private world proves likewise deadly as it requires external risk and is denied sustained existence. Publicly, as Sampson says at the beginning of the play, "women, being the weaker vessel, are ever thrust to the wall" (1.1.14-5). But inside the formation of their internal world, it is Romeo who is thrust to

Juliet's wall. He recognizes her as his "center" (2.1.2), suggesting a gravitational pull suspending him and drawing him to her. Transcending her external boundaries, risking death, he trespasses into her garden where she is seeking her own internal counsel, at a time when she is at her most vulnerable. As is Romeo. She responds surprised at his ability to reach her despite the wall and immediately questions his honor: "What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night, / So stumbles on my counsel?" (2.2.52-3). Within the darkness of this primordial space, she questions who he is, and he responds, "I know not how to tell thee who I am" (2.2.54). Romeo is losing familiarity with the external world while Juliet is not familiar with sharing hers. This combined discovery is a combined recognition of their vulnerability which fuels their desires, emboldens Juliet's autonomy, and unites them in the creation of their own private world. Together, they embark on their pilgrimage into her most private thoughts and desires willingly and passionately.

Both Romeo and Juliet's gendered behaviors within this space are inverted from the external streets of Verona and the expressions of their individual, internal selves. Juliet's metaphor establishing herself as the falconer calling out to "lure this tassel-gentle back again" (2.2.162) indicates her existent, even if previously silent, aspiration for autonomy. Her reserved response to his suggestive invitation at the ball does not discourage him ("Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake" [1.5.103]) but indicates her lack of autonomy to assert and obtain her desire in the external world – not its nonexistence. Her sexual desire awakened in this space exposes her depth and intention of possession: "Bondage is hoarse and may not speak aloud, / Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies, / And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine / With

repetition of 'My Romeo!'" (2.2.163-5). She recognizes the silence her parents' house requires both to secure her safety in this moment, but also in all her previous moments. In their private world, however, Juliet embraces her power through action and expression. Romeo consents and submits. Notably, Juliet does not desire Romeo's submission; rather, "she insists on her sharing of his humanity" (Novy 102). Refusing and betraying the external, insufficient and vulnerable masculine world, Romeo and Juliet refuse "to reify names and words that carry such weight in their community [which] contributes to the play's destabilizing of youthful identity" (Prusko 129). No longer a Capulet nor a Montague, their internal, private world provides the opportunity to likewise shed external expectations, and instead encourage gender fluidity helping them attain precisely what they lack agency to achieve in Verona.

Desperate to retain possession of Romeo, Juliet renders all, offering to "follow thee my lord throughout the world" (2.2.148) and relinquishing her own name as Capulet. She endeavors to stay in this dreamlike world of possibility which provides a completeness to both their emerging, adolescent identities. Just as Romeo seized her hand at the Capulet ball, Juliet returns the same anxious, assertive power in declaring her love for him and organizing their marriage. Juliet's assertiveness, traditionally masculinized, boldly allows her to voice her desires, arrange her own marriage, and await her wedding night in increasing anticipation. Though Juliet is cautiously aware their union is "too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, / Too like the lightning which doth cease to be" (2.2.118-9), "Romeo never distrusts her" (Novy 99). He accepts her declaration of love, her proposal, and submits to her desire making her his equal, if not superior, match.

While Juliet is awakened within the bounds of this internal world, Romeo remains suspended on “love’s light wings” (2.2.66). Their progression to this climactic self-developed point exposes the intense passion and its inevitable demise.

Juliet draws a sense of strength, awareness, and courage from their internal, private world. Her desire emerges alongside her autonomy and will, though the order of Verona is founded on her realizing neither. Her union with Romeo in this secret, but tragically temporary space produces a powerful Juliet, and conversely, an effeminate Romeo. For him, drawing inward results in emasculation, and consequently, his effeminate, external choices result in his external banishment. During his banishment, a fate worse than death (3.3.43), he dreams of Juliet who raises him to life as an emperor. This time it is Romeo who shares his inner dreams as Juliet did on her private balcony:

> If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep,
> My dreams presage some joyful news at hand.
> My bosom’s lord sits lightly in his throne,
> And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.
> I dreamed 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.
> Ah me! How sweet is love itself possessed
> When but love’s shadows are so rich in joy. (5.1.1-11)

During Romeo's banishment, his removal from Verona, he dreams of being reunited with Juliet. What he lost in the external world he regains in the imaginary. She revives him with her kisses, and he imagines himself an emperor. Death, the inversion of life, presents the opportunity for an afterlife. Upon the news of her death, he cries, "I defy you stars!" (5.1.24) and returns to Verona, to his reunion with Juliet in death. Once again, Romeo transcends barriers and defies the order of his banishment to seek her in the name of love. Conversely, Juliet puts herself to sleep externally in Verona to awaken within her internal tomb, her womb, the "detestable maw" which will consume and unite them. Their beautifully tragic inverted world requires their deaths, in defiance of the patriarchal order that surrounds them, and as members of the violent society they wish to subvert. Tragically yet successfully, "they are consumed and destroyed by the feud and . . . rise about it, united in death" (Kahn 99). Their unity locates Romeo entombed within Juliet's tomb eternally, and Juliet with the last evidence of Rome's masculinity placed inside her, his figurative sheath.

The arrangement of Juliet's marriage reveals the primary effort to prevent Juliet from making her own decisions or realizing the inherent power of her passion to the detriment of patriarchal Verona. Juliet, aware of the expectations and limitations of her femininity, vehemently opposes the denial of her passion the way Mercutio fatally defends his masculinity. Unable to accept the threat against her passion's possession of Romeo, she agrees to the Friar's sleeping potion as means to escape Verona in victorious external rebellion. Outside of her tomb, and within Verona, the site of least control for her, is the space most opposed to her being. Juliet's fear of madness in her tomb locates

her unfamiliarity with possessing the full scope and capacity of her passion, her innermost power. Her tomb, her private and innermost space, remains a place of equal solitude and dispossession should she wake without her passion's prize. Sadly, when she wakes to Romeo's dead body, her moment of triumphant external rebellion becomes the truth of her wedding bed. Grabbing Romeo's dagger, rather than her "forefathers' joints" (4.3.52), in her purest moment of external defiance, she exclaims, "O happy dagger / This is thy sheath. There rust and let me die" (5.3.169-70). In this choice, she is utterly in control and lucid, and executes her rebellion – embracing it passionately and powerfully.

Together, they successfully formed a private world where their love persisted albeit "too like the lightning" (2.2.119). Their private world "precariously remedies the defects of the larger one – its coldness, its hierarchies, its violence – but the lovers cannot negotiate recognition by the outer world except by their deaths because of their residual commitment to the outer world and its gender ideals" (Novy 109). Effeminate Romeo and masculine Juliet are inextricably linked and subject to external reality. Their "failure to transcend the gender polarization of their society makes disaster inevitable" (Novy 108). In the end, Verona's foundational values are as Mercutio recounts as he tries to teach Romeo saying, "Why, is not this better than groaning for love? / Now art thou sociable. Now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art – by art as well as by nature, for / this driveling love is like a great natural that runs / lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole" (2.4.81-5). Society's prescription of gendered expectations – external, masculine dominance and internal, feminine subjugation – cannot be rebelled against or inverted

sustainably. Like the internal, feminine domain, private spaces are fragile and vulnerable and subject to masculine superiority.

The balcony scene, effectively their marriage ceremony complete with vows, truths, and commitment, and their subsequent consummation inevitably means external reality requires reconciliation imminently. Once committed internally, both Romeo and Juliet confess their crimes of love and desire to one another, to the Nurse, and the Friar, all notably within internal spaces: "In the private space of the Friar's cell, Romeo and Juliet speak freely and lay bare their interior selves" (Prusko 123). Confessing externally what they hide internally, though, should absolve them; but tragically, it condemns them. External circumstances begin to invade their interior spaces and destabilize them: Tybalt's murder and Romeo's banishment; Lady Capulet's knock at Juliet's door the morning after her wedding night; Juliet's rushed marriage to Paris and her Nurse's betrayal. Their internal world remains subject to their external demands and the corresponding spaces that enabled them to become perverted and unstable: Juliet's bedroom becomes the site of their sexual consummation and familial betrayal; the Friar's cell, the site of previous safety becomes harbor to dangerous, subversive plans, and later, Juliet's tomb, the site of peace, becomes the site of violence and marriage consummated in blood. Ultimately, their internal world bleeds back into the external. Enmeshed in love, secret, power, and violence, both Romeo and Juliet find existence only in death.

The feud in Verona is "tragically self-destructive" as a "permanent invitation to and outlet for violence" (Kahn 84-85). It is their feud that drives the youth of Verona to death. Indeed, as Friar Laurence warns, "These violent delights have violent ends"

(2.6.9). Not only in the passionate case of Romeo and Juliet, but in Tybalt, Mercutio, Paris, and all surviving members of Verona including the houses of Montague and Capulet. Both Romeo and Juliet die by the methods Verona would consider just revenge. Their sacrifices of themselves concludes the feud "in a most sobering and ironic fashion, when the youngest generation of the warring houses turn the weapons of revenge upon themselves" (Tassi 57). Romeo takes the poison Lady Capulet would arrange to kill him while he was banished in Mantua; Juliet stabs herself with Romeo's previously "softened valor's steel" (3.1.112) as the "happy dagger" (5.3.169). Their greatest defiance becomes their union in death.

If Verona is self-destructive, Romeo and Juliet are the products of its "fatal loins" (Prologue.5) living and dying by the unforgiving terms they unforgivingly subvert. Aptly, the play, opening upon the chaotic, public streets of Verona, ends with the internal space of Juliet's tomb, the site of life and death within the figurative maternal womb. Spatializing gender within Veronese context exposes the polarized expectations of external, authoritative masculinity and private, yet potent femininity which are at once inextricably linked and at odds with one another. Adolescence, the instigating element of passion, desire, and rebellion, inspires the creation of Romeo and Juliet's private, internal world. Concealing, subverting, and challenging the systematic order, their world is vulnerable and tragically temporary. Within their contextual world of passion, they exhibit inverted gendered behaviors in the pursuit and defense of their union. Juliet finds her autonomy; Romeo finds his love. Their adolescence, however, paralyzes the lovers' ability to transcend their external realities. Romeo and Juliet's love, rebellion, and gender

inversion, illustrated in spaces, inspires a reading of the lovers as “star crossed” (Prologue.6) because they dare to “take their life” (Prologue.6) in defiance of Verona’s expectations.

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The “fatal loins” of Popular Culture (Re)Producing Juliet

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean
(Prologue.4-5)

Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* exposes the feminine as abject, abhorred, and internalized to such extremity that feminine death is society’s desired result. Realizing Juliet as the constellation of Shakespeare’s play exposes the patriarchal system she operates in and reinforces the need for critical and cultural readings that subvert such a system. However, much like the Petrarchan “sonneteering tradition” that preceded and inspired Shakespeare, Juliet has since been “translated into something different” because she has been “subjected to excessive repetition” (Fineman 188-9). Failing to recognize the strength and agency Shakespeare affords Juliet by deeming her a victim of tragic circumstances promotes an implicit cultural idealization of a misinterpreted and recycled Juliet. Such a (mis)reading idealizes Juliet’s abjection preferring her silence, subjugation, and subdual. Tragically, various and incessant misinterpretations of this Juliet within the cultural system that dominates her reinforces a system, both historically and perpetually, with an inherent desire for her punishment and death. Or worse, a system that doesn’t acknowledge her at all. What Shakespeare resisted through Juliet, is idealized today through increasingly “fatal loins” (Prologue.5).

As western cultures change and evolve over time, so, too, the interpretations of the quintessential tale of ill-fated love. Analyzing popular representations of the “star-crossed lovers” by Franco Zeffirelli (1968), Baz Luhrmann (1996), and Simon Goodwin (2021), demonstrates how because “R&J [are] doing the work of culture” (Callaghan

107), the abhorred and internalized Juliet and the violent, but justified Romeo are idealized by the audiences that consume them. Zeffirelli's production prioritizes Juliet's perspective but diminishes her intense desire and desperation forcing her to remain in an internalized and subordinate place. Mere decades later, Luhrmann produces a film so preoccupied with Romeo, Juliet is not only minimized but silenced and diminished altogether. Goodwin's film, an admirable example reviving Shakespeare's Juliet, reduces instances of violent masculinity, translates, and transfers it disappointingly onto Lady Capulet, who represents the modern abhorrent female (i.e., powerful, rich, manipulative, deceptive, dangerous, and fiercely un-maternal) who impels the play's tragic events. The evolution of these retellings reflects the many pop culture references of Romeo and Juliet present outside the bounds of Shakespeare's play which continue to influence western ideals of femininity, masculinity, and romantic love, no matter when the story is retold.

Zeffirelli's film *Romeo & Juliet* was filmed in 1968 during the height of the Vietnam war and the 2nd wave of feminism. Though a period-piece, his adaptation is influenced culturally to prioritize Juliet's vantage point as she processes adolescence and attempts to acclimate her femininity within Verona's violent social structure. In this way, Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection is most apparent in Zeffirelli's production where Juliet is chronically forced to reconcile the external demands of social compliance at odds with her internal discordant autonomy. Ultimately, her choice to rebel against social expectations becomes a choice to embrace society's abjection completing her process of self-development as separated and removed from society. The camera is particularly captivated with Juliet's reconciliation of her sexual awakening and her obedience to

secure the Capulet legacy. Her adolescent chaos is depicted in several scenes, while the depth of her sexual awakening and application remains superficial or otherwise omitted. In other words: she remains internalized and controlled while society remains negligibly beyond reproach and responsibility. Omissions to Romeo's experience likewise absolves the diseased masculinity, the "fatal loins" (1.1.5) responsible for producing them both.

Initially, Zeffirelli's Juliet emerges on the screen, young and obedient. Her child-like innocence is captured by extreme close-ups as her Nurse uses overtly sexual language to tease a shocked Juliet. The Nurse, explicitly sexual and continually speaking out-of-turn, juxtaposed with a shocked Juliet and a repulsed and annoyed Lady Capulet, is evidence of the audience's abjection of such verbalized recognition of the feminine social role. Positioned in the scene between her crude Nurse and her authoritative and snobbish mother, Juliet becomes the recipient and focus of the tension. Both Lady Capulet and the Nurse experience pressure and discomfort just as the audience experiences it watching a 13-year-old Juliet (a casted 15-year-old Olivia Hussey) propositioned for marriage knowing she is both unaware and unable to exercise her desire or will.

No longer a girl, but a woman available for marriage, Juliet is surrounded at the Capulet ball with imagery of "lavish displays of fruit and wine; warmly lit archways; rich fabrics, and Juliet's red dress as central focus, [which] all connote a feminine softness that alludes to the 'ripeness' of Juliet's impending sexuality" (Scott 138). Romeo watches behind his mask as the camera follows Juliet as she dances with her hands held up inviting many on the dance floor to accept her invitation. As both Romeo and Juliet

become more fully aware of their mutual attraction, the music and dancers speed up, the camera becomes a blur of faces, spinning Juliet out of the circle and out into the inner courtyard of the Capulet's house. Recovering from a dizzy spell, representative of her internal disorientation, she looks over her shoulder as if beckoning Romeo to approach her. When this fails, she returns inside, aware of her desire and the limitations of its expression. Importantly, she remains on the outside of the spectator circle without access or agency to enter it and no way to approach Romeo externally.

Demonstrating her desire to meet her limerent love object, Juliet looks up and examines another woman on the outside of the circle. She appears beautiful, elegant, and proper. Juliet's facial expression connotes slight frustration which suggests her growing awareness of an outward appearance at odds with the truth of her internal, conflicting desire. When Romeo approaches her, and pulls her behind the curtain, an important superimposition happens with the camera: "The intense close-up marks the attachment of the viewer's gaze and Juliet's internal thoughts: it is not Romeo who is looking at Juliet and registering her desiring look at this point, but the spectator, as Romeo is shown to be standing behind her in the previous shot" (Scott 138). The viewer becomes a part of their adolescent love process, possessing Romeo's suggested desire as indicated by Juliet's awareness of her newfound sexual desire. Both characters experience this adolescent stage as a defining part of their combined self-development, but because the audience is linked to Juliet's experience, her desires are received and coopted by the audience.

Zeffirelli uses the camera to capture Juliet's reactions throughout her evolving individuation. Juliet's inward conflict continues as she rushes back into the courtyard she

chaotically entered a few scenes prior. Voices call for Romeo outside the Capulet walls. She hesitates. Her Nurse calls from offscreen as she looks in the direction of a lighted staircase ascending from the dark courtyard. She hesitates. The voice from within grows louder and more aggressive. She submits to a final, authoritative “Juliet!” running up the stairs still glancing behind her, tempted. She must again answer the call to her duty when on her balcony with Romeo. The camera finds her as Romeo emerges from the garden below. The audience and Romeo trespass into the internal space of Juliet’s mind. He hesitates. After hearing her confession of love and her proposal of equal sacrifices of each other’s names, they embrace. As if an internal warning, the Nurse calls her again from within. Juliet answers the call returning to Romeo, is called again, again returns admitting she forgot why she called him back already. The process to abandon her name and duties has begun.

Though Zeffirelli offers insight into Juliet’s internal chaos and desire for separation, his film fails to fully implicate society because he omits important parts of Juliet’s selfhood. Juliet’s famous “Gallop apace” soliloquy (3.2.1-31), for example, is excluded from the film and is replaced with the naked breast of a 15-year-old Olivia Hussey. The wedding bed scene, an addition to Shakespeare’s play, portrays female passion as an objectified, silent, naked woman. This addition reaffirms the discomfort and disgust with Juliet’s agency to verbalize her desire, as evidenced earlier with the Nurse, and instead offers her naked body for evidence and consumption. Though scholar Lindsey Scott argues the omission of her soliloquy is satisfied by the camera’s "gendered spaces that mark the awakening of carnal desire” (Scott 138), these “spaces” remain

evidence of male domination both through silent females and accessibility to her body. Likewise, the morning after their marriage is consummated, Juliet begs Romeo to stay by speaking directly to the camera. The audience is now an additional recipient of such invitation to her bed and body. When Romeo returns to her bed, it is only when her passion is suggestively reawakened that she realizes Romeo must leave before he is caught and killed. Her desire becomes her warning of danger. The depth of her desire is restricted and denied its capacity. Without the inclusion of Juliet's ability to embrace and articulate the passion she feels, the complexity of female desire is eliminated.

Such omission happens again at the Friar's cell, where Zeffirelli eliminates the extremity of Juliet's desperation. He eliminates all language expounding upon the depth of her grief where she desires and threatens death: "And with this knife I'll help it presently . . . this shall slay them both . . . Give me some present counsel, or, behold, / 'Twixt my extremes and me this bloody knife / Shall play the umpire, arbitrating" (4.1.54-88). He likewise eliminates her preference for living among "dead men's rattling bones, / With reeky shanks and yellow, chapless skulls" (4.1.82-3) than to live and marry Paris. The camera instead becomes Juliet's perspective as she listens to the Friar as she quietly accepts his plan reminiscent of her obedience to attend the Capulet ball to examine her betrothed, Paris.

In refusing to grant Juliet the strength and agency she has in Shakespeare's text, Zeffirelli impedes the audience's ability to fully condemn Verona society. Shakespeare's text, however, powerfully charges Juliet with verbal agency, fierce grief, and retributory violence. As Bigliazzi and Nigri explain:

> Her *voice* troublingly betrays nuances of a masochistic wish of self-annihilation as a paradoxical self-inflicted punishment for bereavement, and strangely resounds male fantasies of female rape similar to those we have heard in Sampson's opening sexist and bawdy lines . . . Evidently Juliet too is part of the culture of male violence and sexist aggressiveness rooted in Verona, and her being 'spoken' by that discourse shows how deeply and subtly discursive models shape also her own imaginings. (176; emphasis added)

Silencing her grief and desperation enables and excuses the Friar's concoction of a devious plan. Rather than implicate him for his participation in their scheme, Zeffirelli's film absolves him and isolates the tragedy to Romeo and Juliet, not their society. Through Juliet's bed curtain we watch her take the Friar's potion after she prays in solitude, "Love, give me strength" (Zeffirelli) – a line Juliet says directly to the Friar in Shakespeare's text. Zeffirelli, again eliminates and replaces the scene, to Juliet's detriment, where she expresses her inward fears of the Frair's ill intention to poison her, and of her waking alone in her tomb: "Environed with all these hideous fears, / And madly play with my forefathers' joints, /. . . And, in this rage . . . dash out my desp'rate brains?" (4.3.49-53). Without her passion and fear of death and conspiracy verbalized, the system is less menacing and less implicated, and Juliet is less powerful, less aware of her tragic choice.

Zeffirelli likewise omits some important experiences for Romeo, but these omissions serve his benefit. Romeo's murder of Paris outside Juliet's tomb is removed

from the film. In this scene, Scott argues Zeffirelli may be "marginalizing the patriarchal discourse" by also omitting "Romeo's speech [which] lingers on castration anxiety, and his 'entrance' of the tomb is verbally constructed as a violent and bloody metaphorical rape . . . [where] Romeo and Paris must assert their phallic weapons before Romeo enters the tomb" (Scott 140). In the omission of Shakespeare's text which "[draws] attention to aspects such as the toothed entrance and the bloodstained passage, female erotic power is simultaneously abhorred and controlled through the play's imagery" (Scott 140). Minimizing masculinity, Scott argues, instead "enhances Juliet's sexual agency and the autonomy of her suicide with the dagger" (Scott 140-1). Rather, Zeffirelli removes the need to critically examine Verona's patriarchal masculinity as a source and root cause of the problem. Where "Zeffirelli constructs a space that holds Juliet's unconscious body as its central focus" (Scott 139), these scene omissions coupled with the beauty of Juliet's tomb idealize a dead female. It prefers, instead, scenes figuring Romeo as a hero (by attempting to make amends with Tybalt) and not a vengeful murderer (of Paris), as well as glorifies a tomb in which women are beautifully silent in sleep, as statues, or dead. Even Scott recognizes Juliet's tomb as the domain of the female:

> Spatially, the tomb's domain is inherently female: an early shot of Romeo and Balthasar arriving outside the church is dominated by the dark arches of the entrance gates and the tomb's arched doorway; a statue of a mother holding her child guards its entrance and is frequently in shot as Romeo breaks open the doors. (Scott 139-40)

As Romeo "stands over Juliet's body in long-shot" (Scott 140), Juliet resembles a saint worthy of prayer and praise reminiscent of their initial meeting where Romeo says to her, "Then move not while my prayer's effect I take" (1.5.104). Juliet, immovable out of virtue earlier, remains perpetually immovable in death, perpetually available for male desire. The camera, looking up at her from Romeo's stance at her feet, idealizes her as a silent, dead saint to the audience.

After Romeo's sins are purged upon Juliet's sanctified corpse, he toasts the poison to her, drinks, and dies having thus taken back his sin again (1.5.108). The camera cuts to Juliet's waking hand balled into a fist. At Zeffirelli's last opportunity to restore any agency to Juliet, he chooses to offer a confused and shocked Juliet at the sight of Romeo's dead body. She refuses to vacate the tomb, though not with defiance, but out of an inability to immediately process and assess the situation before her. It is the noise of the watchmen approaching that hastens her decision to stab herself and makes her choice less violent and more reactionary. Her choice of Romeo's tool to kill herself does more to suggest her desperation to avoid answering for her choices than it does a willful violent desire for union with Romeo in death. Ultimately, Zeffirelli refuses her the voice and action to match her inner awareness and power and denies the audience insight and understanding of her capacity for such violence and passion. Rather than give her agency consistent with her desire for Romeo, he internalizes her, softens her violence and showcases her defeat. Unfortunately, where Zeffirelli had the opportunity to empower Juliet, his interpretation instead enforces her abjection rather than rightly accuse Verona of its facilitation of these deaths.

If Zeffirelli is guilty of making Juliet "abject" by omission, Luhrmann's Juliet is violently jettisoned from society. In his 1996 interpretation of Shakespeare's story, "Luhrmann's film creates a pop version of Verona that not only questions the traditional interpretation of the play, but also alters and re-frames the way audiences cognize *Romeo and Juliet*" (Balizet 126). Rife with the 90s teenage grunge and anti-authority attitude, Luhrmann's is a culturally appropriate nihilistic presentation: Romeo and Juliet are doomed to die carrying "the aesthetics of salvation but not the purpose . . . both without a world [they care] to save" (Balizet 126). Replacing swords with guns and lavishly ornate courts with gaudy, superficial and gluttonous households, Luhrmann's "film tends to confirm a 'no hope' reading . . . a genuine symptom of a generation's anxieties" (White 23). Neither Zeffirelli's nor Luhrmann's film suggest the feud is over, nor that their deaths are apt payment. Simply sacrificing the star-crossed lovers "[puts] aside the notion of doomed love . . . replacing it with an unfair expectation of civic redemption" (Balizet 126). Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet are similar to Shakespeare's characters because they are products of a society they cannot, and likely will not, save. Against a backdrop of a diseased and murderous society, audiences perceive Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet as two preternaturally innocent figures. Stratified within Luhrmann's approach is a preference for a tragic Romeo over a chronically lost and unremarkable Juliet.

The audience is introduced to the story through a modern-day news update. The news anchor begins the story as both "print headlines or graphic poster art, further fragmented through flash edits and slammed at viewers" (Hodgdon 130). The viewer is similarly introduced to Juliet after much chaos within Verona city limits has already

happened. Through quick edits, sped-up frames, and close-ups of half-naked Lady Capulet frantically searching the house demanding Juliet's presence, the frame cuts to a close-up of an already naked Juliet submerged in her bathtub. The Nurse stomps through her disheveled room full of clothing, stuffed animals, toys, and figures of the Virgin Mary. Whether the women's calls force Juliet out of her submersion or she decides against drowning, Luhrmann presents Juliet's teenage turmoil: she is mute, floating, somewhat lifeless, and yet sexualized, until she reluctantly appears by apparent conjuring of the women of the house. Juliet's presence rails against the pace, loudness, and violence of the film: "Unlike Hussey, Danes's Juliet is a picture of *stillness,* a body frequently lost in the frantic pace and 'movement' of Luhrmann's film" (Scott 141). Composed against this backdrop, Luhrmann's Juliet is the melancholic figure of numb, agentless awareness, while Romeo, introduced earlier, is pensive, beautifully tragic, romantically inviting and distracting to audiences who anticipate hearing him speak but are temporarily and tantalizingly denied.

Luhrmann's Juliet consistently appears "Lost in the apparent chaos of the Capulet household . . . overshadowed by the impact of her mother's dramatic entrance" (Scott 142). The close-ups of her facial expressions suggest she understands and resents the social expectation before her more than Zeffirelli's Juliet. Though she is likewise obedient, she appears so in a subversive way. Juliet's eyes remain empty as she talks with her mother hinting at disdain. In this way, she seems to embody the ultimate teenager: annoyed by her parents and authority, wishing to be rid of them, enduring them, though rebellion hangs temptingly behind her words and actions. Pushed and shoved into her

mother's closet (literally and figuratively), Lady Capulet rolls her eyes annoyed at the reality of being alone, intimate, and honest with Juliet. Likewise annoyed, Juliet rolls her eyes as her mother calls her Nurse back to the room for moral support. Once the Nurse is safely inside, she shows Juliet *Timely* magazine, "the precious book of love" (1.3.89), where she will examine the prescribed social rules for securing her future (and theirs). Her mother shares, "[Paris] seeks you for his love," which removes the archaic focus on marriage and children and posits it as a strategic match materialistically and socially. Both Lady Capulet and the Nurse focus entirely on his wealth and his physical appearance. The Nurse, though likewise annoyed by Lady Capulet's grotesque opulence, remains aloof as she prioritizes her place within the household. The omission of her stories of young Juliet, other than to emphatically remind her that "women grow by men," removes her status as a Nurse-mother. Instead, she participates in Lady Capulet's scheming as she sits next to Juliet eyeing her expression of understanding. If Juliet truly understands herself within the power structure of Luhrmann's Verona, then she must embrace an inherent, internal desire for escape or rationalize female desire as disgusting, calculated, and fake.

Danes' Juliet remains silent with a bland expression watching her grotesque mother (her future self) gazing at herself in the mirror. As she looks to her mother with disgust and disappointment, she is repulsed by the model of female glamour, power, and status under this system (so is the audience). After Lady Capulet's best effort to sell her daughter on this scheme, she demands Juliet's response with perturbation. Juliet responds obediently and flatly; she will attend the ball to examine Paris, but a hint in her flat

expression suggests she says what she knows her mother wants to hear. Later, when she pulls Romeo into the elevator it will be clear her words were as calculated and veiled as her mother's. Her mother rolls her eyes at Juliet's consent, stamps out her cigarette in annoyance, pauses in the doorway to say, "Juliet!", in relentless disgust and annoyance. This time, Juliet does not respond. Nonetheless, the scene ends with a curious Juliet smiling at the prospect of love. Externally, she betrays her authentic internal self on this. Her desire for love and her necessity of its reciprocity is already hopeless. The tragedy of this moment is that rather than identify or support one another, all three women choose to ignore one another's awareness of their social positions within Verona. All three women, in their attempt to secure their current positions, engage in a devious plot that will inevitably maintain their separation.

Unfortunately, Luhrmann's film's own abjection of Juliet leaves the audience curiously disconnected from her. Juxtaposed with such dramatics and outward expressions, "at moments where Shakespeare's play demands passion and energy, she is virtually erased from the spectator's gaze" (Scott 142). She effectively exists as a perpetual, lifeless and naked body in a bathtub. Juliet's thoughts and desires are eliminated in voice and expression; "oddly lacking in the desire and agency of Shakespeare's heroine" (Scott 141). Similar to Zeffirelli's preference for a silent Juliet, Luhrmann's film configures "her body . . . [as] a visual replica of many porcelain figures of angels and cherubs that adorn her dressing room table" (Scott 141). Devoid of personal autonomy even when filmed in internal spaces, her body as an empty statue reflects the values of society: Juliet may not possess or express desires of her own, but rather, she is a

body, a blank canvas, available for the displaced desires and frustrations of the audience. The camera preference for Romeo reflects on the tragedy of Luhrmann's Juliet:

> Danes's Juliet is not only still: she is frequently silent. Her character suffers most from Luhrmann's textual omissions, and her verbal expressions of passion and agency are often weakened by the apparent denial of her screen presence. At moments where Shakespeare's Juliet is able to take control of the language, Danes is ignored by Luhrmann's camera as it repeatedly searches for Romeo. (Scott 142)

Minimizing her words and prioritizing Romeo on camera places Juliet in a further internalized space not accessible by the audience. At moments when Luhrmann could share Juliet's expressions, he prioritizes Romeo's. For example, "As she speaks her first lines of the shared sonnet in the ball scene, the camera does not rest of her face but instead focuses on Romeo's in an extreme close-up. . . Juliet's lines in the shared sonnet lost all emphasis and control" (Scott 142). Likewise, her reaction to pull him into the elevator is merely an extension of how badly he wants to kiss her. She affords him the opportunity by going further into an inner space within the Capulet house. She avoids the capture of the Nurse and her mother as the elevator opens to different floors, but the scene fails to place their exchange within the scope of Juliet's desire – it remains with Romeo as he enjoys the chaotic, dangerous, and clumsy pursuit of his own desire.

Later, as Romeo hangs on the lattice work by Juliet's pool, she admits to the night air that she desires Romeo. Listing off the parts of his body to which his villainous name need not apply, she pauses, looks up, and suggestively says, "nor any other part

belonging to a man" (2.2.41-2). As if beckoning and inviting Romeo's sexual presence, she conjures him like Mercutio taunts earlier with Rosaline's "quivering thigh" (2.1.20) as he ascended Juliet's walls. On cue, he creeps up behind her silently, scares her, and indeed does take "all herself" (2.2.49) as they fall into her pool. Though Luhrmann includes her "Gallop apace" (3.2.1-31) soliloquy, his efforts to prioritize Romeo's expressions of desires throughout the film leaves this scene awkwardly superficial and childish. Juliet sits huddled on her bed surrounded with stuffed animals, casting herself upon her pillow as she awaits her wedding night: "So tedious is this day, / As is the night before some festival / To an impatient child that hath new robes / And may not wear them" (3.2.28-31). The scene is abruptly intercut precisely at her climax with shots that juxtapose Romeo's exponentially more intense desire, death, and lunacy as he chases down and murders Tybalt. Romeo violently points the gun at the camera and demands his justice. Once again abbreviating Juliet's full desire, Luhrmann refuses her passion and lends it to Romeo.

After exacting his revenge, Romeo later enters Juliet's room to claim his second victory. As the audience hears her solitary, internal voice as she prays over her grief of Tybalt's death and her own confusion of her feelings for his murderer, Romeo again invades. He interrupts her grief and prayers, she smiles, relieved of her torment as she no longer must debate his future: his presence has solved it for her. As Juliet hugs him, the film's romantic score begins filling her room previously silent in agony with an expectant Romeo. Though she expressed her verbal desire in her "Gallop apace" soliloquy earlier, the climax of her speech was Romeo's murder of Tybalt, and the experience of their

wedding night is primarily his as Juliet greets him warmly and removes his shirt. He smiles at her as she does so, the infused pain and pleasure, of Mercutio's and Tybalt's death as well as his injury and desire, all his. Juliet remains silent and expressionless as he removes her shirt and kisses her. The camera remains on Romeo's face and briefly lands on Juliet's emotionless eyes encouraging the audience to recognize and identify with Romeo's passion. Romeo's experience is intensified by defaulting Juliet's.

But Luhrmann does allow Juliet an important moment of extreme external expression of desire. The abhorrent feminine is revealed when Juliet, desperate to escape her arranged marriage to Paris, visits the Friar with an abandon that fully exposes the danger of a desperately passionate woman, in other words, an abhorrent female. Allowed to express violent madness, Luhrmann focuses her rage and desperation not at herself, but at the Friar. Safely inside the Friar's room, she screams, "I long to die!" and appears so reckless and desperate, she points the gun at the Friar, effectively taking him hostage. While Shakespeare's Juliet points this kind of desperation and violence against herself by threatening her own life with a sword, Luhrmann's Juliet is a woman willing to murder the lone religious figure of the play. This approach frames the Friar as a victim rather than an agent of demise. Juliet's move to point the gun at him arguably, accidentally locates the primary accomplice in the tragedy. It absolves him of his crime to marry them as well as absolves him of devising the plan that will lead to their future deaths. Yet again, as he tells her the plan to feign her death, the audience sees only his face superimposed over a montage of the devious events to unfold. Juliet's reaction is nonexistent.

Luhrmann also omits her expression of hesitation and fear of waking in her tomb alone with death. As she prays, she expresses only her fear of marrying Paris should the potion fail. Her fear of waking in a tomb without Romeo, her fear of the Friar's ill intention to poison her, or her possible madness when faced with death that she kills herself in violence (4.3.14-57). Rather, she simply tells her mother, "Farewell," and consumes the potion. Anticlimactically, the camera floats above a sleeping, dead-like Juliet. Once again, the camera searches for Romeo and finds him in Mantua as he receives the news of Juliet's death. This extremity of the moment, again, capitalizes on Romeo's devastation. His tragic choice to return to Juliet's grave is the moment when the audience sympathizes more with his desperation than with Juliet's. The camera follows his torment as he returns to her.

The final and most tragic silencing and sexualizing of Juliet comes at her death. Romeo enters her wake, not by descending into her earth nor by violation, but by opening doors within a church as he flees police pursuit. Opera music replaces the violence and tension of the proceeding scene with a romanticized invitation from a silent Juliet. Juliet lies still among white flowers, the path to her bed beautifully adorned with neon crosses and candles which invite him delicately closer. The audience captures the depth of his grief while the camera floats above her. Even as Romeo strokes her face, it is his face the audience watches. Romeo, along with the audience, is consumed by his experience of this loss, Juliet's waking is missed. As he dies, Juliet hovers over him watching, his face fills the screen. Silence. Scott writes, "When Romeo dies, everything ends in Luhrmann's film. All musical accompaniment ceases, and an extreme close-up of his face appears for

several moments, as if lamenting the end of his story. In contrast to this visual lament, Luhrmann's camera is dramatically distanced when Juliet kills herself with Romeo's gun" (Scott 143). Juliet effectively serves as a facilitator of Romeo's experience throughout the film.

In the atmosphere of a silent church, void of a living Romeo, Juliet is heard breathing. She cries aloud only once. She is not met by the Friar. She is not rushed by the approaching watchmen. Within this space, the film functionally stops. Realizing her hand on Romeo's gun, the camera focuses in on the gun as her hands cock it and raise it up to her temple. She gazes up to the camera for one rare and final close-up: "an extreme close-up of the gun pointed at Juliet's temple articulates her own death . . . The shot holds in silence . . . the lovers float above the candles, transforming bier to altar. Images reprising their shared moments . . . link bier with wedding bed where, beneath a fluttering white sheet, they again exchange smiles across a cut" (Hodgdon 140). The camera floats above them followed by a montage that suggests their souls are together floating above as celestial bodies. The montage replays their wedding consummation in a "proximity of the chamber and the vault scenes in the sequence of actions [that] solicits a perception of spatial connections between the bed and the bier also at a symbolic level" (Bigliazzi and Nigri 178). Juliet's fateful recognition is achieved: "My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (1.5.133). Romeo, as the draw of Luhrmann's film, is its lasting image making the film more *our* love story for Romeo than desiring *their* union. Juliet's death becomes more of a cathartic reality than her desperate grasp of agency and liberation. Luhrmann's silencing of Juliet, especially in her final scene, "robs Juliet of her final speech and

simultaneously removes her capacity for agency in death" and configures it "as defeat rather than triumph, helplessness rather than control" (Scott 144). His film glamorizes masculine violence, and by silencing Juliet, eliminates any critique against it. Thus, Luhrmann's anti-feminist film, now a cultural classic retelling, demonstrates and reinforces the masculine dominant culture, and (still) eliminates any alternative: "For Luhrmann, Shakespeare's 'story of woe' is very much one of *Romeo, and his Juliet* (5.3.308-9)" (Scott 144).

Where Zeffirelli and Luhrmann refuse Juliet her complexities, Simon Goodwin's 2021 hybrid stage-screen production of *Romeo & Juliet* prioritizes the titular characters truest to Shakespeare. Filmed in London's National Theatre during the global COVID-19 pandemic, Goodwin's is a unique retelling in both story and format; nothing marks it a period piece like Zeffirelli's, nothing denotes a gaudy MTV nightmare like Luhrmann's, yet Goodwin's creative response to the literal plague creatively illustrates Verona's plague. Trimmed to the essentials only, his retelling prioritizes the relationship of Romeo and Juliet with fast-paced, intercut scenes of onstage and offstage spaces to intensify and spatialize their passion, union, and demise. With minimal dialogue and modest, yet creative and stunning production, Goodwin's film transcends time and space effectively spatializing the characters illustrating Juliet's internal chaos and solitude and Romeo's melancholy, dejection, and vulnerable masculinity. Goodwin's camera, focused on Juliet, foregrounds her complexity which affords her Shakespeare's depth of fear, passion, and tragic hope of attaining that which was never within her control. Goodwin takes liberties,

and while some work to creatively illustrate, if not accentuate, Shakespeare's text, some over-simplify and problematically absolve society.

Creative liberty opens the film as the audience is introduced to Juliet alongside the other actors arriving for stage rehearsal. At some indeterminate point, the arrival becomes the rehearsal which becomes the production, thrusting the audience into the chaos of the set/street. The scenes are a mixture of pace and location: slow marks the internal experiences and set locations of peace, unity, and passion, while fast-paced scenes illustrate external Verona's chaos, separation, and hatred. The viewer is allowed insight into both Romeo and Juliet's awareness of their "ill-divining soul" (3.5.53) through flash-forward cuts to their deaths even before the lovers meet. Reintroduced to Juliet at the Capulet rave, she sings into a microphone as Romeo locates her (her voice then echoes in the music score throughout the film). What begins as a proximal, secret introduction at the public rave, cuts to intimate exchange in the private, internal space of Juliet's bedroom. The scene cuts between the rave and her bedroom as they kiss, their passionate union complete.

Romeo, played by Josh O'Connor, seems to embrace his masculine expectations with his passionate feelings. As Mercutio and Benvolio exit the rave, nearby yet absent Romeo comes into focus as he says, "Can I go forward when my heart is here?" (2.1.1). Juliet, on her balcony, expresses her frustration with his Montague name and cries out in frustration, "Be some other name!" (2.2.42). As Romeo emerges bashfully from below, she lowers behind the railing – physically removed from him, behind bars, illuminated by the moonlight looming overhead. Though their exchange is limited, Romeo confesses his

fear directly to Juliet that their meeting “is too flattering sweet to be substantial” (2.2.141). He appears vulnerable, desperate, honest, and well-intentioned. Juliet, on the other hand, is not as emotionally vulnerable and instead offers the solution: they should marry and confess “love’s faithful vow” (2.2.127). Here, Juliet is articulate, intelligent, dynamic, confident, and in control. After minimal arrangements and obstacles to overcome, their wedding takes place at the Friar’s cell, composed within a beautifully simple frame of candles and darkness as the lovers kneel before one another. The simplicity of the scene promotes the honesty and purity of their union and intentions. Later, Romeo submits to Tybalt in the same humbled stance: on his knees, hands in the air, in full submission. Mercutio, appalled at this display of unmasculine passivity, answers Tybalt’s challenge. As the pivotal moment of the film begins, so begins Juliet’s “Gallop apace” speech. A beautiful and tragic overlap of scenes commence encompassing the intense pain and pleasure the two lovers experience. Simultaneously, Romeo kills Tybalt at the climax of her speech which does not overshadow Juliet’s desire, but rather, amplifies the unfortunate and tragic, “violent ends” (2.6.9) and the pleasurable, “violent delights” (2.6.9) both Romeo and Juliet experience.

Goodwin’s inclusion and composition of Juliet before she takes the potion is another stunning visual of her madness and awareness (both Zeffirelli and Luhrmann exclude this). Halted by both her fear and desperation of the choice and sacrifice before her, Juliet calls for her Nurse’s help. She calls out in vain as she walks through multiple sets of doors that open to an empty theater set with her bed in the center. This inner, inner space demonstrates her utter isolation while also acknowledging those who have brought

her to this moment; the cast surrounds her bed. Goodwin includes her complete soliloquy that explores her fear that the potion is ill-motivated by the Friar's guilt, that she will awaken before Romeo arrives, and that she will experience madness inside her tomb (4.1). Ultimately, she embraces the risk as her viable option to unite with Romeo. This scene parallels at the final scene when the cast is again around her and Romeo's bodies. At the climax of their deaths, the scene, similar to Luhrmann's, cuts backward to their wedding, consummation, balcony scene, meeting at the rave, and to the beginning of the play as the actors chase each other around the set (as actors or as the lovers?).

However, Goodwin makes important departures that disarm an effective social critique. By condensing and minimalizing supporting characters, elements, and text, he strips away the audience's ability to locate the true source that marks them "star-crossed lovers" from the outset (Prologue.6). Likewise, by casting adults to play adolescents, a sharp contrast from Zeffirelli, (Juliet is played by 30-year-old Jessie Buckley; Romeo by 31-year-old Josh O'Connor), it likewise isolates their story away from society. They are visibly older, suggestively more autonomous, naturally more self-aware, and more believably in control of their desires and choices. Additionally, Sampson and Gregory's exchange describing victorious and subsequent violence against women: "when I have / fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids. / I will cut of their heads" (1.1.19-21), is removed. In fact, all references linking masculinity with sexuality is removed from the play's context. In an assumed effort to displace the overt masculinity that overrides Shakespeare's play, it is redirected to and focused upon Lady Capulet who replaces Capulet's part entirely.

The interchange of Capulet and Lady Capulet confuses, if not ignores, why the feud exists in the first place. Lady Capulet is the powerful alpha; she forces Tybalt to allow Romeo to stay at the ball, emasculates him, wields her power, and arranges the demise of her daughter. Capulet and the Nurse are shocked, disgusted, but not exactly surprised, at her threats against Juliet for her rebellion. Where Capulet in Shakespeare's play forcefully and unforgivably betrays his daughter at her most vulnerable, Lady Capulet, now cold and calculating, is the cathexis of Juliet's betrayal. In Shakespeare's text, Lady Capulet remains resolute to her feminine duties of securing the Capulet legacy. Goodwin's Lady Capulet is resolute in the destruction of her daughter which locates the "fatal loins" as specifically those of the maternal – her womb accomplishes the tomb. Lady Capulet is further polarized into this role as Juliet's Nurse consistently appears warm, caring, and supportive, begging and pleading with Juliet to marry Paris. The en masse betrayal of Juliet by all characters as seen in the previous films, even in Shakespeare's play, is absent in this production. Additionally, Capulet, who comforts a mourning Juliet and informs her of her arranged marriage to Paris, is silent and complicit to Lady Capulet's wishes. Ultimately, this figures Lady Capulet as the lone character responsible for the tragic events of the story from the feud to her vendetta for Romeo, as well as for Juliet's marriage to Paris, and her death.

The conclusion of the film abandons most of the play's lines that would condemn society for the tragedy it created. We are instead left with Romeo and Juliet – autonomous, singular, tragic, isolated – as all cast members, previously killed or alive, hovering over them. The Prince announces, "Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while, /

Till we can clear these ambiguities / And know their spring, their head, their true decent, / And then will I be general to your woes / And lead you even to death. Meantime forebear / And let mischance be slave to patience" (5.3.216-20). Our grief is suspended. The lovers aren't buried, memorialized, or redeemed. Like Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's film, no hope exists for a world worth saving nor is the feud over. Instead, they remain frozen in Juliet's blood, ever-present, transcending time, never allowed their rest or justice. Reducing the Prince's directive to "Go hence to have more talk of these sad things / Some shall be pardoned and some punished" (5.3.307-8), makes no suggestion at those responsible, nor any solution or future prevention. It remains an isolated tragedy that may repeat itself. Instead of punishing any, we absolve all. Furthermore, it suggests society today is more attuned and desensitized to how preeminently and perpetually unclean civil hands are. Blame identified, or not; punishment prescribed, or not, the fact of society and the fact of the lovers' deaths remains. The reduction of recounting the tragic events in the public square, as in Shakespeare's text, pauses the tragedy without hope for justice. The Prince, who emphatically condemned violence in Verona's streets, is now strangely vague, uninvolved, and noncommittal.

Inevitably, what these films idealize, we internalize and popularize which exposes the evidence and malady of *our* ideality. As Kristeva explains, "We are all adolescents when we are enthralled by an absolute" (717). We idealize Romeo and Juliet's love as tragic and ideal, and we, like the adolescent lovers in Shakespeare's story, "relish both the fantasy of an absolute Object as well as the fantasy of its vengeful destruction" (Kristeva 716). The lovers' "violent delights" lead passionately to their "violent ends,"

while the audience's violent delight in their love becomes satisfaction in the violence of their ends. Charles Affron likewise recognizes the power of cinematic endings in which "sentimental narratives tend to generate improbabilities in proportion to the strength of the feelings they express" (23). The more impossible the existence of their love, the more the audience accepts it as ideal, and the more affective the emotional response which leaves us vulnerable to the story's message. In this case, the popular culture interpretations of Shakespeare's story exposes what it is we, the audience, idealize. Juliet idealized the "the god of my idolatry" (2.2.113) as Romeo. Likewise, the audience views Romeo as the god of *our* idolatry. Especially in Luhrmann's film, Hodgdon describes "DiCapriorgasm" (Hodgdon 130) as the obsession with Leonardo DiCaprio following the movie that proves how society idealizes and defaults to the male experience. We forgive his murderous rage against Tybalt as necessary vigilante justice making Romeo a dangerously attractive, "liminal outlaw hero," a sort of quasi-knight and rugged western outlaw (Umland 33). Conversely, we idealize a silent and sexually available Juliet and abhor a dangerously fatalistic female who in unafraid to sacrifice others. Naturally, the older women in both films are juxtaposed as undesirable: the Nurse is the opposite of feminine beauty with her missing teeth and vulgar language (Zeffirelli), while Lady Capulet is a monstrously manipulative and self-centered woman obsessed with the wealth and material opportunities of daughter for her own gain (Luhrmann and Goodwin). The enduring focus on Juliet as a young, passionate, and submissive female remains at her most beautiful when she is most silent and subdued: dead.

The private, interior world Romeo and Juliet create, separate and insulated from the suffocating demands and social expectations of society, indicates their detached adolescence. Zeffirelli's lovers are child-like and hopeful, helplessly ignorant (Juliet) yet dangerously attractive (Romeo) in Luhrmann's, and tragically, yet sweetly united within Verona's dark world in Goodwin's. The range of the actors' ages in these films blur the lines between "child, tween and adult" (Burt 219) which indicates culture's ability to recognize adolescence as a perpetual concept. Regardless of the film production, Romeo and Juliet's story invites the audience into their adolescent desires and tempts us with the satisfying consequences of subversion and attempted escape from the world in the name of love and desire. Consequently, the interpreted Veronas of Shakespeare's play represent the audience's society as a perpetual society speaking to perpetual adolescence. Audiences participate in their story emotionally adopting the ideals presented. When it warns against specific types of rebellion, the message is internalized. Though Shakespeare inspires audiences to judge society for creating the system that disallowed the lovers' adolescent union and caused their deaths, the film adaptions distract and displace such an abjection of a dominant masculine society by exploiting or eliminating Juliet's adolescent sexuality (Zeffirelli and Luhrmann) or demonizing female power and agency (Goodwin). Subsequently, audiences, attracted by our own perpetual adolescent identification with the tragic lovers, instead implicitly participate in and perpetuate a system of ideals for the substantiation of the dominant patriarchy.

As the adaptions demonstrate, society increasingly abhors the feminine, demanding her abjection and creating an impossible ideal of femininity. The obsession

with such an impossible ideal begins to expose itself proportionally with the increased desire of her destruction. Even if Goodwin prioritizes Juliet's experience, his film's retelling still relegates femininity to a sphere of suspicion, caution, and abhorrence. Zeffirelli offers a film that objectifies Juliet's sexuality. Luhrmann silences Juliet and romanticizes a violent Romeo. Goodwin imposes power upon Lady Capulet to menace and effect Juliet's demise. All the films forgive and prefer masculinity at the expense of femininity. All films refuse the existence of powerful femininity free of abhorrence and refuse Juliet justice: the acknowledgement that society motivates, inspires, and reinforces her punishment and death, a system Shakespeare resisted. The tragedy is twofold: One, adapted versions of Juliets are increasingly sexual, delinquent, dangerous, and require subjugation or elimination; Two, Juliets of society, imbibed with the internalized ideals presented and offered to them, sexualize themselves under a false pretense of power though it serves to reinforce and influence the dominant culture that inspires them. The evidence presents itself when exploring whether the Juliets of today's popular culture exist in any more liberation than the Verona in which Shakespeare wrote his original Juliet.

By traversing into Reynolds and Segal's "R&Jspace" an analysis of Juliet, outside the bounds of her story, demonstrates how she resonates within popular culture. Reynolds and Segal define this space as:

> a conglomeration of the official and and/or unofficial historical, political, cultural, and social spaces through which Romeo and Juliet resound in various manifestations, ranging from emblems of romantic love,

> legitimaters of forbidden desire, icons of teenage angst, and, in more recent critical incarnations, subversive agents of dominant ideologies substantiated by the names they themselves are so eager to doff. (38)

Thus, "R&Jspace" is an internal realm within our culture through which the ultimate figures of tragic, romantic, ideal Western love permeate all other spaces in popular culture. Invoking their names, directly or indirectly, applies authority to any story which attempts to legitimize the retelling. Consequently, culture continues to consume adolescents, inspire female monstrosities, and manipulates Romeo and Juliet so they continually function as "conductors of normative views" within culture (Reynolds and Segal 38). Ultimately, it is the subjective space of both femininity and adolescence in *Romeo and Juliet* that is manipulated within dominant culture to reinforce dominant culture. The purpose of their function is "to formulate and inculcate subjective territory with the appropriate culture-specific and identity-specific zones and localities, so that the subjectivity that substantiates the state machinery is shared, habitually experienced, and believed by each member of the populace to be natural and its very own" (Reynolds and Segal 39). Superficially, the lovers' deaths were hoped to mend the feud in Verona, instead, they reinforce it in modern society.

The evolution of Juliet within many popular culture reiterations presents a Juliet vastly different than Shakespeare's. In fact, popular culture no longer needs Shakespeare to recognize or encounter Juliet. Hendershott-Kraetzer researches "accidental encounters" of Juliet across popular television shows including *Law and Order, Law and Order: SVU, Bones, The Cleaner, Supernatural, White Collar,* and *Necessary Roughness* (14). His

examples present referential figures of Juliet as hyper-sexual, existing only in reference to an identified Romeo, as an evil manipulator, and as a dangerous, "fallen angel" (13-29). Similarly, Reynolds and Segal reference Sublime's 1997 song "Romeo" for its frustrated longing for a "kinda woman who can make me feel right" (37). Juliet is not named in the lyrics, of course, but her qualities are: "In a tight mini short, in a short mini skirt / It feels so wrong and it feels so right / The more I think about it you're a pain in the ass / I told you many times, this time it's gonna last" (Sublime). She exists purely for Rome's catharsis, as a space to work out what he needs to feel right. As the cause of his "anger, pain, and sorrow," she "makes you wanna explode" (Sublime). Both Romeo and Juliet remain conductors of the heteronormative ideal while also reinforcing the power structure under which Juliet is subordinate and subject to Romeo.

Herdershott-Kraetzer's research also examined high school student reactions to reading Shakespeare's play which likewise suggests pop culture's monstrous Juliet now informs how the original character is conceptualized:

> one student's comment indicates some erosion of this idealized pillar: 'I find it fishy that she falls for Romeo so quickly' (Student Response 6) . . . students indicated they had come to be suspicious of assertions of Juliet's monumental innocence and purity, tending to characterize her in negative terms, as a tantrumy, self-interested schemer: 'she has a tacky habit of threatening to harm herself' and 'is not pure in her motivations,' which 'are fueled by her own desires . . . Her goal, motivations, focus, and ambition are all to obtain what SHE wants' (Student 6, 'Answers'); 'She

> plays Romeo like her personal marionette' (Student 5, Message); she is a 'sinister' character (Student 4, Message) who 'uses those around her, especially those below her station . . . as the means to her end'; 'Juliet could have gone along with her father's plan and lived a life of comparative ease and luxury, yet she chose the impressionable son of her family's rivals as a means to escape her situation' rather than marry Paris, because she knows 'he can be manipulated in ways the older Paris is unlikely to agree to' (Student 1, 'Juliet'). (32)

Henderschott-Kraetzer's examples perfectly demonstrate the problem of female adolescence and how in reality, society is riddled with the violence and aggression of Verona still requiring the death and destruction of the female adolescent. He summarizes, "In these characters, Juliet lives on, messy, disruptive, disorganized, and alluring, still posing problems – problems about how we learn about her, what we know about her, how well we know her, whether we really know her at all" (35). Modern representations of Juliet expose increased male fear of women (Capulet himself reveals this straightforwardly upon Juliet's defiance). But as scholar Alice Bolin argues, the popular culture consumer tends to absolve men of the evil they do based on the hardships they experience using the female body to provide catharsis (47-56). Romeo is taught violence and becomes murderous and defiant when prevented from possessing his wife and future: reasonable. Juliet, however, always and ever unable to possess her husband and her future becomes increasingly monstrous: unreasonable. Her transition into something more, different, and beyond what Shakespeare originally wrote has already happened. She

remains on her golden pedestal where she can remain a warning, however subconscious, that rebellious females are dead females however, but especially if, beautiful, young, and tempting. On her pedestal, her abhorrence is her only homage. As such, she remains a perpetual blank canvas available for any cultural purpose desired.

Whether Shakespeare gives the lovers such power, or the audiences that idealize and consume them, theirs is a story of authority and power which "does not stand above history, but rather within it, doing the work of culture, instigating and perpetuating the production of socially necessary formations of desire" (Callaghan 107). As more interpretations and more references of Juliet are created, the more fragmented, fragile, and vulnerable to misrepresentation they become. As the interpretations continue, as Shakespeare inspires further, the more emergent and important a critical approach towards those representations – especially of Juliet. There becomes power in the retellings of Shakespeare's story. Highlighting Juliet's authentic experience can protect future Juliets. If it further silences her, as in the cases of Zeffirelli and Luhrmann's films, it will do more harm and will reinforce Western culture's preference for submissive or dead females. The dangers lie in an "increasingly more fragmented and less meaningful . . . yet more global and ever present . . . niche market of the tween, made up of eight- and twelve-year-olds . . . [which] has increasingly destabilized and even collapsed the distinction between child and adult" (Burt 219). The younger the audience, the increasing importance and difficulty in challenging and changing the system. We need not look beyond popular culture to tell us females are in an increasingly desperate situation. The practice of writing to Juliet via the Juliet Letters (Tamassia) showcases the collective

female experience today. It is evidence that women's voices are still very much internalized, the result of women living under and subject to patriarchal authority. Still, these subtle acceptances silence rebellion and create monstrous females out of those who, like Juliet, would rebel.

What is idealized as archetypal is learned implicitly. In its truest form, Juliet's death should haunt audiences to expose how "Civil blood makes civil hands unclean" (Prologue.4). Especially when female civil blood is manipulated and perverted to meet hegemonic civil definitions of clean. The permeation of Shakespeare throughout cultures of time, then, begs the question: How has Shakespeare, a gifted writer inspired by his culture, become a writer who has inspired or "invented every generation's version of its own popular culture" (White 24)? Regardless, Shakespeare *is* culture and critical approaches to his Juliet, whether in the classroom, theater, or in pop culture encounters, exposes inaccuracies and corrective opportunities. With a proper and thorough understanding of his Juliet, Shakespeare's influential play can correct the existing warped ideal that silences, sexualizes, and manipulates females, and instead jettison the system that desires their punishment and death. Understanding and correcting the portrayal of Juliet's character harnesses the power and purpose of Shakespeare. Such an understanding lays Juliet to a rest that not only offers her peace, but the finality, not of an afterlife, but of knowing society can and will be better for younger Juliets – a peace knowing civil hands can be made clean. Her death can be the end of the culture that created her. Her tomb, her fertile loins, can create social bodies not of hatred, but of

facility, agency, and equity. Her story can be one of triumph for future Juliets and their Romeos.

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