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Spatializing Gender and Adolescence in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

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SPATIALIZING GENDER AND ADOLESCENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

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ABSTRACT:

Romeo and Juliet create a fragile and temporary internal, private world of love and union in response to the external and public Montague and Capulet feud. In contrast to the external chaos in Verona, theirs is a world of desire, self-actualization, and fulfillment. In their adolescent union, "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 Juliet's blood. Her 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. Spatializing adolescence and gender within Verona locates Juliet within internal spaces but establishes her inherent power to overtake masculinity by strength, passion, reason, and undeterred dedication to her defined honor and duty.

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 make 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 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, 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 externally but obedience, 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 another 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 magnetizes them together. Each lover withdraws from their respective families and draws further into unified 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 conquering 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" (Shakespeare 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). Romeo's masculine composure is infused with sexual innuendo which refers to and reiterates Verona's prescribed principles. Tragically, Romeo remains arrested within the internal space of the Friar's cell disconnected from the external world's expectations. While Romeo struggles to reconcile his exposed effeminate self, Juliet's masculinity likewise begins to emerge.

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). Juliet recognizes the space to which she is relegated, but she is emboldened to subvert, deceive, and verbalize her desire. 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 eternally locates Romeo entombed within Juliet's tomb, united with Juliet, who is impregnated with the last evidence of Romeo'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 conclude 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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