Shakespeare and Nezami

A study of gender roles and gender reversals in *Romeo and Juliet* & *Layli and Majnun*

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IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN

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Publisher:
Muhammad Suheyl Umar
Director, Iqbal Academy Pakistan
6th Floor, Aiwan-i-Iqbal Complex,
Off Egerton Road, Lahore.
Tel: [92-42] 36314510, 99203573
Fax: [92-42]36314496
Email. info@iap.gov.pk
Website: www.allamaiqbal.com

ISBN: 978-969-416-486-1

1st Edition	:	2013
Quantity	:	500
Price	:	Rs. 200/-
Printed at	:	BPH Printers, Lahore

Sales Office: 116-McLeod Road, Lahore. Ph. 37357214

To my loving mother,
who makes life beautiful

Marziyeh S. Ghoreishi

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Foreword

I am pleased to present this comparative study of two iconic poets. Although the study may not be based on the ideas presented by Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1935), a systematic comparison of these poets is nevertheless important for Iqbal Studies due to a number of reasons.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), obviously, needs no introduction. However, what is very often ignored about this greatest playwright of the world is the extent to which he has been influential in shaping the consciousness of modern East, especially the Muslim East. Through innumerable adaptations, his works began to be assimilated by the masses in the East at least as early as the nineteenth century. In their original text or literary translations, they became part of the mental furniture of the educated in this part of the world. A testimony to this indigenization is the fact that Agha Hashr Kashmiri (1879-1935), the most popular playwright of Urdu, was ubiquitously called "Indian Shakespeare". The poem written by Iqbal on the 300th death anniversary of Shakespeare in 1916, now included in the Urdu anthology *Baang-i-Dara* (1924), is counted among the greatest tributes ever paid to Shakespeare, within or without the English speaking world. Equally astonishing is Iqbal's well-known remark: "Both Shakespeare and Goethe rethink the Divine thought of Creation."

Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209), who wrote in Persian, may rightly be described as one of the most influential figures in the culture of Islam and the East. His claim to fame is his *Quintet* ("Khamseh"), or the set of five long poems. Four of these,

having a narrative structure, have practically the fabric of the emotional and intellectual existence of generations in a very large part of Asia, and to some extent even in the Eastern Europe. These four long poems are: *Khusrav-o-Shireen, Layli-o-Majnoon, Haft Paykar* and *Iskander Nameh.* Nezami was among the earliest Muslim storyteller-poets who attempted to discover tools of social change in the spiritual messages of the Sufis. No wonder, then, that his metaphors and allusions may be traced in the work of almost every Muslim poet who came after – including Jalaluddin Rumi, Sheikh Saadi of Shiraz, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai of Sindh, Mirza Ghalib of Delhi and Iqbal. His basic agenda, in his own words, was to offer "a treasury of Divine secrets and a common resource for kingship and asceticism." This ideal resonated most comprehensively in the writings of Sheikh Saadi of Shiraz in the century after Nezami and in those of Iqbal in the more recent past. Just as the plays of Shakespeare have refused to die in the age of cinema, and keep reappearing in screen adaptations of various types, so the legends of Nezami are keeping up with the changing times. Ballets on his works, especially *The Seven Beauties* ("Haft Paykar") remain popular throughout Central Asia, parts of Russia and the Eastern Europe to this date. Others, especially *Khusrav-o-Shirin* and *Layli-o-Majnoon,* are alive in the repertoire of television and cinema in the areas of Nezami's influence, especially in Pakistan.

A comparative study of these iconic writers is therefore a much-needed addition to our knowledge of ourselves, and of the world we live in. I hope that the present work will lead to more research and output in this area.

Muhammad Suheyl Umar
Director, Iqbal Academy Pakistan
January 16, 2013

Shakespeare
and
Nezami

A study of gender roles and gender reversals in
Romeo and Juliet and *Layli and Majnoon*

1. Introduction

> "Though still in bed, my thoughts go out to you, my Immortal Beloved, now and then joyfully, then sadly, waiting to learn whether or not fate will hear us – I can live only wholly with you or not at all – Yes, I am resolved to wander so long away from you until I can fly to your arms and say that I am really at home with you, and can send my soul enwrapped in you into the land of spirits."
>
> Ludwig van Beethoven

The purpose of this study is to present a comparative reading of gender roles and gender reversals in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Nezami's *Layli and Majnoon* in order to explore the interaction between the leading characters of these works and the patriarchal system of their societies.

Although the two works were written centuries apart and belong to two different genres, they place their characters in similar patriarchal societies and hence, subject to similar demands of repressive ideologies:[1]

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[1] In the *OED*, ideology is defined as "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy." Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition (1989). This study relies on this definition when referring to ideology.

- In both works, the leading characters, Romeo, Juliet, Layli and Majnoon position themselves against the dominant ideology of their societies and, despite their differences in time and setting, display similar attitudes and behaviour towards ideology.
- All four characters set to resist social conditioning and rise against their societies' dominant ideology.
- In doing so, the characters reverse gender roles and thus violate their societies' sanctioned codes of gender behaviour.
- They also disrupt their societies' system of power relations by challenging and undermining the authority of the many institutions that exist within their societies.

Therefore, it is possible to study both works in the light of gender theory (explained below). The present study primarily investigates how gender is described in each literary work and what roles are assigned to female and male characters, and hence how notions of femininity and masculinity are defined by the communities depicted in these two works.

About this Book

Although the notion of gender has been discussed previously by other critics in Romeo and Juliet, as indicated in review of the literature, there has never been any attempt to compare both these works on these grounds. What is significant about this undertaking is the attempt to show how patriarchal ideology is questioned and subverted in these two stories.

This is important since many critics, especially feminists, tend to look at such love stories and the structure of the narrative

in these stories as actually supporting the patriarchal rule and order.

Furthermore, the research carried out on *Layli and Majnoon* is original in many ways since no previous studies have analysed the world of the poem to the degree that this study has.

The primary sources for this study are Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Nezami's *Layli and Majnoon*. The secondary sources include concepts and jargons from gender theory, feminist theory and archaeology, as well as anthropology.

The aim is to find how the roles of the leading characters as masculine and feminine are assigned in their respective patriarchal cultures and what behaviour their cultures expect from them. This is the focus of Chapter Two.

Then, by analyzing their characters and their behaviour, especially after falling in love, the process of gender reversal is examined in the light of concepts such as male/female binary oppositions and the idea of gender as a construction. This is done in Chapter Three.

Theory

There is a vast amount of literature available on the theoretical aspects and concepts regarding gender and gender studies. What concerns the present study, however, is limited to:

a. patriarchy and its characteristics;
b. a definition of gender as a social construction;
c. gender roles and how they are assigned within a society; and
d. the concept of gender reversal.

Accordingly, this section is dedicated to a discussion of the theories concerning these concepts.

Patriarchy

One of the basic assumptions on which this study is based is that the societies in which Romeo, Juliet, Layli, and Majnoon live are patriarchal. It is the patriarchal system that opposes their liberating love and brings the lovers to their downfall. Through their love, the lovers come to challenge and subvert the patriarchal system and hence their love becomes subversive.

Thus to get a clear picture of their resistance to patriarchy, the first step is to identify the system itself and see how it works. This requires a look at how patriarchy is defined and what its main characteristics are. A study of patriarchy also enables us to analyse the different forms of gender inequality that exist within each society.[1]

Patriarchy is a system of "social relations"[2] which affects all aspects of life within society, in both public and private spheres. The many patriarchal institutions which operate within society include the state (law and politics), family (domestic life) and cultural institutions.[3]

The *OED* describes patriarchy as "a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is traced through the male line."[4] Yet, when defining patriarchy, an important point to remember is that patriarchy may take on many forms and varieties. The individual experience of patriarchy can differ greatly for people across

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[1] Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, first published 1990, Reprinted 1991) p. 2.

[2] Walby, p. 21.

[3] Walby, pp. 20-21. See also Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple up, 2005) pp. 14-15, 41-42; Carol Gilligan and David A. Richards, *The Deepening Darkness: Patriarchy, Resistance, and Democracy's Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2009) p. 159.

[4] Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition (1989).

history. It also depends on race, place and class.[1] Hence, a concise and universal definition would be a near impossible.

The definition used for examining the worlds of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Layli and Majnoon* in this study will be that of Allan G. Johnson in his book *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*. Johnson defines patriarchy as a system which privileges men "by being male dominated, male identified and male centered." The system is also based on the concept of control and the oppression of women.[2]

This definition gives three main characteristics to patriarchy:

- male dominated – having men and their actions as the focus of attention;
- male identified – whereby all that is related to men and masculinity is considered as the norm and prioritised, and everything else, especially woman and femininity, is seen as abnormal and 'Other'; hence, the standards of the society are defined by men and their lives;
- male centered – wherein men hold all "the positions of authority", whether it be in the public (e.g. the law, economy, religion, politics) or private sector (i.e. family).[3]

Further elaboration of the concept of patriarchy (including its implications of control, oppression, suppression, violence and honour) is provided in Appendix B.

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[1] Walby, 2; Lynn S. Chancer and Beverly Xaviera Watkins, *Gender, Race, and Class: An Overview* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) p. 38.
[2] Johnson, p. 5.
[3] Johnson, pp. 10, 6-7, 5.

Gender

A major part of this study focuses on how the characters of Romeo, Juliet, Layli and Majnoon subvert gender roles, and thus defy their societies' sanctioned codes of gender behaviour.

Consequently, a premise on which this study is based is the concept of gender as a social construction. Since gender is a construction, rather than a fixed and innate characteristic, it becomes possible to violate these roles.

Recent and popular approaches within the field of gender studies usually entail discussions around the two opposite poles of "the nature-culture debate," that is whether gender differences between men and women arise out of nature or whether they are cultural constructs provided by society and culture:[1]

- Those favouring nature take an "essentialist" view arguing that natural biological differences between men and women determine gender and gender roles. These "fundamental" differences which are based on "physical and physiological" features of men and women manifest themselves in everything they do, in personality traits and the way they think as well as in gendered behaviour.[2]
- On the opposite pole stand those who take a cultural approach to gender. They argue that although

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[1] The names given to either approach may vary slightly from one book to the next, but the concepts remain the same. Rudman and Glick for example term them "the evolutionary approach and the cultural approach". Howson refers to them as "socio-biological approaches and social constructionist approaches". See Laurie A. Rudman and Peter Glick, *The Social Psychology of Gender: How Power and Intimacy Shape Gender Relations* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008) p. 3; Richard Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 55-56; Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (New York: Routledge, 1999) pp. 9-10.

[2] Rudman and Glick, pp. 6-8. See also Walby, p. 90; Howson, 55-56; Gilchrist pp. xiv, 10.

> "biological sex categories" determine gender, gender roles and gendered behaviour are cultural or social constructions and it is cultural beliefs about what it means to be a man or a woman and what behaviour is acceptable from each gender that ultimately define masculinity and femininity in any given culture.

Hence, social constructionists – those who take the second approach – believe gender to be a social construct, a product of ideas and beliefs. Psychological differences between men and women are also considered to be constructs. For social constructionists, it is culture, not nature, which creates differences between men and women. Hence, gender becomes a "performance" since men and women have to "enact or 'perform' gender" due to social and cultural forces.[1]

This study treats the two works of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Layli and Majnoon* as cultural artefacts and consequently, gender is examined from a social perspective. Hence the approach taken here is that of a social constructionist and the definitions given are according to the cultural approach to gender where gender is viewed as a social construct.

Further elaboration of the concept of gender (including a critique of "psychological essentialism") is provided in Appendix B.

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 6-15. See also Howson, p. 56; Donald E. Hall, "Gender and Queer Theory," *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory,* ed. Simon Malpas and Paul Wake (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 106.

Gender Roles and Reversals

Another equally important concept for this study is the notion of gender roles, since it is shown here that the characters deviate from their societies' sanctioned codes of gender behavior.

Patriarchay is seen to be gendered in all aspects and at all levels, dividing the whole society into two distinct categories of masculinity and femininity which are assigned to men and women respectively.[1] Since a patriarchal society is male identified, qualities associated with masculinity are seen as reflecting "the core values of society as a whole." Femininity, on the other hand, is described as the opposite of masculinity and is generally devalued and deemed inferior.[2]

If gender is a construction, it can always be "deconstructed." Although it is a personal experience, it is at the same time "a social phenomenon," hence a result of social circumstances. In this sense it becomes "mutable" and "arbitrary." Since it does not have a "fixed" and "static" nature, change becomes possible.[3]

Further elaboration of the concepts of gender roles and gender reversals is provided in Appendix B.

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[1] Walby, p. 90. See also Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, ed., *Gender: A Sociological Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p. 2; Chancer and Watkins, p. 20.

[2] Johnson, p. 7.

[3] Howson, p. 35; Gilchrist, pp. 78, 1. See also Hall, p. 106.

Previous Studies

Romeo and Juliet

In writing his *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's principal source was *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet*, a narrative poem by Arthur Brooke written in 1562. To a modern critic, the love between Romeo and Juliet as presented by Brooke in his poem appears to be no more than "a pathetic but commonplace attachment."[1] With his magic, Shakespeare has transformed this simple narrative into one of the world's greatest love stories of all times and arguably "the largest and most persuasive celebration of romantic love in Western literature."[2]

Shakespeare has deviated from his source in many ways, some of which are quite significant for the present study:

- *Treatment of the feud:* Although the feud is mentioned early in Brooke's poem, the volatility and immediacy of its impact on social life felt in Shakespeare's play is not seen in Brooke's poem which delays its violent dimensions to surface only after Romeus and Juliet's wedding. By opening his play with the street brawling, Shakespeare presents the hostility of Veronese social environment.[3]
- *Development of the characters of Romeo and Juliet:* The first glimpses of the lovers in Shakespeare's

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[1] Maynard Mack, "The Ambiguities of *Romeo and Juliet*," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) pp. 275-276.

[2] Harold Bloom, "An Essay by Harold Bloom," *Romeo and Juliet: The Annotated Shakespeare*, annotator. Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale up, 2004) pp. 198-199.

[3] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *Romeo and Juliet: the New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2003) p. 8.

play present them as two very young and immature youths who are comfortably set in their familiar surroundings and as yet displaying none of the maturity, understanding and rebellious attitudes of their later selves. Juliet is presented as an "almost tongue-tied" girl (in I.iii). [1] In her conversations with her mother there is no trace of the courage, wisdom and agility of mind she uses later to object to her father's rule (III.v). The debate over her age between the Nurse and her mother emphasises her extreme young age (I.iii). Romeo is also first seen in his conventional role as a young lover grieving his "unrequited love" for Rosaline (I.ii).[2]

- *Romeo in search of an "identity":* Rosaline, though mentioned, remains unnamed in Brook's poem. To present Romeo as lamenting over his cruel mistress and as a lover more concerned with the idea of being in love than love itself, are Shakespeare's own inventions (I.ii). To emphasise the conventional nature of Romeo's love for Rosaline, Shakespeare employs conventional expressions used by Petrarchan sonneteers to have Romeo speak of his love for Rosaline. Thus, he paints the image of Romeo wishing to define an identity for himself through his "unrequited love" for a cruel and indifferent mistress.[3]

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[1] All quotations from the play are from *Romeo and Juliet: the New Cambridge Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, unless otherwise stated.
[2] Evans, p. 26.
[3] Evans, p. 11.

Though a popular play for "performance" and films, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* however, has largely been undervalued by Shakespearean critics.[1] This is mainly because, unlike Shakespeare's other tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* disregards the Aristotelian or neo-classical definition of tragedy in many ways.[2] Examples pointed out by critics include the treatment of characters and events in the play, its "hybrid" genre, and the reasons for the death of its two main characters.[3] This last reason turns out to be of specific relevance to the present study.

While Shakespeare's other tragedies usually present their protagonists as free agents, choosing their own destiny, and responsible for their fall, the traditional approach to *Romeo and Juliet* has been to see it as a tragedy of fate, wherein Romeo and Juliet become innocent victims of fate and destiny.[4]

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[1] R. S. White, ed. "Introduction: What is this thing called love?" ed. R. S. White, *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 1. See also Philip Edwards, *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968) 71; Bloom, An Essay, p. 195.

[2] White, p. 1; David Bevington, "Tragedy in Shakespeare's career," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy,* ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2002) p. 54.

[3] Characters and events: H. B. Charlton, "Shakespeare's Experimental Tragedy," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Romeo and Juliet: A Collection of Critical Essay,* ed. Douglas Cole (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1970), pp. 50-51; Mack, p. 275; Thomas McAlindon, "*Romeo and Juliet," Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 257; Bevington, p. 54.
Hybrid genre: Tanya Pollard, ""A Thing Like Death": Sleeping Potions and Poisons in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra,*" *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009) pp. 29, 30; Bevington, pp. 54-55. See Apendix for more details.

[4] White, p. 1; Evans, pp. 13, 14; Harold Bloom, ed., *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. xii; Susan Synder, *Shakespeare: A Wayward Journey* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002) p. 27; Paul N. Siegel,

In sharp contrast to such views are those expressed by critics who believe Romeo and Juliet to be free agents, and thus responsible for their deaths. These critics seek the cause of the tragedy in the characters themselves, such as excessive passion[1], social rebellion[2] or death-wish.[3] Yet there are others who refer to love[4] or fear[5] as the cause of tragedy.

There are also arguments that deal with other aspects of the play and look at it from various perspectives. For instance:

- *Patriarchy:* Goldstein offers a patriarchal reading of the play and blames the Capulets. He argues that "a disagreement between Capulet and Lady Capulet as to when and whom Juliet is to marry" leads to the disastrous events of the play, and thus recognises "Old Capulet as a tragic figure to set beside the youthful doomed lovers."[6]
- *Masculine obligation:* Catherine Belsey blames "the world of family feuds and the masculine

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Shakespeare in His Time and Ours (Notre Dame: u of Notre Dame p, 1968) pp. 69-70.

[1] Franklin M. Dickey and W. H. Auden, cited in Evans, p. 14, or Virgil Whitaker, cited in Kiernan Ryan, "'The Murdering Word'," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 117.

[2] Lawrence Stone, cited in Burton Raffel, annotator, *Romeo and Juliet: The Annotated Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale up, 2004) pp. xviii-xix.

[3] Such as Norman Rabkin and Julia Kristeva. See Julia Kristeva, "*Romeo and Juliet*: Love-Hatred in the Couple," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 69; Rabkin, cited in Ryan, p. 117.

[4] Donald A. Stauffer, *Shakespeare's World of Images: The Development of His Moral Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana up, 1966) pp. 57-58; Frank Kermode, cited in Ryan, p. 117.

[5] Harold C. Goddard, "*Romeo and Juliet*," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 174.

[6] Martin Goldstein, "Martin Goldstein on the Capulet's Role in Their Daughter's Death," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*. ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 98.

obligation to avenge a wrong" for the destruction of "a marriage based on love and reciprocity."[1]

- *Social issues:* Another group of critics look at the play from a social perspective. According to Bates, for instance, the play is concerned with "man's incivility to man."[2] McAlindon, on the other hand, recognises the play's theme to be "young love rebelling against patriarchal control."[3] Brown believes that the play is concerned with "the conflict between private 'strife' and social well-being" as well as "the operation of fate."[4] Salter takes an "anthropological approach" to the play and recognises the play as concerned with "marriage as a rite of passage."[5]
- *Psychological issues:* On the other hand, some readings have dealt with the psychological aspects of the play. Hence, for Davis the play depicts "the

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[1] Catherine Belsey, "Gender and family," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy,* ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2002) p. 126.

[2] Catherine Bates, "Shakespeare's tragedies of love," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy,* ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2002) p. 183.

[3] Tom McAlindon, "What is a Shakespearean tragedy?" *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy,* ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2002) p. 5.

[4] John Russell Brown, "*Romeo and Juliet:* an Innovative Tragedy," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*. ed. Harold Bloom, Volume ed. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 302.

[5] David Salter, "Shakespeare and Catholicism: The Franciscan Connection," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations,* ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009) p. 68.

outcome of unfulfillable desire."[1] Belsey also regards desire as the theme of the play;[2] while Seward suggests that "Shakespeare's concern is with human beauty and with the agony of its destruction."[3] Similarly, Bevington considers the play as concerned with the "beautiful pain of suffering for having fallen in love."[4]

- *Polarities:* There are also critics who have read the play in light of its many oppositions. Maynard Mack regards the play "as an experience of vivid contrasts" and lists some of the play's opposites, such as youth and old age, love and hate, light and dark, night and day, and worldliness and innocence.[5] Following suite, Deats discusses the "polarities of communication and alienation" as one of the play's concerns.[6] Similarly, Holland considers the play to be "a tragedy of young love and old hate."[7]

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[1] Lloyd Davis, "'Death-marked Love': Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 29.
[2] Catherine Belsey, "The Name of the Rose in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R.S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 53.
[3] James H. Seward, "The Height," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume ed. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 221.
[4] Bevington, p. 55.
[5] Mack, p. 285.
[6] Sara Munson Deats, "Sara Munson Deats on Isolation, Miscommunication, and Adolescent Suicide in the Play," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 71.
[7] Norman N. Holland, "Romeo and Juliet," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 187.

- *Other issues:* For some critics, the theme of the play is love,[1] or the fusion of love and violence,[2] while others look at death,[3] the relation of love and death in the play,[4] or "a conflict of grace and rude will"[5] as some major themes.

While older critics were mainly concerned with whether *Romeo and Juliet* is a true tragedy at all and whether it is a tragedy of fate or character, more recently, critics have read the play in the light of new approaches and theories in literary criticism. These approaches vary from psychoanalysis and feminism to new historicism and Marxism. Yet, even in these new readings, critics still concern themselves with some of the older issues regarding the play, including the cause of the tragedy and the play's comic elements.[6]

Gender differences between the lovers are one of the many issues covered in feminist readings:

- Edward Snow believes that Romeo and Juliet's differences divide them in death as well as life and this division in death "assigns them separate meanings and separate destinations." He locates these differences in the way the lovers use language. Through using "abstract" language,

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[1] Stauffer, p. 54; Edwards, p. 72.
[2] Goddard, p. 153.
[3] Gordon Ross Smith, "The Balance of Themes in *Romeo and Juliet,*" *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Gordon Ross Smith (University Park Pa.: Pennsylvania State up, 1965) p. 51.
[4] Smith, p. 52; Northrop Frye, "*Romeo and Juliet,*" *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, ed. Harold Bloom, Volume Editor. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 240.
[5] Harold Bloom, ed., *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*, Contributing ed. Neil Heims (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005) p. 61; Smith, p. 45.
[6] Bloom, Ages, p. 132; Evans, p. 49.

Romeo emerges as "a self-disintegrating, self-distancing 'Other'," while Juliet's "concrete" language makes her "a centred self." Snow, however, declares the cause of their tragedy to be, not their gender differences, but a conflict "between the imaginative vision its protagonists bear witness to in love and the truth of a world whose order must be enforced at passion's expense."[1]

- Whereas for Snow gender differences only point to the lovers' tragedy, other critics regard gender as the cause of their tragedy. For them, gender becomes "a set of social prescriptions whose imposition *is* truth and order in Verona." Thus, Romeo and Juliet as lovers come into conflict with the society's expectations of them as members of that society.[2]
- Many critics, especially feminist critics, recognise Juliet to be the stronger of the two characters who is "more thoughtful, prudent and realistic than Romeo."[3] Harold Bloom declares her to be "the play's triumph", who is "a saint of love, courageous and trusting," and "absolute in her love." Compared to her "boundless depth and splendour," Romeo appears "inadequate."[4]
- Broder also recognises Juliet to have "greater sense and strength of character." In many of the scenes between the lovers, she is the more realistic of the two and the first to suggest marriage. In times of

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[1] Evans, pp. 49-50.
[2] Evans, p. 50.
[3] Evans, p. 27. See also Bloom, Ages, p. 132.
[4] Bloom, Guides, 2005, pp. 7, 9; Bloom, Ages, p. xi.

trouble, while Romeo gives into despair and acts "insensibly," Juliet shows greater courage and sense. She is also very "radical" despite living in a patriarchal culture, and stands up to her father when forced to marry Paris. She stands in stark contrast to the other women in her family, her mother and the Nurse, who easily give into male control, while Juliet refuses to be subdued by the patriarchal culture. Through her passion, constancy and unyielding courage, she "debunks her society's notion that a woman is weak, inconstant, and incapable of bravery."[1]

- Laroque regards *Romeo and Juliet* as a subversive play. He locates its subversive nature in a number of the play's elements. For instance, being a love tragedy is "a subversion of tragedy," since the play begins in the usual tradition of Shakespearean comedy and turns tragic only after Mercutio's death. Furthermore, the love between Romeo and Juliet subverts the law since it leads to "a destabilization of domestic order." It challenges marriage as an established institution, but is in turn "subverted by Mercutio's wit and by the Nurse's bawdy." Love also subverts "social rules and political authority" as well as challenging "the traditional patriarchal order." Gender roles are also subverted, with the play "presenting an active,

[1] Leslie Broder, "Leslie Broder on Heroism Against the Odds in the Play," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) pp. 93-95.

> almost masculine Juliet against a weak, effeminate Romeo."[1]

There are readings, however, which look at the play from the opposite view and blame Shakespeare as well as patriarchy for "victimising" Juliet.[2] One such reading is offered by Dympna Callaghan who believes that the play actually reinforces and naturalises the new patriarchy of capitalism.[3] (See Appendix B for further discussion on the critical appreciation of the play).

Layli and Majnoon

Nezami composed his *Layli and Majnoon* in 1188 A.D (584 H) in four thousand and seven hundred lines, though he seems to have made slight alterations to it later.[4] Although the plot of the story is not Nezami's own invention, the story of Layli and Majnoon was little known before Nezami, and came into prominence after Nezami's love lyric.[5]

The original plot of *Layli and Majnoon* comes from Arabic poems based on the love between two lovers called Layli and Qays. It seems that Nezami had access to and used the original Arabic sources of the story and translated them from Arabic to Persian, and then altered and modified the story using his genius and taste. Yet he seems to have remained faithful to the original

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[1] François Laroque, "François Laroque on Subversion and Reversal," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*, ed. Harold Bloom, Contributing ed. Neil Heims (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005) pp. 87-89.
[2] Bloom, An Essay, p. 195.
[3] Dymphan Callaghan, "The Ideology of Romantic Love: the Case of *Romeo and Juliet*," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
[4] Jalal Sattari, *Halateh Eshgheh Majnoon* (Tehran: Toos Publications, 1987) p. 11.
[5] Sattari, p. 17.

sources, not making any major changes and only altering his *Layli and Majnoon* sparingly.[1] The Arabic versions show no unity in theme or content but in the hands of Nezami the love story achieved unity and aesthetic value.[2]

Many critics have attested to the magical power and influence of Nezami's great work. A. A. Hekmat[3] has cited forty Persian and thirteen Turkish adaptations of *Layli and Majnoon*, of which the works of Jami, Hatef and Maktabi stand out among the others. He also compares Nezami's *Layli and Majnoon* with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as great (if not the greatest) examples of love poems from East and West.

Although Nezami used Arab sources for his wonderful love poem and kept the plot largely the same, he never hesitated to add to and alter the original story wherever it seemed appropriate to him. Sattari classifies Nezami's alterations into two groups: the events that have been added to the original story, and also the descriptions of the minds and inner worlds of the characters.[4]

The events added by Nezami include:[5]

- the story of Salam, the lover who decides to spend time with Majnoon and be his companion (XLII); [6]
- how the lovers meet: that Layli and Majnoon meet and fall in love in school is not seen in the original Arabic sources and many believe it to be the work of Nezami's imagination (XII);

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[1] Sattari, pp. 7, 14.
[2] Sattari, p. 16.
[3] Ali Asghar Hekmat, *Romeo va Julieteh Shakespeare Moghayeseh ba Layli va Majnooneh Nezami* (Tehran: Barvakhim Publications, 1941).
[4] Sattari pp. 7, 35.
[5] Sattari, pp. 36-37, 43.
[6] All references to the poem are from Elyas Ibn-e Yousof Nezami Ganjavi, *Koliyateh Nezami Ganjavi* (Tehran: Entesharat Negah, 1388), with Roman numeralss referring to Book number and Arabic numerals referring to line numbers.

- description of the garden (boostan) in which Layli is roaming (XIX);
- Nofel a noble man fighting Layli's tribe on behalf of Majnoon: although his name has been mentioned in Arabic sources, the original story is very simple and does not involve his fighting for Majnoon (XXI-XXIV);
- Majnoon's living among animals (XXXIII).

The question now is why Nezami has added these scenes. Many critics have tended to answer this question from an aesthetic point of view, that in order to lessen the barrenness and dryness of the deserts in which the lovers live, Nezami, being a Persian poet, has taken upon himself to beautify this otherwise simple story and turn it into one of the greatest love stories of all times.[1]

Though no doubt it is right to say that what Nezami added to his version of *Layli and Majnoon* has made his poem an everlasting love story, aesthetics may not have been his only reasons for the alterations. Indeed, many critics have tended to ignore the possible social implications of the added parts; how each added scene, from a social perspective, enriches the meaning of the whole poem and helps to highlight the subversive nature of Layli and Majnoon's love.

Hence, a subversive and critical reading of the poem helps to provide possible answers to the question of why Nezami has made certain alterations to the original story. These alternative readings of each scene are briefly listed below:

- The story of Salam juxtaposes Majnoon with a conventional lover who is unable to endure the hardships of Majnoon's love and life, and hence

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[1] Sattari, pp. 18, 36, 37.

highlights the unconventional, subversive and challenging nature of Majnoon's love;

- School is seen as one of the institutions that enforce gender relations and act as "gender police"[1] or ISA's.[2] Hence, by meeting and falling in love while in school, the lovers undermine its authority and power as a gender enforcing institution, thus subverting power relations;
- The garden (boostan) in which Layli is roaming is also where she is seen by Ibn Salam. On seeing her, Ibn Salam falls in love with Layli and later asks for her hand in marriage. Layli's presence in the garden places her in a conventional setting where she is described in terms of conventional nature imagery. This makes a stark contrast with how Layli and Majnoon meet and fall in love, thus highlighting and emphasising the unconventional nature of Layli and Majnoon's love which is subversive and not in a natural setting.
- The incident involving Nofel points to Majnoon's instability and plurality of character since he displays multiple, and even contradictory, attitudes during the war with Layli's tribe. While he is praying for peace, he supports Layli's tribe, yet

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[1] "Gender police" are defined as the different institutions that make up the patriarchal structure and are responsible for perpetuating gender divisions and patriarchal values. These institutions help to maintain the privileging of men and the oppression of women. They include the state (law and politics), family, as well as cultural institutions such as education. Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed. *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 2; Walby, p. 21. See also, Johnson, pp. 41-42.

[2] For definition of Ideological State Apparatuses or ISA's please see Apendix C.

admonishes Nofel when he stops fighting. This plurality of character emphasises Majnoon's gender reversal;

- Majnoon's living among animals and caring for them bring him closer to nature which, again, shows his feminine character and gender reversal.

Another important difference between Nezami's *Layli and Majnoon* and the original story is his depiction of the lovers and their relationship to one another. According to Andre Miquel, while Arabic stories were mainly about Majnoon, and women had little or no role, in Nezami's poem Layli's part becomes equal with Majnoon's.[1] T. Moharamov also points to this feature of the poem, that, unlike the Arabic versions which only speak of Majnoon's love, Nezami highlights and even prioritises Layli's role.[2] As has been asserted by A. Mobarez, not only does Layli become as important as Majnoon, but also stronger than him. In Nezami's version:

- Layli is braver and has more dignity and courage than Majnoon. Although her grief and conditions are far, far worse than Majnoon's, something to which she repeatedly points herself (XL), she never gives in nor gives up hope and resists all her adversaries right to the end.
- She is the more hopeful of the two, who in times of trouble constantly encourages Majnoon to look forward to a better future and not give up trying. When all seems to be lost, she is the one who reminds Majnoon of their love (XXXV).

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[1] Sattari, p. 490.
[2] Cited in Sattari, pp. 133-134.

- Yet, despite her courage and strength, she sees herself a prisoner, caged in a culture which denies women any rights (XXXV). Hence, there is an ongoing conflict between Layli's pure and innocent love, and the strict and restricting laws of her society.[1]

Sattari also believes that Nezami depicts Layli as the stronger of the two:

- Although Majnoon speaks openly of his love, Layli comes out as the braver one, who takes many risks to meet and speak to her beloved (XL).
- It is Layli who arranges to meet Majnoon, and although she cannot go to him directly, she is always seeking him through friends and others (XXXV).[2]
- Her role is equal to that of the ruler of the tribe since, instead of showing obedience to the ruler, Majnoon declares himself to be under the rule of Layli. This becomes quite evident in the scene involving the old beggar woman and Majnoon chained as a prisoner (XXVII).[3]

Nezami also portrays Majnoon as a pure and true lover and his depiction becomes a role model for others to follow centuries after him. Through Nezami Majnoon becomes an exemplar of the true lover.[4]

The poem is usually interpreted as a spiritual journey in search of Divine Love, where Majnoon's love for Layli enables

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[1] Cited in Sattari, p. 134.
[2] Sattari, p. 141.
[3] Sattari, pp. 182-183.
[4] Sattari, p. 18.

Majnoon to discover God as the Ultimate Beloved.[1] Servatiyan, for instance, believes that Majnoon is in fact in search of God and comes to this realisation at the end of the poem. After 30 years of waiting for Layli in mountains and deserts, losing his grasp on everything and letting go of himself, he suddenly realises that Layli was only an excuse for him to discover Divine Love.[2]

This search for Divine Love is not, however, only limited to Majnoon, since, according to Servatiyan, through Layli Nezami aims to show that women are also capable of seeking and attaining Divine Love. Hence, the poem depicts how this love grows and matures in a woman caged in a limiting and constraining society.[3]

Though the text may allow such a reading, to look at the poem only in terms of spirituality has the disadvantage that it tends to ignore its social aspects. For instance, from a social perspective, the poem can be treated as a critique of society. As such, Russian critics looking at the poem in terms of class struggle assert that in his *Layli and Majnoon*, Nezami sets to defend women and their rights.[4]

T. Moharamov declares that the poem's main concern is to reveal the terrible and unfair treatment of women in the feudal society of the time. Hence, Nezami names his masterpiece *Layli and Majnoon* and by bringing Layli's name to the fore, highlights and prioritises her role.[5]

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[1] Sattari, p. 14.
[2] Behrooz Servatiyan, *Razeh Eshgh Dar Masnaviyeh Arefaneyeh Nezami Ganjavi* (Karaj: Nashreh Neshani, 2009) p. 9.
[3] Servatiyan, p. 90.
[4] Sattari, p. 133.
[5] Cited in Sattari, pp. 133-134.

Similarly, according to Mickael A. Zand, Layli portrays human dignity and pride when she refuses to consummate her forced marriage to a man she has no feelings for.[1]

Sabzeh Ali, however, offers a completely different reading of the poem. She looks at the poem from a socio-psychoanalytic perspective to analyse Majnoon's personality. She believes that Majnoon's inner mind is divided into two parts: his "sane half" as well as his "dormant mad half". Accordingly, she states three reasons for Majnoon's madness: first, love itself; second, being away from the beloved; and third, society. By constantly calling him Majnoon (madman), society provokes Majnoon to allow his "dormant mad half" to become active.

Furthermore, she regards the poem to be concerned with a conflict between God's will and that of man. For this she refers to the beginning of the poem where Majnoon's father keeps praying to God for a child. By his insistence, Sabzeh Ali believes, Majnoon's father refuses to accept Divine providence and destiny as accorded by God, not knowing that what he is asking for will in fact cause him grief and suffering (Book XI). Thus, it is such an arrogant will, doomed to destruction, which causes the catastrophe in the poem.[2]

Eqbali and Givi look at the poem using Freudian and Jungian theories and conclude that the story contains nothing except "excessive doting, and Majnoon's pathetic death." They declare Majnoon to be "cursed and ominous" who has no "self," and thus not even the hero archetype, represented by Nofel, the archetype of rebirth, and mother archetype (Kaabeh) can save

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[1] Cited in Sattari, p. 256.

[2] Layla Sabzeh Ali, "Tahlileh Ejtemaee-Ravanshenasi az Dastan Layli va Majnooneh Nezami Ganjavi: Halateh Eshgheh Majnoon," *Hamshahri* (2 Bahman 1381) p. 5.

him.[1] Thus, *Layli and Majnoon* depicts “doting and absolute madness, or in other words self-alienation, and masochism.”[2]

Somewhat along these lines, critics usually hold Majnoon responsible for his pain and grief:

- Soon after falling in love, he openly admits and declares his love for Layli. This leads everyone to talk of his love and also of Layli, thus bringing disgrace for both Majnoon and his beloved. It is this open talk and disgrace which forces Layli’s family to hide her from Majnoon (XII, 22-29). Hence, Sotoodiyan and Naseh assert that if Majnoon had kept his love a secret he would have been allowed to be united with his beloved in marriage and may not have become Majnoon (mad) either. But, by being arrogant and exposing himself, he ruins all his chances of happiness.
- According to Sotoodiyan and Naseh, Majnoon exposes himself due to weakness and excessive passion, which lead him to desire union with the beloved. This desire is a weakness when the poem is read as a spiritual journey and the beloved is seen as a metaphor for the Ultimate Beloved. In such a reading, offered by Sotoodiyan and Naseh, separation, not unity, is the aim of such love, which

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[1] Ebrahim Eqbali and Hossein Ghamari Givi, “Barresiyeh Ravanshenakhtiyeh Seh Manzoomeyeh Ghanaeeyeh Farsi (Khosro va Shirin, Layli va Majnoon, va Vays va Ramin),” *Pazhoohesh Zaban va Adabiyat Farsi:* 2 (Spring and Summer 1383) p. 14.

[2] Eqbali and Givi, pp. 11-12.

should remind the person of Divine Love and bring him or her closer to the Creator. [1]

- Sattari also states the reason for keeping Layli away from Majnoon to be caused by Majnoon exposing their love to the world.
- This separation leads to his madness which causes both lovers to live with pain and grief all their lives. Hence, it is Majnoon who destroys any chance the lovers may have had and brings all to a dead-end.[2]

The lovers, according to Sattari, put up what he calls a "negative resistance." Since they are separated because of the laws of their families and society, they have no choice but to abide by those laws. By negative resistance Sattari means that despite wanting so much to be with each other, all their lives the lovers act as if they were only after pain and suffering, welcoming grief and pain as part of their destiny. Their negative resistance is perhaps their way of making up for their failure caused by social etiquettes since they dare not act against the social and ethical norms of society. Hence, they turn the pain of separation into a positive value and as an inevitable part of their love and lives.[3]

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[1] Sotoodiyan and Naseh, "Eshgheh Ozri va Shereh Ozri ba Negahi beh Layli va Majnooneh Nezami." *Majaleyeh Daneshkadeyeh Adabiyat va Oloom Ensan,* (Mashahd. 144. Spring 1383) p. 111.
[2] Sattari, p. 77.
[3] Sattari, p. 14.

2. Gender Roles

Since gender is a social construct and a product of a society's beliefs regarding gender behaviour, gender roles differ slightly from one society to the next. In spite of this, there are similar patterns of "gendered division of labor and a gender hierarchy" seen in many cultures which means that there may also be similar patterns of behaviour in different cultures.[1] Therefore, in analysing the two societies of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Layli and Majnoon*, similar patterns of gender roles and gender behaviour will be shown to exist between the two cultures, even if there may not be a one to one correspondence.

On this basis, the world of *Romeo and Juliet* can be divided into two which stand opposite to each other. One is the patriarchal world of the fathers, dominated by fathers, the feud, violence, expediency, materiality, and patriarchal laws that curtail love, equality, and freedom. Once in love, Romeo and Juliet move away from the world of the fathers to constitute their own "love-world" governed by their liberating, untainted love, in which they emerge as liberated human beings free from the patriarchal laws of domination and subordination.[2]

Similarly, the world of *Layli and Majnoon* can also be divided into two distinct and opposing worlds. The first world is the patriarchal society of Arabia with its limiting and constraining laws which sanction and advocate violence, oppression, and inequality. The second is created by Layli and

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[1] Rudman and Glick, p. 88.
[2] Edwards, pp. 73-74; Ryan, p. 122. See also Mack, pp. 289-290; Evans, p. 23.

Majnoon, an ideal world free from prejudice and oppression, and founded, instead, on love, compassion, freedom and equality. Layli and Majnoon's liberating love and the world it creates can then be seen as inimical to the patriarchal world of Arabia.

The following chapter deals with the world of the fathers in the two works and offers an in-depth analysis of how these patriarchal societies function. From here on, the world of the fathers in *Romeo and Juliet* is referred to as the world of *Romeo and Juliet*, or Veronese society. In *Layli and Majnoon,* this world is referred to as the world of the poem or Arabian society.

The Patriarchal World of *Romeo and Juliet*

The pure and unselfish nature of Romeo's and Juliet's love gets emphasized through all the characters employed by Shakespeare in his play, including Romeo himself before he falls in love with Juliet. They seem to reveal different aspects of patriarchy which stand in stark opposition to Romeo and Juliet and their liberating love, thus highlighting the complete freedom of the two lovers from the constraining laws of the patriarchal system.[1]

Patriarchy is seen as a system that relies on violence which victimises both men and women.[2] The world of *Romeo and Juliet* is no exception: violence is central to Verona. Critics have often pointed to the "violent atmosphere" underlying "Veronese civility."[3] Verona is filled with "violence-loving aristocrats"[4] and is based on hostility, "enmity, violence and disorder."[5]

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[1] See also Mack, p. 281; Brown, p. 305.
[2] Rudman and Glick, pp. 270-271; Johnson, p. 16.
[3] Synder, p. 182. See also Edwards, p. 76.
[4] Raffel, p. xxiv.
[5] Bloom, Guides, 2005, p. 27; Edwards, p. 76.

This violent atmosphere is evident in the opening scene, which is also where the play deviates from its immediate source, Brooke's poem. Although the violent dimensions of Veronese life are evident in Brooke's poem and the feud introduced early on, the destructive force of the feud is presented much later. Shakespeare, however, puts particular emphasis on this fact of Veronese life by having his play open with talks on violence between the servants followed by a street fight which goes on to involve most of the characters, including the peace-loving Benvolio, thus highlighting the centrality of violence and the feud in Veronese social structure.[1] Through the opening scene, Verona is depicted as a "world full of rancour and irrational hostility."[2] Using speech-acts, Joseph A. Porter describes the opening scene "as one of edgy quarrelsomeness" and full of "insults, challenges and defiances."[3]

Male violence can in fact be seen as integral to patriarchy's "social structure" and even sanctioned by the system, though it may not be openly approved of.[4] In Verona, the feud exemplifies one form of violence and is in fact a legitimised part of the system. It is more than just a fight between the two houses of Capulet and Montague because it involves everyone. The Prince, who stands for authority and the State, may denounce the feud, and call those involved in the fighting 'Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace' (I.i.72). Veronese citizens, too, abhor the Capulets and Montagues for street brawling: 'Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!' (I.i.65) Yet they are by no means against violence itself and sanction it one way or another.

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[1] Evans, p. 8.
[2] Edwards, p. 74.
[3] Joseph A. Porter, "Eloquence and Liminality: Glossing Mercutio's Speech Acts," *Romeo and Juliet: New Casebooks*, ed. R. S. White (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) p. 168.
[4] Walby, pp. 21, 128.

This is because in Verona men are allowed to wear and carry swords and, as Sampson in the opening lines tells Gregory, they act according to honour codes which allow and even demand violence:[1] "Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals" (I.i.1).[2]

Though the gentry may seem more "civilized" in appearance, they are even more dangerous than the servants since they use rapiers instead of swords.[3] Furthermore, in the first scene, none of the characters, whether it is the servants or the gentlemen, shows any reluctance in joining the brawl, and they start fighting without giving any second thoughts (although Benvolio is shown to be a peace-maker and tries to stop the fight, he is ultimately forced to join in). Mercutio, on the other hand, it has to be remembered, is neither a Montague nor a Capulet but a kinsman to the Prince. Yet, when Romeo refuses Tybalt's challenge in Act 3, Scene 1, he takes up Romeo's fight without any hesitation or consideration for the Prince's earlier death penalty.[4] The thirst for fighting is not limited to the young only. Even Old Montague and Old Capulet show their willingness to uphold the feud as soon as they enter the scene:

> CAPULET:
> What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!
> (I.i.66)
> MONTAGUE:
> Thou villain Capulet! – Hold me not, let me go.
> (I.i.70)

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[1] Raffel, pp. xviii-xix, xx-xxi.

[2] To carry coals means to "submit passively to indignity or insult." Evans, p. 68.

[3] Mack, p. 284.

[4] See also Goddard, pp. 160, 161; Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet, Coriolanus* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1970) p. 16.

Hence, not even old age has quenched their thirst for violence. Yet, since they are the heads of the two families, by willing to join the fight they approve of and legitimise the feud.[1]

Though it may appear "lawless" and "barbaric," the feud, with its consequent violence, is integral to Veronese social structure. As Susan Synder has asserted, the feud is Verona's main governing force.[2] It is the feud that defines masculinity and femininity by establishing and promoting honour codes within society.[3] In patriarchal societies, such as Verona, violence is also reinforced through the concept of honour since men's honour lies in their ability to achieve "autonomy and toughness." Therefore, ultimately, they may have to resort to violence in order to establish and even defend their honour. This concept of honour extends to include the reputation of "an in-group" which includes "family, tribe, clan or nation."[4] Adhering to this masculine code of honour can, therefore, be seen as the major factor which causes the disaster of the play and results in the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, as well as Romeo's banishment.[5]

The concept of honour applies to women as well. For women, their honour lies in their "deference" to male authority and control. Furthermore, a woman's honour also represents that of the men in her family. Hence, it becomes essential for men to maintain control over the women in their family, and any defiance on the part of the woman is met with male violence.

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[1] Frye, p. 240.

[2] According to H.B Charlton "such barbaric mores are not realistic in the civilized Verona the play depicts." But "critics in our own time have less trouble seeing the destructive dimensions in Veronese civility." Synder, pp. 182, 23.

[3] Evans, p. 50.

[4] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 266-67.

[5] See also Synder, p. 187.

Consequently, when Juliet defies her father's will to marry Paris, she is threatening his honour as a man. Earlier in the scene, Old Capulet boasts of his power over her, making decisions on her behalf:

> I think she will be ruled
> In all respects by me; nay more, I doubt it not.
> (III.iv.13-14)

Now, to lose his power and to have his authority challenged would make him less the man he wishes and considers himself to be. Thus, Old Capulet retaliates to Juliet's defiance by threatening to turn her out of the house if she would not marry Paris:

> And you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
> And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
> For by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
> Nor what is mine shall never do thee good.
> (III.v.191-194)

Capulet's fit over Juliet's refusal displays another feature of patriarchy. In any given system, "power, dominance, and control" are central issues in the lives of people. Yet, patriarchy emphasises male control only and consequently, demands female submission.[1] Therefore, when Old Capulet is confronted with Juliet's refusal to marry Paris, he feels his authority and control threatened. As a "patriarch," control and dominance over Juliet define his "manhood" and so he reacts aggressively to Juliet's reasonable pleas:[2]

> Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch !
> I tell thee what : get thee to church a'Thursday,

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[1] Johnson, pp. 42,15.
[2] Evans, pp. 23, 52; Bloom, Guides, 2005, pp. 49-51; Bevington, p. 55.

> Or never after look me in the face
> Speak not, reply not, do not answer me!
> (III.v.160-163)

Earlier, when speaking to Paris, Old Capulet seems like a reasonable and caring father who has his daughter's interests at heart and considers her too young for marriage:

> My child is yet a stranger in the world,
> She hath not seen the change of fourteen years;
> Let two more summers wither in their pride,
> Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
> (I.ii.8-11)

He wishes to take into account her say and feelings regarding Paris's proposal:

> And she agreed, within her scope of choice
> Lies my consent and fair according voice.
> (I.ii.18-19)

He quickly, however, changes his position when he feels his authority and control undermined by Juliet's refusal. He considers it his natural right that Juliet "shall be ruled in all respects by" him. Hence, to have authority and control over Juliet "is as't should be" (IV.ii.28):

> Capulet: My heart is wondrous light,
> Since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed.
> (IV.ii.45-6)

By accepting Paris's proposal, Old Capulet disregards his daughter's desires and instead, reasserts his authority and power over Juliet, hence fulfilling his role as a "patriarch" in control of the women in his family.[1]

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[1] Broder, p. 94.

Another instance of male violence toward women surfaces during "intergroup conflict." In such situations, women of the enemy party become the target as a means to "demoralize" and "emasculate" the enemy which highlights the enemy's weakness in protecting their women from strangers.[1] This aspect of violence in Verona is seen in Sampson and Gregory's talk in Scene 1 of Act 1.[2]

Patriarchy is seen as a system based on the suppression of "intimate relationships."[3] Understandably, relationships in such a society are to be formed on a basis of domination and subordination, instead of equality and mutual feelings.

Two of the most interesting characters in this play are bawds, namely Mercutio and the Nurse. These two characters serve as contrasts to Romeo and Julie, and help to highlight the purity and sincerity of their love.[4] Despite seeming differences, Mercutio and the Nurse are, in fact, very similar to each other, reflecting an understanding of love as sex only.[5] When advising Romeo, Mercutio speaks of love as a form of male aggression[6] and views women as "a set of sexual parts to be attacked."[7]A similar attitude is expressed by the servants who consider violence and assault as the basis of a relationship.[8]

Another love convention in this world is seen between Romeo and his first love, Rosaline, which stands on the opposite pole from male aggression. Here it is the woman who plays the role of the cruel and cold beloved. Through her indifference, the

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 283.
[2] See also Evans, p.50
[3] Gilligan and Richards, pp. 19-21.
[4] Goddard, pp. 155. 157; Mack, pp. 279-280; Brown, p. 306.
[5] Goddard, p. 156. See also Porter, p. 170; Bloom, Guides, 2005, p. 8.
[6] Ryan, p. 119. See also Porter, p. 170; Bloom, An Essay, pp. 206-207.
[7] Synder, p. 187.
[8] In the opening scene of the play, Sampson and Gregory's talk of violence and weapons leads them to speak of maidenheads and violence toward women.

beloved becomes an unattainable object, a goddess which can only be worshipped from afar and the lover becomes a "tortured slave," drowning himself, as Romeo does, in sighs over his lady's cruelty. Love in this sense, instead of mutual feelings between equals, becomes a "sadistic" relationship based on domination and submission.[1]

In loving Rosaline, Romeo is more in love with the idea of love than the beloved herself, and only wishes to define his identity as a lover. This is also true of Paris and his love for Juliet. As the play indicates Paris and Juliet hardly know each other except through Juliet's parents. Furthermore, he shows little interest in her affections for him and so he is not really after Juliet's love, but only wishes to own and possess her:[2] "Thy face is mine, and thou hast slandered it" (IV.i.35). Without even considering her feelings, he already assumes that Juliet must love him: "So will ye, I am sure, that you love me" (IV.i.26). Thus, by grieving her in the tomb, he is in fact trying to define himself as a disappointed lover much like Romeo grieving Rosaline's indifference earlier.[3]

In a world where love and emotions have no meaning or value, marriage becomes a convention and a contract. As Brown points out, Paris's proposal exemplifies the way marriages were arranged in "powerful families."[4] Hence, in Verona, too, marriage becomes a social contract where, instead of feelings and emotions, the prospects of the marriage are considered by the parents.[5]

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[1] Mack, p. 278. See also Ryan, p. 119.
[2] Bloom, Guides, 2005, pp. 58, 59.
[3] Bloom, Guides, 2005, pp. 58, 59.
[4] Brown, p. 305.
[5] Mack, p. 279.

Juliet's suitor, Paris, is a Count and a kinsman to the Prince, and so, in accepting his proposal, Old Capulet is probably hoping to benefit from the new opportunities and future prospects that such a match may offer him:[1]

> CAPULET:
> still my care hath been
> To have her matched; and having now provided
> A gentleman of noble parentage,
> Of fair demesnes, youthful and nobly ligned,
> Stuffed, as they say, with honourable parts,
> Proportioned as one's thought would wish a man.
> (III.v.177-182)

Hence, instead of love and Juliet's feelings, his only concern is with materiality.[2] In this sense, marriage is a mere contract, not a relationship between people in love. (When she advises Juliet to forget Romeo and accept Paris, the Nurse too is only thinking of the advantages and expediency of marrying Paris since Romeo is now banished.[3])

In a patriarchal society, female submission can be seen as central to male privilege, male domination and power. This aspect may be observed in the way marriages are arranged in *Romeo and Juliet*.

It is Juliet's father who is approached by Paris and it is he who considers the plausibility of such a match and has the power to accept or refuse it. As the play indicates, Paris and Juliet never

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[1] Bevington, p. 54.
[2] Mack, p. 279.
[3] Bloom, An Essay, p. 210. See also Mack, pp. 279-280. Frye, however, believes that in her advice, the Nurse in fact "wants to be genuinely helpful" and is wrongly termed a "most wicked fiend". Being one of "the lower classes" she lacks imagination and does not "live by codes of honour," hence for her the "only rule was survival." Frye, p. 250.

court, and Paris never stops to consider Juliet's feelings toward him. For him, it is enough that her father has accepted his proposal. Although Old Capulet at first agrees to consider Juliet's consent, it is ultimately he who accepts the proposal, despite Juliet's disagreement.

Lady Capulet, on the other hand, plays a passive role in Juliet's marriage. Despite being Juliet's mother, she has no say on this matter, and only submits to the will of her husband. On the few occasions that she appears in the play her purpose in speaking to her daughter is to communicate Old Capulet's "decree" (III.v.138) regarding Paris's proposal:[1]

> Well, well, thou hast a careful father, child,
> One who, to put thee from thy heaviness,
> Hath sorted out a sudden day of joy,
> That thou expects not, nor I looked not for. (III.v.107-110)

She never expresses her own thoughts and feelings regarding Paris's proposal and upholds and defends her husband's decisions even when he is being tyrannical and unreasonable, thus, submitting easily to male authority and control. Likewise, the Nurse is also given no say in Juliet's marriage and is instead met with Capulet's anger when she tries to defend Juliet (III.v.168-175).

The marriage conventions in *Romeo and Juliet,* therefore, would point to how women are assigned a very passive role in that society. They are excluded from making decisions, even regarding their own lives, and instead, have to submit to the will of men.

Other than characteristics mentioned so far, which are general to patriarchal societies, there are other traits attributed to women which are peculiar to Veronese society.

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[1] See also Frye, p. 242; Broder, p. 94.

The Veronese portrayal of women is mainly seen through Friar Laurence. On two occasions we see him attribute certain qualities to women. First is when he is talking to Romeo after his banishment. While Romeo is crying, and moves to stab himself, he is warned by the Friar that his "tears are womanish" and therefore he has become an "unseemly woman in a seeming man" (III. iii. 110-112). The second instance is when the Friar is giving Juliet the sleeping potion. According to the Friar, fear and inconstancy are also "womanish:"[1]

> If no inconstant toy, nor womanish fear
> Abate thy valour in the acting it. (IV. I. 119-120)

The Nurse further solidifies the conception of women as inconstant when she advises Juliet to leave Romeo for Paris:

> I think you are happy in this second match,
> For it excels your first, or if it did not,
> Your first is dead, or 'twere as good he were
> As living here and you no use of him. (III.v.222-5)

According to her standards, which probably also reflect the standards of her society, expediency and worldly prospects are what binds a woman to a man, and a second and better match justifies inconstancy. Consequently, instead of commitment and loyalty, actions are based on and changed in different situations.[2] Therefore, it does not matter who Juliet is married to as long as he "excels" the first man. Hence, in Verona women are considered, and perhaps are to some extent, weak, afraid and inconstant.

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[1] See also McAlindon, Romeo, p. 269.
[2] Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," *Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*. ed. Harold Bloom, Volume ed. Janyce Marson (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 136; Bloom, An Essay, p. 210; Evans, p. 23.

To sum, Veronese society holds certain beliefs and codes regarding masculinity and femininity. Based on the analysis of the world of *Romeo and Juliet* presented above, masculinity is seen to be typically associated with violence and aggression, activity, dominance, and control. Femininity on the other hand is defined in terms of passivity, submission, weakness, and inconstancy.

The Patriarchal World of *Layli and Majnoon*

As explained before, patriarchy, as a system, is defined as relying on violence for maintenance.[1] Accordingly, in the patriarchal world of *Layli and Majnoon* violence is also an all-too-pervasive fact of life. Social life is so well-immersed in violence that its presence may go unnoticed. Yet under the calm surface of Arabian social structure lurks a very disturbing way of life which feeds on violence and destruction as its governing forces.

The two battles between Nofel and Layli's tribe exemplify the ease with which violence is accepted as a legitimate part of the system in Arabia:

- Wishing to unite Layli and Majnoon, Nofel finds no other way of reasoning with Layli's tribe than to send them harsh words threatening of violence and war should they refuse to succumb to his wishes; words which are replied with "abuse and derision" (XXII, 19, *LM*e 77).[2]

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 270-271; Johnson, p. 16.

[2] The original text of the poem is in Persian. Whenever appropriate, an English prose translation has been used: Nizami, *The Story of Layla and Majnun,* trans. R. Gelpke (London: Bruno Cassirer Ltd., 1966), from here on referred to as *LM*e followed by page number.

- He never sends any emissaries of peace to try and reason with Layli's father, or even hear of his concerns and reasons for refusing Majnoon. Had he done so, he may have realised sooner what he learnt after so much killing and bloodshed, that her father's concerns are rooted in the conventions of society.
- There are no discussions or talks to find some peaceful solution that would avoid violence, nor are any efforts made for reaching an agreement or understanding. Instead, Nofel immediately relies on violence to achieve his end, without any thoughts to the legitimacy of his use of force or any hesitation in shedding blood. In this world, therefore, things get done using force and violence.
- Layli's people also show no reluctance in starting a forced war and make no efforts for peace, thus failing to recognise the cost and destruction of the war they are to enter.
- In this world, it seems everybody has a liking for violence. This is a fact of which Nofel takes great advantage when preparing for a second battle against Layli's tribe. He is able to gather reinforcements and secure his victory by having the support of other tribes and preparing a greater army. When other tribes gladly and easily consent to join the fighting army, the question of the legitimacy or the cause of the fight is never raised.
- The poem does not state directly that other tribes 'gladly and easily' join the fighting, yet there is no mention of any hardships Nofel may have undergone to find support, except that he sent messengers from Madineh To Bghdada to gather an

> army (XXIII, 19-21). Hence, the right or wrong of the cause for which other tribes offer support is never an issue for concern. The only concern, it seems, is to have the stronger army and fight to win. Therefore, violence becomes its own cause and justification, and approved of for its own sake.

Furthermore, at the end of the first battle, when Nofel calls for peace, he is never punished, admonished or even questioned for starting a war against a tribe without any legal or justified cause. Instead, his truce pact is readily accepted (XXII, 78-80). No one questions him on the legitimacy of the war he started. Nor effort is made to punish Nofel for the destruction he caused, nor are any compensations offered by him for the lives lost. At most his wish to unite Layli and Majnoon is denied. Nor do Layli's people complain to the Caliph to bring Nofel to justice for attacking them without any justified cause. Their disregard for the severity of Nofel's actions and his unlawful attack on their tribe emphasises the ease with which violence is accepted as part of their lives.

In Arabia, as a patriarchal society, honour stands out as another means through which violence is sanctified and promoted.[1] Consequently, it is fear of disgrace that leads Layli's tribe to enter the second battle with Nofel. When Nofel gathers a greater army and comes to attack Layli's tribe a second time, there is again no question of the legitimacy of his claim. Even though Nofel's men are far greater in number and it would be unwise to fight such an army, Layli's people find it a shame to refuse the fight (XXIV, 8-9). As honourable men, they find they have no choice but to enter the battle a second time. Hence, fear of their honour stained by refusing to fight Nofel forces them

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[1] Gilligan and Richards, p. 21.

into another bloody war without considering the consequences of their action or the lawfulness of Nofel's attacks.

Whereas earlier Layli's people have no hesitation in complaining against Majnoon for his poems (XVI, 56-64), they never send for the Caliph or his prefect to reinforce the law against Nofel. It seems that violence and destruction have become a legitimised part of the system in this society. Hence, while Majnoon's love poems are a violation of the law, Nofel's attacks pose no threat to "custom and decency" (XVI, 61-62, *LM*e 47), and are therefore never considered as a case for the prefect's intervention.

The hostility which rules over Arabia presents itself as a natural fact of life which is evident, yet again, at the end of the second battle ending with Nofel's victory (XXIV). Layli's people, who are outnumbered and heavily defeated, run humbly to Nofel to ask for his forgiveness. "As a sign of submission, the elders sprinkled earth on their heads" and begged Nofel to show justice and mercy on them:

> 'You, Lord and Master, are the victor. We, your enemies, have been defeated – dead or alive. Now let justice prevail. Do not refuse peace to a few survivors! Allow us resurrection after our fall and remember that one day we shall all be faced with another resurrection. Put your sword back into its sheath; you no longer need it against the defenceless men who are lying here at your feet asking forgiveness. Let spears and arrows rest! Look, we have thrown away our shields and entrust our fate to your hands.' (XXIV, 23-30, *LM*e 86-87)

Oppression, male privilege and male dominance are seen as core aspects of a patriarchal society, leading to "unequal distribution of power, rewards, opportunities, and resources" not only

between men and women, but also between men and men,[1] thus allowing the powerful to oppress, dominate and control others. This can also be seen to exist in the world of *Layli and Majnoon*. Being the victor and the stronger one gives Nofel the right to "demand his price" (XXIV, 31-32, *LM*e 87), disregarding the fact that he started an unlawful attack which led to the deaths of many innocent people.

Based on the characteristics of patriarchy, therefore, Nofel's attack is not as unlawful or illegal as it would seem based on a more egalitarian conception of law and justice, and the use of violence is in fact part of the law itself.[2] This can be discerned in the prefect's attitude toward Majnoon. On hearing the tribe's claim to Majnoon's indecency and crime, the prefect immediately "drew his sword out of his sheath." Without even hearing Majnoon's side of the story and making just decisions based on reason and justice, he gives his "answer with" his sword, showing his eagerness to use violence and force. Despite being the prefect and a representative of the law, he seems to be "out for blood" and "a raging torrent and blazing fire" (XVI, 65-66, *LM*e 47).

The aspect of patriarchy whereby any threat to men's control of the women in their family is met with harsh retaliation and violence[3] may be noticed at the end of the second battle, when Nofel asks for the union of Layli and Majnoon (XXIV, 32). Layli's father, however, refuses to give Layli to Majnoon by threatening to "cut off her head with my own hands" in order "to save my honour and to live in peace." Fearing disgrace and dishonour, he would rather "feed this moonlike bride to the dogs," than have her marry Majnoon (XXIV, 37-60, *LM*e 88).

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[1] Johnson, pp. 41-42.
[2] Walby, pp. 21, 128.
[3] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 274; Johnson, pp. 42, 15.

Consequently, by threatening to use violence against his innocent girl, Layli's father is able to "escape disaster" and save his honour (XXVIII, 5, *LM*e 106). By agreeing with Layli's father's wishes, Nofel also consents to this use of violence. Layli's father's threat, hence, reflects the fact that as her father and a patriarch, he is able to even kill the girl should he feel his honour threatened by her. Therefore, as a woman Layli is subject to her father's authority and has to submit to his will.

Violence, in fact, seems to be how men and masculinity are defined in this society. There are three men in the poem, besides Majnoon, whose characters and actions are described to some depth: Majnoon's father, Nofel, and Ibn Salam, Layli's husband. All three are highly noble men, renowned for their honour and good name. There is, however, also a violent dimension to their characters which is not seen in Majnoon (Majnoon's deviation from this violent temper is discussed in Chapter Three):

- Majnoon's father, for instance, is "a great lord" who has "a kind heart" and is "generous" (XI, 6-7, *LM*e 13). Yet he can also be "a formidable enemy" (XIV, 35, *LM*e 32).
- Nofel, on the other hand, is a "Bedouin prince" (XXI, 12, *LM*e 67) who is moved by Majnoon's grief and his unhappy life. Yet, even though he wishes to help Majnoon, he can only resort to violence as the only way of reaching his goals.
- On similar grounds, Layli's husband also has a violent dimension to his noble character. Ibn Salam is described as "a man of good repute" (XX, 6, *LM*e 65) who is "pride of the Arabs" (XXVIII, 43-44, *LM*e 108). Yet "if need be," he is "willing to shed blood like water" (XXVIII, 45, *LM*e 108). As the two attacks on Layli's tribe indicate, this "need" is

based on arbitrary laws, decided on by the wishes of the individuals.

Since violence is its own law and justification in this world, anyone who has power enough becomes the law and authority and can thus, resort to violence according to his or her wishes and desires.

As a patriarchal society, a prominent feature of the world of the poem is that it is based on a master-slave relationship.[1] All the characters bear this relationship to one another and are either masters or slaves, figuratively if not literally:

- Majnoon's father "ruled over the Banu Amir." He is "a great lord" and a "Sultan of the Arabs" (XI, 3, 6, *LM*e 13).
- Nofel, who is a hunter as well, has brought other people under his command through his bravery and owns many herds and cattle (XXI, 13-15).
- Similarly, Ibn Salam has "untold number of men obey him" and possesses herds and cattle (XX, 7, 17, XXVIII, 44, *LM*e 108). Hence, all the noble men are masters who rule over others and have people obeying their commands.

The master-slave relationship, however, is not confined to the rule of the rich and the gentry only. As the incident with the beggar woman indicates, even the poor have to maintain these positions in order to survive in this society. The beggar woman finds she has no choice but to chain and 'enslave' a dervish, a poor man who also hopes to find something to "fill purse and belly" (IIVII, 16-18, *LM*e 102). Just like the rich and the noble who have men under their command, the beggar woman can

[1] Johnson, pp. 14, 41-42.

only make a living by chaining and bringing another person under her command. The same master-slave principle applies to the chained man who sees slavery and submission as his only means of earning a living. This is, therefore, an endorsement of the master-slave relationship as a means of living which exists at all levels of social life.

Just like Verona, this society also has certain conventions regarding relationships and marriages. There are two types of relationships in the Arabian world, both of which lack mutuality, equality, love, and freedom as their bases. Apart from Layli and Majnoon, the various other lovers in this world include Ibn Salam, Layli's husband, those who fall for Layli described in Book XIX, and Salam, the young man from Baghdad. Through these people the poem reveals different concepts of love which are the common beliefs of this society. These concepts include love as an urge to possess, and love as an unattainable desire.

One type of love convention turns the woman into an object to be possessed. Such is the love Ibn Salam bears for Layli. As soon as he sees Layli, Ibn Salam "decided to conquer this shining light" (XX, 10-12, *LM*e 65). From then on all he can ever think of is possessing "this fairy girl" (XX, 4, *LM*e 66). Despite being "deeply in love" with her (XXVIII, 84-85, *LM*e 109), he does not care to find out Layli's own feelings and consent regarding his proposal. Instead, as it is custom, he sends "a confidant" who, "in well calculated humility," sets out to convince Layli's parents, and offers them "presents" and "gold" (XX, 14-17, *LM*e 66). Hence, love translates into an urge to possess and dominate.

Another convention is exemplified through those who fall for Layli's beauty (XIX). In this instant, the woman's beauty turns her into "a huntress" who captivates her admirers with "her gazelle's eyes." Her beauty becomes a "yoke" able to "bend" even "a lion." Here she becomes the master who is able "to

conquer a hundred kings." Yet, she remains indifferent and cold to her victims: "those who had been caught by the noose of her locks were chased away by the darts of her eyelashes". In this sense, the woman becomes an "enchantress" whose "spell of beauty" turns the onlooker into a "beggar" (XIX, 12-21, *LM*e 57-58). Hence, once again, through this convention men and women are forced to maintain the master-slave relationship.

In this society, therefore, woman is either an object to be owned or a passive goddess whose indifference turns her admires into "victims" (XIX, 16, *LM*e 57). In either case, she becomes an object of male desire who has to be possessed or worshipped for her beauty while her feelings and consent are never considered, thus subjecting her to a passive life dominated by men.

Ultimately, it is not mutual love which becomes the basis for a relationship: at best love is conceived of as "the fire of youth" which eventually "cools down." This is what Salam, the young man from Baghdad, considers love to be. Salam is a young lover who has "tasted love's sorrows" (XLII, 3-4, *LM*e 190); he has had his heart "broken" and his body "exhausted and paralysed" (XLII, 69, *LM*e 195); and has thus earned himself a name in the world of love (XLII, 6). Yet, to him love is nothing more than a youthful flame "which set you alight." Accordingly, "when the man becomes a youth, even this burning furnace cools down" (XLII, 72-73, *LM*e 195).

A yet darker conception of love is granted by Majnoon's father. Of the two fathers in the poem, Majnoon's father is portrayed as the more reasonable and understanding one. Unlike Layli's father who is only concerned with his reputation and is willing to sacrifice his daughter and her happiness for his honour and his own desires, Majnoon's father is more sympathetic to his

son and tries to help him.[1] As soon as he learns of the causes for Majnoon's unhappiness he sets to unite him with his beloved and asks Layli's father for her hand.

Despite his good intentions, however, even he can be seen as giving in to social conditioning. His failure to understand love and the true meaning of his son's emotions can betray his immersion in the ruling patriarchal ideology which allows no room for love and emotions. Instead, he considers Majnoon's feelings as an "evil" or disaster which has claimed Majnoon as its "victim." On taking Majnoon to Makkah in the hope of getting him "cured," he asks Majnoon to pray to be "saved." "Try to find relief from your sufferings," he tells Majnoon, and teaches him a prayer:

> "Save me, my God, from this vain ecstasy.
> Have pity on me; grant me refuge; take my
> madness away and lead me back to the path
> of righteousness. I am love's unhappy
> victim! Help me! Free me from the evil of
> my love." (XVI, 21-24, *LM*e 42)

Even though he tries to unite Majnoon with his beloved, he is unable to fully sympathise with him and after Layli's father refuses Majnoon, his father constantly tells him to be done with love and instead live a loveless, but happy life, free of worries. Worrying about his honour, he tells Majnoon:

> 'Love's fool, uncontrolled, immature, your
> heart burned! What evil eye has cast a spell
> over your beauty? Whose curse has blighted
> you?' (XVII, 4-5, *LM*e 50)
> Your lust is staining my honour and
> destroying yourself. (XVII, 11)

[1] Sattari, p. 195.

Thus, he equates Majnoon's pure, unselfish and untainted love with lust, vanity, and a curse. This attitude toward love may be regarded as typical of his society.

In this society, marriage also appears to be a convention, and a contract founded on materiality and opportunism. In all the marriage proposals that take place in *Layli and Majnoon*, there is never any mention of love, feelings, or the girl's consent. Instead the suitors always approach Layli's father only, and offer their proposal using words of trade:

- The earliest example is Majnoon's father asking Layli for his son, who states his request as if it were a trade and offers many gifts to Layli's father in exchange for her hand:

  > Nor have I any cause to be ashamed of my request. There is, as you know no man among us whose standing is higher than mine. I have many followers and great riches, I can be a valuable friend or a formidable enemy. Whatever you demand as a dowry shall be yours. I have come as a buyer, and you, if you are wise, will state your price and sell. Take note, there is a chance of great gain for you today. (XIV, 33-38, *LM*e 32-33)

- Even Nofel who wishes to unite Majnoon with Layli uses conventions and customs and offers riches for Layli's hand (XXII, 74, *LM*e 82).
- All Layli's suitors, in fact, bring presents with the hope of taking her as their bride ("one offered land, another sheep, yet another gold") and "they used every trick and art of persuasion to reach their goal." (XXVIII, 18-20, *LM*e 107).

- Ibn Salam sends "a mediator" who is "a master of his art" and "could weave a magic spell with his words (XXVIII, 37-39, *LM*e 108) to speak of Ibn Salam's many qualities which would bring 'honour' and fortune for Layli's father:

  > a knight like a lion, backbone of an army, pride of the Arabs! Not only his sword, but untold numbers of men obey him; wherever he goes, his name races ahead of him, and his honour is without a flaw. If it must be, he will shed blood like water and gold like sand. Who would not accept such a mighty warrior as his son-in-law? if you are in need of reliable men – he will find them. If you are in need of protection – he will grant it.'
  > (XXVIII, 43-46, *LM*e 108-09)

Therefore, marriages are social contracts where after weighing the prospects and advantages of the marriage, the girl's father gives her away in exchange for "donkey-loads of amber, musk, jewels and sweetmeats of all kinds" (XXVIII, 29-35, *LM*e 108).

Custom requires both sides to sit and talk together, "throwing a tufan of silver coins into the air," while they 'heartily' discuss 'Shirbaha' – an amount of money the groom is expected to give to the girl's parents (XXVIII, 55-56, *LM*e 190). Yet, in arranging her marriage, unable to resist Ibn Salam's offer, Layli's parents fail to consider her feelings and instead, look at the prosperity such a match would bring them (XX, 20; XXVIII 28, 47-48). Indeed, Layli's father, much like Juliet's, instead of his daughter's wishes and desires, considers the many worldly advantages of such a match. Hence, Layli is never approached by her parents about any of her suitors or her wishes

regarding marriage. She remains subject to her parents' decisions.

Hence, in this society marriage is merely a social contract between the suitor and the parents.[1] Consequently, girls have no say and play a very passive role in their own marriages, never consulted nor have their feelings and wishes considered. They are almost non-existent, except as objects of male desire which can be 'bought' in exchange for riches, gold and treasure. In this sense they become properties which are handed down from one man (the father) to the next (the husband). Therefore, they are meant to be passive recipients of men's wishes and have to submit to men's rule (first their fathers' and later their husbands') over their lives.

Layli's mother can be taken as the prime example of female passivity. Despite learning of Layli's feelings, she takes no action to find "a remedy" for Layli's troubles. Nor does she try to comfort her daughter and, instead of becoming a companion for Layli in whom she could confide, the mother chooses to "remain silent" (XIX, 144-149, *LM*e 64).

Whereas women are largely passive in this society, men take decisive actions to reach their goals:

- Majnoon's father, for instance, on learning of the cause of his son's unhappiness, immediately decides on asking for Layli's hand for Majnoon, and thus, sets out with members of his tribe to speak to Layli's father: "No sooner said than done and the old Sayyid led the dignitaries on their way" (XIV, 13-21, *LM*e 32).
- Similarly, Ibn Salam, once fallen for Layli, "went to work, swift as the wind" to find ways of

[1] See also Servatiyan, p. 62.

"conquering" her, and soon sends a confidant to her parents (XX, 10-15, *LM*e 65).

- Layli's suitors also come "from far and near" to ask for her once they hear of her beauty through Majnoon's poems and "used every trick and art of persuasion to reach their goal" (XXVIII, 17-20, *LM*e 107).
- Nofel is also a man of action, who vows to unite Layli and Majnoon when he hears of the young man's plight, and consequently goes on to attack Layli's tribe to fulfil his promise (XXII and XXIV).

Apart from being active, men in this society are also highly 'cultured.' Other than Majnoon, there are three men into whose lives the poem probes a deeper look and who are praised for the many qualities they possess: Majnoon's father, Ibn Salam, and Nofel. All three are described in terms of their "glory, power and wealth" (*LM*e 13). Women, on the other hand, have their natural beauty as their only merit:

- Layli, for instance, is often described in terms of nature imagery. She has "gazelle's eyes" and her face is "a flower" while her lips are likened to "honey." Furthermore, "her body was like a cypress tree on which the pheasant of her face was sitting in majesty" (XIX, 16, 18, 23, *LM*e 57).
- Elsewhere, when Majnoon's tribesmen are offering him girls from his own tribe, natural beauty becomes the girls' merit. They are "goddesses" who have "lips like hyacinths" and are compared to "milk and honey" (XIV, 55-60, *LM*e 35).

Therefore, whereas men are cultured and win fame for their "glory, power and wealth," women become renowned for their natural beauty and are hence associated with nature.

Apart from traits mentioned so far, beliefs surrounding women's nature in the world of Arabia may also be seen through the rider who informs Majnoon of Layli's marriage (Book XXIX). His views regarding women reflect those of his society and therefore, he can be taken as a spokesman for this patriarchal world.[1]

Layli, who has been forced to marry Ibn Salam, nevertheless stays loyal to her true love, and even after a year, has refused to consummate her marriage. Yet, the rider distorts the news of her marriage and reports lies to Majnoon. Instead of telling the truth about Layli's loyalty to him, he depicts Layli as a sensual, unfaithful woman who "no longer thinks of" Majnoon and is instead only concerned with "kissing and making love" to her husband (XXIX, 21-23, *LM*e 115). He then goes on to paint a general picture of women's "deceit and hypocrisy." He believes women to be "fickle, faithless from beginning to end. One like all and all like one." They are "deceitful" in their love because "they pursue only their own selfish interests" (XXIX, 26-33, *LM*e 115-116).

He also portrays women as 'Other.' In his opinion, a woman is "happy when you suffer, she is eaten by grief when you rejoice" (XXIX, 36-37, *LM*e 116). This view of woman distances her from the masculine 'self' and turns her into 'Other.'

Women are also considered plural in their character and temperament:

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[1] See also Sattari, p. 70.

> A dustbin of falsity and viciousness; peace, when you look at her from outside, and turmoil within. As your enemy she stirs up trouble with the whole world, as your friend she corrupts your soul (XXIX, 34-35, *LM*e 116)

Furthermore, they are regarded as inconstant in their love, befriending a man only for a short while until they can find someone better. Therefore, they are "cheats" who should not be rusted for their "fidelity" (XXIX, 27-28, *LM*e 116).

Majnoon's father also holds similar beliefs regarding Majnoon's beloved and considers Layli to be unfaithful: "why do you give your heart to a rose? She blossoms without you, while you remain in the mud; she has a heart of stone" while you are tormenting yourself (XVII, 39, *LM*e 52).

To conclude, a close study of the world of Arabia as depicted in *Layli and Majnoon* reveals the general characteristic of patriarchy where masculinity is associated with violence, culture, activity, strength, dominance and control; while feminine characteristics include passivity, nature, submission, fickleness and inconstancy, plurality of character and is regarded as 'Other.'

The aim of this chapter has been to discover socially established codes regarding gender behaviour and how femininity and masculinity are defined in the societies of Romeo, Juliet, Layli, and Majnoon. The next chapter examines the behaviour and character traits of these lovers in order to determine their deviation from their societies' sanctioned gender roles.

3. Gender Reversals

The social constructionist approach to gender asserts that gender is not a fixed and immutable characteristic. Rather it is "the psychological, social, and cultural domain of being male or female." In other words, gender is a social construction which has its roots in a society's understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman.[1] As a construction, gender can always be "deconstructed."[2] In this sense, it becomes possible for members of a society to break away from their socially assigned gender behaviour and reverse gender roles. Thus, gender reversal can be defined as

> any change, whether "total" or partial, in social behavior, work, clothing, mannerisms, speech, self-designation, or ideology, which brings a person closer to the other (or, in polygender systems, *an*other) gender.[3]

After falling in love, Romeo, Juliet, Layli, and Majnoon can be seen as violating their society's sanctioned codes of gender behaviour and reverse gender roles. This means that Romeo and Majnoon, despite being men, display characteristics socially ascribed to women. Juliet and Layli, on the other hand, take on

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[1] Anne Bolin, "Traversing Gender: Cultural Context and Gender Practices," *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives,* ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 24.
[2] Howson, p. 35; Gilchrist, pp. 78, 1. See also Hall, p. 106.
[3] Ramet, p. 2.

masculine characteristics. Hence all four characters subvert gender roles.

Romeo and Juliet's Gender reversals

Honour codes

As described in Chapter One, the feud, with its consequent violence, is integral to Veronese social structure since it establishes honour codes within the society and defines masculinity and femininity.[1] Consequently, to defy the feud and to violate honour codes lead to a subversion of gender roles.

The scene which easily pinpoints Romeo's "emasculation" coincides with the plot's turn toward tragedy. Act 3, Scene 1 is the play's crisis scene which positions Romeo against an angry and fiery Tybalt and offers him a choice between love and violence. Yet, Romeo, who has just been married to Juliet, is filled with so much passion and love that he is able to resist Tybalt's provocations.[2] Violence, it must be emphasised, defines masculinity in Verona since in this society you have to "draw [your sword], if you be men" (I.i.53). Hence, as a man, Romeo is expected to take up Tybalt's challenge and fight to defend his name and honour against Tybalt's slanders. Yet, Juliet's love proves the stronger force in Romeo and moves him to try to make peace with Tybalt even at the risk of "dishonouring" himself by ignoring the masculine code of honour:

> Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
> Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
> To such a greeting. Villain am I none;

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[1] Synder, pp. 23, 182; Evans, p. 50.
[2] See also Goddard, p. 163.

> Therefore farewell, I see thou knowest me not.
> (III.i.55-58)

Displaying compassion toward Tybalt is seen by Mercutio as 'calm, dishonourable, vile submission!' which in turn makes Romeo a "coward".[1] Romeo's actions stand in stark contrast to those of the other men present in the scene. As Susan Synder has pointed out, when Romeo refuses to be provoked by Tybalt, he acts and talks in an "unconventional" manner:

> I do protest I never injuried thee,
> But love thee better than thou canst devise,
> Till thou shalt know the reason of my love;
> And so, good Capulet, which name I tender
> As dearly as mine own, be satisfied.
> (III.i.61–65).

This, however, quickly changes once Mercutio is wounded which leads Romeo to use "conventional reactions and conventional language." Ultimately, with Mercutio's death he takes on "the avenger-role" sanctioned by society, adhering to the masculine code of honour that leads him to kill Tybalt. In proving himself a man, Romeo reverts to violence and the principle of honour, and by doing so he fails to "give it all for love." He even regrets his earlier inaction and blames Juliet for the passive role he plays at the beginning of the scene:[2]

> O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
> And in my temper softened valour's steel!
> (III.i.104-106)

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[1] Goddard, p. 163; Edwards, p. 77.
[2] Goddard, pp. 171, 166. See also Siegel, p. 98; McAlindon, Romeo, pp. 263, 270.

This is not the whole picture, however, and there is more to Romeo's emasculation.

Constancy and inconstancy

Typically, inconsistency, plurality and instability are held to be characteristics of feminine behaviour which stand in contrast with the masculine principles of "stability, order and a fixed and constant identity."[1] The crisis scene which leads to the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt and Romeo's banishment, also witnesses a series of different behaviour from Romeo which reveal in him a plurality of character. While earlier he distances himself from the society's accepted codes of behaviour and chooses love above all else, some sixty lines later, fearing his honour stained, he chooses to avenge Mercutio and kill Tybalt, an action which he immediately regrets. It seems he is unable to decide which road to take, whether to remain totally faithful to love or to abide by socially sanctioned rules. Romeo's inconsistency in behaviour in this incident contrasts with the actions and attitudes of the other characters.

All the characters throughout the play remain constant:

- Mercutio and Tybalt are just as fiery and passionate about violence in this act as they have been shown from the beginning of the play.
- Benvolio, too, remains the same in his peace-seeking attitude as he has shown to be in the play's opening scene.[2]

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[1] Nickolas Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000) pp. 95, 80.
[2] Charlton, p. 56.

As opposed to a fixed and stable identity, Romeo's character is dynamic and changing. Consequently, H. C. Goddard identifies "four Romeo's" in this incident:

> First we see him possessed by love and a spirit of universal forgiveness. From this he falls, first to reason and an appeal to law, then to violence—but violence in a negative or "preventive" sense. Finally, following Mercutio's death, he passes under the control of passion and fury, abetted by "honour," and thence to vengeance and offensive violence.[1]

The "fourth Romeo" appears after Tybalt's death: Romeo regretting his actions and "rooted to the spot at the sight of what he has done."[2] Hence, torn between masculine duty and honour, and his love for Juliet, Romeo displays plurality of character and an unstable temperament, bringing him closer to the feminine.

Furthermore, the play reverses the normally accepted binary opposition of "male constancy and female inconstancy" to present an inconstant Romeo against a constant Juliet who remains true to her love right to the end.[3] In Veronese society, inconstancy is a characteristic ascribed to women who are considered fickle and changeable (see Chapter Two).

Romeo's first sign of inconstancy appears when he meets Juliet in Act 1, Scene 5. Not long before, he is swearing his dedication and love to the cold and indifferent Rosaline:

> One fairer than my love! the all-seeing sun
> Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun.
> (I.ii.92-3)

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[1] Goddard, p. 167.
[2] Goddard, p. 168. See also Bevington, pp. 55.
[3] McAlindon, Romeo, pp. 269-270.

Yet, on seeing Juliet, he immediately forgets all about Rosaline and falls deeply for Juliet (I.v). Although by falling in love with Juliet, Romeo moves from infatuation to true love, this shift in his feelings is, nevertheless, the first sign of his inconstancy in the play.[1] Even in his love for Juliet, Romeo proves himself inconstant when he gives up love for male honour in the fatal incident ending with his own banishment (III.i).[2]

Juliet on the other hand, remains true to her love for Romeo until the end of her life. The proposed marriage to Paris becomes Juliet's test of constancy where she establishes herself as the more constant of the two lovers:

> O 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 shroud -
> 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.
> (IV.i.77-88)

Putting fear and temptation aside, she complies with the friar's plan to drink the sleeping potion and to be buried alive so that she can escape her marriage to Paris and thus remain true to her love.[3]

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[1] McAlindon, Romeo, pp. 269-270.
[2] Goddard, p. 168.
[3] Goddard, p. 171. See also Bloom, Ages, p. xi.

Activity vs. passivity

Romeo and Juliet also subvert the culturally accepted notions of female passivity and male activity in their relationship. Romeo's love for Rosaline reveals one type of relationship in which convention requires women to remain indifferent and cold, perhaps to appear chaste as Rosaline swears to be (I.i.208-209), or maybe "to increase male desire." Juliet, on the other hand, plays a very active role in her relationship with Romeo from the very beginning. She casts away the conventional role of a cruel mistress and instead of appearing indifferent and denying her love for Romeo, during the balcony scene, Juliet never holds back from revealing her true feelings to Romeo:

> In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
> And therefore thou mayst think my behaviour light :
> But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
> Than those that have more coying to be strange.
> I should have been more strange, I must confess,
> But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
> My true-love passion; therefore pardon me,
> And not impute this yielding to light love,
> Which the dark night hath so discovered.
> (II.ii.98-106)

This is a point to which she refers herself when she fears she may have been "too quickly won:"

> Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
> I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,
> So thou wilt woo, but else not for the world. (II.ii.95-7)

Instead, she bids “farewell” to “compliment” and instead of ‘dwelling on form’ (II.ii.89,88) as she is expected to do, she openly admits her feelings.[1]

Romeo, by contrast, acts passively in certain situations. While he is still doting on Juliet and uses words to prove his love for her, Juliet demands actions from him:

> send me word tomorrow,
> By one that I’ll procure to come to thee,
> Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite.
> (II.ii.144-6)

He ‘allows’ Juliet to arrange their marriage plans, including setting the time and the place, and arranging for ways to keep in touch, while he merely carries out the plans as designed by her.[2]

He also becomes a passive character in the company of his own friends and other men, as has already been shown with special reference to Act 3, Scene 1.

Imagery

Even in terms of imagery, Romeo and Juliet subvert their socially assigned gender roles:

- Whereas the masculine traditionally sides with the step, the feminine is associated with the ground.[3] In the case of Romeo and Juliet, however, this binary pair, too, is reversed. During the balcony scene, Juliet is standing above in the balcony while Romeo

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[1] Ryan, pp. 122-123. See also Belsey, The Name, p. 51.

[2] See also Broder, p. 94; Elmer Edgar Stoll, *Shakespeare’s Young Lovers: The Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto (*London: Oxford up, 1937) p. 25.

[3] Hélène Cixous, “Sorties,” *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge, and Nigel Wood, 2n ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2000) p. 264.

is standing below her in the orchard. This places Juliet in a superior position to Romeo, who then becomes "spatially dominated" by Juliet and placed "in an inferior, passive position" to her.[1]

- Furthermore, Juliet is standing in the light while Romeo below her is standing in the dark.[2] The association of Juliet with light and Romeo with darkness reverses the binary opposition of light/dark where light is ascribed to the masculine and dark to the feminine.[3] Hence, in the space of a few lines Romeo and Juliet subvert several notions of masculinity and femininity, and reverse gender roles.
- The sun is an image traditionally associated with masculinity, while femininity is attached to the moon.[4] During the balcony scene, however, the binary opposition of sun/moon reverse their order. Romeo, despite being the man, swears his love by the moon which is a symbol of inconstancy since it "monthly changes in her circled orb" (II.ii.110), and hence normally allied with women who are usually believed to be the inconstant ones. Perhaps, however, his use of the image of the moon to swear his love by is appropriate since later he proves himself inconstant when he gives up love for male honour. Yet, earlier in the same scene he compares Juliet to the sun (II.ii.3) traditionally affiliated with masculinity and, unlike the moon, a symbol of

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[1] Laroque, p. 89.
[2] See also Laroque, p. 89.
[3] Cixous, p. 264.
[4] Cixous, p. 264.

constancy. This choice of imagery also becomes fitting when Juliet proves herself the constant of the two lovers, never faltering for one moment and being fully committed to her love to Romeo until the end of her life.

Other characteristics

A discussion of Act 3, Scene 1, has so far had Romeo displaying a number of characteristics including weakness, submissiveness, compassion, plurality, inconsistency, instability and inconstancy. These traits are ordinarily ascribed to women and thus point to Romeo's gender reversal.

Yet, Romeo's gender reversal does not end there. Even in terms of personality, Romeo displays certain traits which are more in line with feminine behaviour than masculine characteristics:

- According to traditionally assigned gender roles, masculinity is associated with rationality, reason, logic, decisiveness, strength, control, and courage, while the feminine is considered to be emotional, weak, vulnerable, and dependant.[1] In many of the scenes between the lovers, however, it is Juliet who displays more courage, sense, and strength than Romeo.
- As compared to Juliet, Romeo is less practical while Juliet is the more realistic of the two and the first to suggest marriage. While Romeo is still concerned with exaggerated statements to declare

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[1] Johnson, pp. 7, 14; Rudman and Glick, p. 89; Gilchrist, p. 64; Chancer and Watkins, pp. 19-20; Mansfield, p. 95.

his love, Juliet is the one who "takes decisive action" to plan their wedding:[1]

> Three words, dear Romeo, and good night
> indeed.
> If that thy bent of love be honourable,
> Thy purpose marriage, send me word
> tomorrow...
>
> (II.i.142-144)

- Romeo is also less reasonable and rational. In times of trouble, while Romeo gives into despair and acts irrationally, Juliet shows greater sense and character. A scene during which his gender reversal becomes very evident is after his banishment, a point to which the Friar openly refers when he reminds Romeo that his tears are "womanish" (III.iii.110).[2] In this scene, overtaken by fear and grief, Romeo takes to weeping, lies on the floor and refuses to listen to Friar Lawrence's words and reasoning. Consequently, the friar calls him a "madman" and "a beast" and admonishes him for his feminine behaviour:

> Hold thy desperate hand!
> 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...
>
> (III.iii.108-112)

- While Romeo resorts to suicide as the answer to his adversaries, Juliet displays great courage and reason in dealing with her pain and grief. When faced with her cousin's death and Romeo's banishment, she is

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[1] Broder, p. 94. See also Stoll, p. 25.
[2] See also Goddard, p. 170.

able to control her feelings, think clearly and remain loyal to Romeo:[1]

> That villain cousin would have killed my
> husband.
> Back, foolish tears, back to your native
> spring,
> Your tributary drops belong to woe,
> Which you mistaking offer up to joy.
> My husband lives that Tybalt would have
> slain,
> And Tybalt's dead that would have slain my
> husband:
> All this is comfort, wherefore weep I then?
> (III.ii.101-107)

- Romeo is also the more imaginative, not only compared with Juliet, but also against other characters such as the Nurse and Mercutio. During the balcony scene, for instance, Romeo uses what Robert Penn Warren terms "pure poetry" which contrasts dramatically with Juliet's "intellectual style." In Act1, Scene 3, Romeo "invokes nature" when he swears his love by the moon. But Juliet disturbs Romeo's "spiritualized" metaphor with her "logical criticism" of Romeo's pure poetry:[2]

> O! Swear not by the moon, the inconstant
> moon,
> That monthly changes in her circled orb.
> (II.ii.110)

- Critics usually recognise Romeo's language to be "vague and fantastic" whereas Juliet's language is "direct and practical."[3] Through using "abstract"

[1] Broder, pp. 94-95.
[2] Warren, p. 136.
[3] Evans, p. 108. See also Bloom, Guides, 2005, p. 61.

language, Romeo emerges as “a self-disintegrating, self-distancing ‘Other’,” while Juliet’s “concrete” language makes her “a centred self.”[1] This is the opposite of how the binary opposition of self/other, is conceived in patriarchy.[2]

- Hence, Romeo becomes the weaker partner who is more poetical and imaginative while Juliet proves herself the “more thoughtful, prudent and realistic” of the two, displaying greater courage, strength and sense, and thus taking on the masculine role.[3]

Romeo and Juliet, once in love, come to subvert the traditionally assigned and sanctioned gender roles within their society, deviate from their society’s sanctioned codes of gender behaviour and in fact reverse gender roles.

Layli and Majnoon’s Gender Reversals

Layli and Majnoon also subvert their society’s sanctioned codes regarding gender behaviour. Traditionally, in their society masculinity is associated with violence, culture (including wealth, honour and titles), activity, reason, and strength. The feminine, on the other hand, is described in terms of nature, passivity, submissiveness, inconstancy, plurality and is seen as ‘Other.’ Yet, Layli and Majnoon choose to reverse gender roles and deviate from traits traditionally ascribed to them by society.

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[1] Edward Snow cited in Evans, p. 50.
[2] Johnson, pp. 6-7. See also Mansfield, pp. 92-93.
[3] Evans, p. 27.

Violence

Violence, as described in Chapter Two, is a prominent feature of this society and a way of achieving goals and desires "if it need be." Yet, when this "need" arises for Majnoon, he avoids violence of any kind and instead, shows compassion. During the battle between Nofel and Layli's tribe, Majnoon refuses to partake in the fight and out of love for Layli, prays for peace:[1]

> "crying to God and to the fighting warriors for peace. Between the lines of the battle he looked like a lonely pilgrim" (XXII, 35-37, *LM*e 78).

While the aim of the battle is to win against Layli's tribe so that Majnoon can be united with his beloved, Majnoon cannot still bring himself to use violence:

> "While each warrior thought of nothing but to kill the enemy and to defend himself, the poet was sharing the sufferings of both sides. Majnoon was in deep torment" (XXII, 34, *LM*e 78).

Instead of violence, he shows affection toward Layli's people whom he cannot consider as enemies:

> His heart was with the men who defied his own champions. His lips prayed for help for his opponents. He longed to kiss the hand which had just flung one of Nofel's riders out of the saddle. (XXII, 43-49, *LM*e 80).

Just like Romeo who comes to love Tybalt because of Juliet, Majnoon regards the enemy as his "friends":

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[1] See also Sattari, p. 28.

> "The heart of my beloved beats for the enemy and where her heart beats there is my home" (XXII, 52-58, *LM*e 80).

While, according to his society's conventions, Majnoon is expected to use violence against those who have taken his beloved away from him, he chooses to show compassion toward them and considers them friends instead of enemies.

Compassion

Majnoon's compassion extends to include animals as well as people. On two occasions he is met with hunters and captured animals. After leaving Nofel and his men, Majnoon comes across a hunter who has caught some gazelles. At the sight of the captured gazelles, Majnoon is so moved that he gets angry at the hunter:

> are you a wolf, not a human being, that you want to take the burden of such a sin upon yourself? Look how beautiful they are! Are their eyes not like the eyes of the beloved? Does their sight nit remind you of the spring? Let them go free, leave them in peace! (XXV, 10-25, *LM*e 92)

He then offers "the reins of his horse" in exchange for the animals, and sets them free after "kissing their eyes," talking to them, and "blessing" them (XXV, 31-36, *LM*e 93).

Not long afterwards, he is met by another hunter who has trapped a stag. Once again Majnoon is appalled at the hunter's inhuman act and begins to criticise the hunter "his voice as sharp as a bloodletter:"

> 'You hyena of a tyrant! Torturer of the weak and the defenceless! Release this poor creature at once so that

> it may still enjoy its life for a short while. (XXII, 58-61, *LM*e 95).

He sympathises with the stag, comparing it to himself and his beloved:

> 'How will the hind feel tonight without her companion? What would she say' to you about his absence? "She would exclaim: "May he who has done this to us suffer as we do; may he never see another happy day!..." Would you like that? Do you not fear the distress of those who suffer? Imagine yourself as the stag – the stag as the hunter and you as his victim!' (XXII, 62-67, *LM*e 95)

Accordingly, he gives up all his belongings and sets the stag loose.

The hunter vs. the hunted

Though his society is based on a hunter-hunted relationship where men pride themselves in being masters and ruling over others (see Chapter One), Majnoon decides to take side with the hunted. Yet, to break this oppressive way of life, he sets the animals free. He is, therefore, able to sympathise with the weak and the hunted, and chooses compassion over violence and aggression, while at the same time denouncing subjugation and oppression of others.

He rejects the master-slave relationship, again, when he meets an old woman who has enslaved a poor dervish. On seeing the chained man Majnoon is moved to sympathise with him, and as with the hunters, asks the woman for his freedom:

> Majnoon, deeply shocked, felt pity for the poor man. He implored the woman not to use her prisoner so

> roughly and asked: 'Who is this man? What has he done that you drag him around chained like that?' (XXVII, 10-11, *LM*e 102)

Majnoon further distances himself from the hunter-hunted rules of his society by residing in the wilderness and taking animals as his companions. His removal from civilisation takes place early on in the poem. Once he is denied seeing his beloved he takes daily tours to the mountain next to which lives Layli's tribe, though he returns home at night. After his father's unsuccessful efforts to unite him with Layli in marriage, Majnoon rids himself of his clothes and takes to the wilderness on a more permanent basis. From here on he becomes very much a part of nature and wilderness and returns to civilisation only on rare occasions:

> Majnoon escaped once more into the desert of Najd. Like a drunken lion he ran around restlessly about in this desolate country of sand and rocks. His face became as hard as iron, the palms of his hands like stone. He wandered through the mountains chanting his ghazels. (XVIII, 23-25, *LM*e 56)

Once in the wild, he takes animals as his companions: they came running to him to be under his command, making camp around him. "Among them were animals of every kind and size" (XXXIII, 17-20, *LM*e 135).

Showing compassion makes Majnoon their ruler: "He became a king among his court, like Solomon" (XXXIII, 21, *LM*e 135). In his presence, however, the wild beasts abandon their bestial ways: "They did not attack each other" and "seemed to forget their hunger and became tame and friendly." Instead, they behave with compassion and love, not only toward Majnoon, but toward each other also:

> The wolf no longer devoured the lamb, the lion kept his claws off the wild ass, the lioness gave milk to the orphaned baby gazelle. It was a peaceful army that travelled with Majnun as he roamed the wilderness, with his animals always at his heels." (XXXIII, 23-26, *LM*e 136)

Nature

Majnoon's command over animals reflects yet another trait which is conventionally held to be "feminine".

The men in his society are described in terms of their honour, strength and wealth. They are well known for their "bravery in the field" which brings other men under their command, for the many animals they possess and for being "lords," "princes" and noble men who rule over others. The women, on the other hand, are constantly merited for their natural beauty and described in terms of nature imagery. Therefore, in the binary opposition of culture / nature, the feminine is associated with nature while culture is ascribed to the masculine (See Chapter Two for more details).

Yet, Majnoon is the opposite of the cultured men:

- He dwells in nature and among beasts, away from people and civilisation. He earns himself the titles of a madman (majnoon), a demon (XXIV, 58), a savage (XLII, 41), and a beast (XXX, 58) since he has chosen to live naked among animals and in caves.
- It is with the animals he finds peace and compassion, not with people who call him mad when he falls in love, take his beloved away from him, and deny him a happy life with Layli (XXXIII, 15-17).

- While for other men their bravery and strength bring people under their command and make them rulers and lords, Majnoon becomes the king of animals for the compassion he shows them. Instead of wealth, he chooses to ignore the world and live naked in caves and instead of possessing animals, he becomes their trusted companion. Therefore, instead of culture, civilisation, strength, wealth and honour, Majnoon chooses nature, the wilderness, compassion and wild animals. Hence, in the binary opposition of culture/nature Majnoon undergoes gender reversal and becomes associated with nature.

Furthermore, not only his companions but also his many messengers to Layli come from nature:

- On several occasions, he talks to different elements from nature or animals, asking them to send messages to his beloved. At the beginning, while he is still living with his parents and still has hope of being with Layli, he invokes the east wind, hoping to get his words to Layli and finding out how she is:

  > 'East wind, be gone early in the morning, caress her hair and whisper in her ear: "One who has sacrificed everything for you, lies in the dust on his way to you. He is seeking your breath in the blowing of the wind, and tells his grief to the earth. Send him a breath of air as a sign that you are thinking of him." (XIII, 19-22, *LM*e 26)

- Later, when talking to the stag before setting it free, he compares Layli and himself to the stag and its hind:

> 'Like myself, are you also not separated from your beloved? Quick-footed runner of the steppes, dweller of the mountains, how vividly you remind me of her! Go, hurry, search for her, your mate. Rest in her shadow – there is your place. (XXV, 76-79, *LM*e 96)

- He then asks the hind to deliver a message to Layli:

> *I am yours, however distant you may be!*
> *Your sorrow, when you grieve, brings grieve to me.*
> *There blows no wind but wafts your scent to me,*
> *There sings no bird but calls your name to me.*
> *Each memory that has left its trace with me*
> *Lingers forever, as if part of me.*
> (XXV, 84-90, *LM*e 96. Italics in original)

- Majnoon also talks to a raven and, once again, hopes it will deliver a message to his beloved:

> *Help me, oh help me in my loneliness!*
> *Lonely my light fades in the wilderness.*
> *'Be not afraid, for I am yours', you said,*
> *Do not delay – lest you should find me dead.*
> *Caught by the wolf, the lamb hears too late*
> *The Shepherd's flute lament its cruel fate.*
> (XXVI, 26-33, *LM*e 99. Italics in original)

- Similarly, on another occasion he turns to the stars. He invokes Venus and Jupiter and implores them to help him with his troubles (XXXIV, 59-73).

Activity vs. passivity

Majnoon's invocation of the stars, the wind, and the animals reflect his lack of action in his relationship with Layli as well as

the passive life he leads after falling in love with her. Since in his society men are associated with activity and women with passivity, his inactions become another sign of his gender reversal.

The love between Layli and Majnoon, in fact, defies both conventions in their society about love (described in Chapter Two): (a) the male urge to possess and dominate, as exemplified by Ibn Salam; and (b) the woman becoming a huntress capturing her admirers with her bewitching beauty, as exemplified through those who fall for Layli (Book XIX). In both of these conventions of love, the masculine is associated with activity and the feminine with passivity, yet these socially sanctioned concepts are subverted by Layli and Majnoon.

After falling in love with Layli, Majnoon spends most of his time composing poems, hoping to hear from his beloved:

> Day and night he composes poems for his beloved. If a gust of wind sweeps by, or a cloud sails past in the sky, he believes them to be greetings from her and he thinks he can inhale her scent. He recites his poems, hoping that the wind or a cloud will carry them along to his beloved.' (XXI, 23-25, *LM*e 68)

Therefore, to love becomes his sole purpose to live, and to write poetry his only occupation, thus leading a very passive and inactive life.

These incidents also point to Majnoon's imaginative character. Instead of using real messengers who could actually deliver his messages, Majnoon relies on his imagination and speaks to Layli through animals or the wind. In this regard he differs greatly from the men in his society and, in fact, stands on the opposite pole from them:

- Layli's suitors, for example, "used every trick and art of persuasion" to convince Layli's parents

(XXVIII, 19, *LMe* 107). Similarly, according to custom, Ibn Salam sends a "mediator" who is "a master of his art" and is able to "weave a magic spell with his words" (XXVIII, 37-39, *LMe* 108). Instead of using reasoning and cunningness in this fashion, Majnoon sends animals and the wind as his mediators, though not to Layli's parents, but to Layli herself. Instead of using "every trick and art of persuasion" and boasting of his many qualities which would benefit Layli's parents, in all his messages he reassures Layli of his love and loyalty to her.

- Furthermore, instead of offering treasures as Layli's suitors do, he offers his heart, soul and life to her.

Unlike Majnoon, for whom imagination plays a greater role than reasoning, further distancing him from masculine traits and brining him closer to femininity, Layli proves herself the more realistic and practical of the two:

- She sends her messages through actual messengers, making sure that Majnoon hears of her poems written in reply to his: She heard of Majnoon's poems through children coming from the bazaar or people passing by her house. She,

  > "then composed her answers. These words she wrote down on little scraps of paper, heading them with the words: 'Jasmin sends this message to the cypress tree."

  Instead of relying on the wind or chance to deliver her messages, she drops them onto passersby from her roof top who would take them to Majnoon with the hope of hearing some verses

from him. She thus makes sure that she hears of Majnoon's poems and that her replies reach him:

> "Thus, many a melody passed to and fro between the two nightingales, drunk with their passion." (XIX, 53-66, *LM*e 59).

- She is also the more active one who takes steps and makes efforts to meet and speak with Majnoon. Even after her marriage to Ibn Salam, Layli never hesitates to write to Majnoon. She finds a stranger who is crossing her land and informs her of how Majnoon is. Yet, she asks him to return to her soon so she can get her message to Majnoon:

> Swear that you will return tomorrow. In the meantime, down there in my tent, I shall write a letter to Majnun and hand it to you. Then I want you to search until you find him! (XXXV, 82-87, *LM*e 156)

Later on, she sends another man to seek Majnoon and bring him to her, and despite being closely guarded and watched, runs away from home to see and speak with her beloved (Books XL, XLI).

- Her active character contrasts with the other women in her society. While women in this world are only renowned for their beauty, Layli becomes more than a beautiful goddess: "Now Layla was not only a picture of gracefulness, but also full of wisdom and well-versed in poetry" (XIX, 56-57, *LM*e 59).
- Her efforts and endeavours to keep in touch with, and reach her beloved are more in line with the actions of the men in her society, who take to act and make arrangements to reach their goals and carry out their plans, while women play a very

> passive role, not only in society, but also concerning their own lives (see Chapter Two for details).

Hence, whereas Majnoon mainly relies on his imagination to speak to his beloved, and in fact does very little in actually seeking her, Layli takes decisive actions to make sure her letters and messages reach Majnoon. When Layli is able to arrange an actual meeting between themselves all Majnoon does is follow her plan. Therefore, Layli is portrayed as the more active, realistic and practical of the two, taking on the masculine role, while Majnoon is very imaginative and maintains a passive role, both in his own life and in his relationship with Layli, thus becoming "effeminate".

'Madness'

Not only is Majnoon imaginative and unrealistic, he also makes no efforts to devise a sound and realistic plan for being with Layli. On the contrary, most of the time he displays very erratic and irrational behaviour. A prominent example is the incident with the beggar woman. When Majnoon hears that the real reason for the chaining of the dervish is poverty, he asks the woman to relieve the poor man so that Majnoon can take his place:

> When Majnoon heard these words, he went down on his knees and beseeched her:
>
> 'Relive this man of his chains and put them on me. I am one of those unhappy men with a disturbed mind. I should be tied up – not he. Take me with you as long and whenever you wish and everything that is given to us shall be all yours. (XXVII, 19-23, *LM*e 102)

Once in chains, he goes around like a lunatic, acting absurdly and irrationally:

> Whenever the woman and her prisoner came to a tent, they stopped: Majnun recited his love poems, cried out 'Layla…Layla', banged head and body against the stones, and, in spite of his chains, danced around like a drunken madman. (XXVII, 26-29, *LM*e 104)

Even at the beginning, when he has just been separated from Layli, his efforts in wanting to see her or be united with her appear as unusual and are in no way based on society's accepted norms:

> The separation from his beloved robbed the youth from his home and if Layla wept secretly, he openly displayed his unhappiness for everyone to see.
>
> He appeared now here, now there. He wandered about in the small alleys between the tents and in the bazaar where the merchants and artisans have their stalls. He walked aimlessly, driven only by his aching heart, without heeding the staring eyes; tears springing from under his eyelashes like wild mountain streams. All the time he sang melancholy songs such as lovers are wont to sing in their misery…
>
> When he passed by, people around him shouted: 'Look, the Madman, Majnun is coming … Majnun!' (XII, 31-36, *LM*e 24)

Longing for Layli, he wanders everyday into the desert: "each day, at dusk, the ghosts of his vain hopes chased him into the desert, barefoot and bareheaded" (XII, 44, *LM*e 25). Even at nights he would try to seek his beloved:

> At night, when everyone was asleep he secretly stole to the tent of his beloved." All the while he was "reciting his poems. Swift as the north he flew along, kissed Layla's threshold like a shadow and returned before the new day dawned.
>
> How hard it was to return! It seemed to take a year. On his way to her he ran fast, like water pouring into a trough. On the way back he crawled as if he had to make his way through a hundred crevasses thick with thorn-bushes. if fate had allowed him happiness, he would never have returned home, where he now felt a stranger. (XII, 46-53, *LM*e 25)

Unable to hide his feelings, he earns himself the title of Majnoon, yet he does "nothing to pacify those who reproached him" and instead acts and appears more insane (XII, 27, *LM*e 22). Every morning, with "two or three friends who had suffered the torments of love like him,"[1] he takes to Najd mountains where "Layli's tribe pitched their tents." There "he walked around like a drunkard; weeping bitterly, he lurched, fell and jumped to his feet again" (XIII, 10-17, *LM*e 25-26).

While the men in his society take pride in the titles and honours they have earned, Majnoon drowns himself in his love for Layli: "He hardly listened to what people were saying; he no longer cared. Only when he heard Layla's name did he take notice. When they talked about other things, his ears and lips were sealed" (XIII, 12-13, *LM*e 25). Thus, he becomes "the King of Love in majesty" (XLII, 76, *LM*e 195).

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[1] In the translation, this part appears when describing Majnoon's nightly wanderings to Layli's place, but in the original poem, Majnoon is said to have friends accompany him when he visits the Najd Mountains during the day.

He maintains the same irrational behaviour throughout his life. When he is visited in the caves by his father he is described as:

> now talking to himself in verse, now moaning and sighing. He wept, stood up and collapsed again, he crawled and stumbled, a living image of his own fate. He swooned and was hardly conscious. (XVI, 109-111, *LM*e 49)

Therefore, while other men would rely on artful reasoning and cunningness when hoping to be with Layli, Majnoon pushes reason aside, acts irrationally and frantically, and displays his intense emotions for the world to see.

'Self' vs. 'Other'

Majnoon's dedication to his beloved moves him to be absorbed in his love for her to the point that he stops distinguishing between himelf and the beloved. This is contrary to the patriarchal perception of the feminine as abnormal and the 'Other' as opposed to the masculine 'self', which is regarded as normal and the standard.[1] By becoming united with his beloved, Majnoon thus moves away from his 'self' and becomes 'Other.'

When his father comes to visit him for the last time, Majnoon is unable to recognise him:

> "He had forgotten himself. How then could he remember anyone else?" (XXX, 32, *LM*e 122)

[1] Johnson, pp. 6-7. See also Mansfield, pp. 92-93.

After finally realising that the visitor is his father, Majnoon confesses to his father his inability to distinguish between himself and the beloved:

> ‘I have not only lost you; I no longer know myself. Who am I? I keep turning upon myself, asking “what is your name? Are you in love? With whom? Or are you loved? By whom?” (XXX, 110-111, *LM*e 126)

Elsewhere, when Salam, the young lover from Baghdad, mistakes Majnoon’s pure love for a youthful flame, Majnoon again describes himself in terms of his love and his beloved:

> Love is the essence of my being. Love is fire and I am wood burned by the flame. Love has moved in and adorned the house, my self has tied its bundle and left. You imagine that you see me but I no longer exist: what remains is the beloved. (XLIII, 79-81, *LM*e 195)

Another incident in which Majnoon confesses losing his ‘self’ for the beloved occurs in XXXIII, 4-12, *LM*e 132-133, during his return from his father’s grave. In his wanderings, Majnoon happens to cross Layli’s place. There, he finds “a scrap of paper” which had ‘Layli and Majnoon’ written on it, “in tribute to their love.” Yet, with his nails, he scratches off Layli’s name from the paper so that only his own name remains. When the onlookers ask him why only one name remains, he says:

> “One name is better than two. One is enough for both. If you knew what it means to be a lover, you would realize that one only has to scratch him, and out falls his beloved.”

The onlookers ask him again why he keeps his own name and not Layli’s to which he replies: “Because we can see the shell,

but not the kernel'" and goes on to explain: "The name is only the outer shell and I am this shell, I am the veil. The face underneath is hers.'"

Majnoon, in fact, becomes so drowned with Layli that she becomes his only reality: "the past, apart from Layli's name and memory, had been extinguished from his mind. As soon as they tried to talk of anything else he fell silent, or escaped," or went to sleep (XXVII, 64-65, *LM*e 105).

Majnoon's love for Layli, therefore, moves him to lose his "self" for the beloved, and instead of regarding her as 'Other', as women are normally considered in this society, he becomes united with Layli, unable to distinguish between himself and the beloved, thus undergoing gender reversal and becoming 'Other' himself.

Stability vs. instability

Not only does Majnoon become 'Other,' he also develops a plurality of character which is another feminine characteristic, since in the binary opposition of stability/instability, the feminine is considered to be unstable, fickle, and plural in her character and behaviour, and have multiple personalities.

From the moment he meets Nofel, a young noble and wealthy man who promises to unite him with Layli, right to the end of the second war with its disappointing outcome, Majnoon displays six different characters and attitudes:

1. At first, when Nofel meets Majnoon, he is "a melancholic, a madman who has left the company of men and now lives here in the desert," well known for his love and strange way of life, a lover withdrawn from society living in caves and among animals (XXI,19-22, *LM*e 68).

2. Yet, once he is promised to be united with his Layli, a tremendous change occurs in him. In return for his help, Nofel asks Majnoon to "show patience. Give up your frenzy, take your wild heart in hand, quieten it, tame it, if only for a few days;" a request which Majnoon readily accepts: "Majnun consented. He smoothed the stormy sea of his soul" (XXI, 60-72, *LM*e 72).

   Accordingly, he gives up his madness and goes along with Nofel to his camp. There "he bathed and donned the fine garments and the turban which" was customary for Arabs to wear. He then resumes a normal life in the company of Nofel and his men: "He ate with pleasure, drank wine as a friend among friends and recited his qasidas and ghazels" (XXI, 73-78, *LM*e 72-73).

   In no time, he transforms from a madman into a civilised and wise one, reciting poetry and revealing no trace of the madness he has become known by: "yes, he had become a man among men again" and a wise one in their circle (XXI, 85-87, *LM*e 73).
3. Soon, however, a third Majnoon appears who grows impatient with Nofel's inaction: "My patience is at an end, my reason rebels. Help me, lest I perish!" (XXI, 99, *LM*e 75) Wary of his prolonged stay at Nofel's place without any sign of action toward the promise he was made, Majnoon "reproaches" Nofel, threatening to run back to the wild should Nofel go back on his word:

   > Stand by your promise, or the madman which you lured out of the desert will return

> to it. Unite me with Layla, or I shall throw my life away.' (XXI, 115-116, *LM*e 75)

4. Once the war starts and Nofel's army is winning the battle, there comes a fourth Majnoon praying for peace: Majnoon was "crying to God and to the fighting warriors for peace. Between the lines of the battle he looked like a lonely pilgrim" (XXII, 35-37, *LM*e 78).

   During the battle, he supports the other army, giving the impression that he is not in favour of the war: "His lips prayed for help for his opponents. He longed to kiss the hand which had just flung one of Nawfel's riders out of the saddle;" or that he would not want Nofel and his men to win: "Time and again he rejoiced when the enemy advanced, and became downcast and miserable when Nawfel's men gained an advantage" (XXII, 44-49, *LM*e 80).

5. Yet, as soon as the war ends with Nofel's defeat, Majnoon displays yet another side of his plurality. He gets upset and angry at Nofel's defeat and his failure to fulfil his promise and his words move Nofel to prepare another army to fight Layli's people again:

   > He drew the sword of his tongue and spoke: 'Such then are your artful ways of uniting two lovers? Excellent indeed! Is that your wisdom's last resort, to raid with arms and men? Is that proof of your strength? Is that the key to your magic power? The masterpiece of your equestrian pride? Is that the way you throw the lasso? (XXIII, 2-6, *LM*e 83)

6. After the end of the second war, when Nofel decides to overlook the price of his victory and leave Layli to her father, Majnoon's sixth and final character appears. Anger and rage take over him while harshly criticising Nofel for giving him false hopes: "His eyes streaming with tears, he boiled over with rage like a volcano." His hopes crushed, he then sternly rebukes Nofel for the empty promises he is made: "You let my hopes ripe into a radiant dusk and now you push me into the daylight of despair. Why, tell me, did your hand drop its prey? What had happened to this arm once ready to help me?" Losing all hope, and disappointed, he then "turned his horse without waiting for an answer and galloped into the pathless wilderness, away from Nawfel." (XXIV, 79-87, *LM*e 90)

   Once again, he becomes a mad disappointed lover wandering in the deserts with despair: "After he had left Nawfel, Majnoon sped away on his horse like a bird without nest," riding like the wind, "singing to himself about Nawfel's unfaithfulness" (XXV, 2-5, *LM*e 92).

Majnoon's plurality of character is also evident in his chosen way of life. Despite being a human, he has chosen to live in the deserts among wild animals. He has become a "beast among beasts," a characteristic to which his father points when he visits Majnoon for the last time:

> You are human, therefore live like a man! Or are you a ghoul, a demon of the desert in human shape? Even then, you should live like a man or return to the underworld. (XXX, 77, *LM*e 124)

Unlike Majnoon, who is neither a man nor a beast and yet he is both, Layli proves herself constant and strong:

- While women in her society are considered to be fickle, faithless and deceitful (XXIX, 24-34, *LM*e 115-116), Layli remains constant in her love for Majnoon, even despite her marriage. Although she is forced to marry Ibn Salam, Layli never gives up loving Majnoon, and by refusing to consummate her marriage, stays loyal to him. She shows remarkable courage when she violently refuses her husband and slaps him for having made a move toward her:

  > Ibn Salam stretched out his hands towards the garden, determined to pluck from the palm tree the date which was not granted willingly.
  >
  > But alas! Instead of the fruit he felt the thorn, instead of sweetness he states bitter gall. Before he even knew what was happening to him, the gardener hit him so hard that he fell and lay still like a dead man. (XXVIII, 75-77, *LM*e 112)

- Layli is also a very strong character. Her pains can be regarded as greater than Majnoon's, since she is allowed no outlet for her grief: "ever since their separation, she also burned in the fire of longing; but her flames were hidden and no smoke rose from them" (XIX, 36, *LM*e 58). This is something to which she points and complains of:

  > It is true, he is also a target for the arrows of pain, but he is man, I am a woman! He is free and can escape. He need not be afraid, can go where he likes, talk and cry and

> express the deepest feelings in his poems. But I? I am a prisoner.
>
> "“I have no one to whom I can talk, no one to whom I can open my heart: shame and dishonour would be my fate. (XXXV, 49-56, *LM*e 154)

- She is restricted by her parents, husband, and society. She cannot even grieve her sadness openly: “Secretly she wept and suffered.” When her father was not there “she allowed her tears to fall freely until her sleepless eyes were red-rimmed like those of the narcissus.” (XXVIII, 10-13, *LM*e 107) To admit her love would bring her disgrace and dishonour. Her feelings become a secret which she cannot disclose to anyone, not even to her mother: she had no one to whom she could reveal her secret and no friend who could find a way out for her (IIVIII, 14).
- She has no say in her life, never consulted for her views and consent on marriage. Her feelings and opinions are never considered by either her parents or her husband. She remains subject to the authority of her father and later her husband. Yet, despite being guarded at home, she makes numerous efforts to stay in touch with her beloved Majnoon and never gives up hope. In her letter to him, she advises him to be patient and not let others distress him. She sounds very wise, mature and strong:

> A wise man does not let others look through his eyes into his soul. Shall the enemy laugh at our tears? No! a wise man hides his grief lest the wicked and malicious should grow fat on such a feast.

> 'Do not look at the sower casting seed, but remember what will grow from it. If today thorns block your way, tomorrow you will harvest dates, and the bud still closed and hidden holds the promise of a blossoming rose.
>
> 'Do not be sad. Do not let your heart become heavy and do not think that no one is your friend. Am I no one? Does it not help you that I am there and am yours – yours alone? Believe me, it is wrong to complain of loneliness. Remember God. He is the companion of those who have no other friend.
>
> 'Even in your grief about your father you should not burst your into flame or flash like the lightning in the sky; do not drown in your tears like a rain-cloud. The father has gone, may the son remain! The rock splits and crumbles, but the jewel which it enclosed endures.' (XXXV, 141-149, *LM*e 161)

Layli also points to the cultural construction of the concept of woman, that even if in actions (and perhaps even in nature) a woman behaves courageously and is brave as a man is, she would still be seen as a woman and inferior to him. Therefore, it is culture, and not nature, which defines women as weak and cowardly, and places them in an inferior position to men:

> "'Oh! A woman may conquer a hero and enslave him so that he lies prostrate at her feet; still she remains a woman, unable to act. She may thirst for blood and

> show the courage of a lioness – still she remains a woman. (XXV, 60-61, *LM*e 155)

Therefore, despite her brave nature and courageous acts, a woman is defined culturally and is regarded subordinated to men, not because of how she acts and behaves, but rather based on cultural and commonly held beliefs within society.

Layli and Majnoon, hence deviate from the socially and culturally accepted norms of gender behaviour in their society, and reverse gender roles:

- Majnoon, instead of masculine traits, displays compassion, passivity, submissiveness, irrationality, inconsistency and plurality of character; he is imaginative, unrealistic, unpractical, becomes associated with nature, and becomes 'Other,' all of which are characteristics culturally ascribed to women.
- Layli, on the other hand, displays traits typically associated with masculinity and becomes an active, strong, decisive, courageous, wise, practical and constant character, displaying violence, stability and rationality. Hence, the lovers violate socially sanctioned gender behaviour and reverse gender roles. The poem, therefore, presents a weak, effeminate Majnoon and a strong, masculine Layli.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the four characters' gender reversals and their violation of their societies' sanctioned codes of gender behaviour. Their gender reversals place the four lovers outside their societies' norms, and inimical to the dominant patriarchal ideology. Their resistance to patriarchy, however, need not be

seen as limited to subverting gender roles. Romeo, Juliet, Layli, and Majnoon can be seen as threatening patriarchy even further when they challenge and subvert their societies' power relations. This aspect of the lovers' resistance, however, is outside the area covered in the present book.

Appendix A: Synopses

Romeo and Juliet

William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* tells the tragedy of two young people, Romeo and Juliet, who live in the small city of Verona in Italy. The city is torn apart by an ancient feud between two important aristocratic families, the Capulets and the Montagues.

The play starts with a fight between the servants of the two households. Soon the heads and members of both families, plus Verona citizens, join in the fight which is eventually stopped by Escalus, the Prince of Verona. The Prince declares that further fights will be punished by death. But Romeo, a Montague, is absent from this scene and is introduced in the next, lamenting his unrequited love for a lady named Rosaline of the Capulets. Soon, along with Benvolio, his cousin, Mercutio who is a friend to the Montagues and a kinsman of the Prince, and a few others, he goes, to a masked ball held at Capulet's house in the hope of meeting Rosaline. There he meets Juliet, Capulets' daughter and is captivated by her beauty. Yet neither is aware of the identity of the other, and they kiss and talk. They are seen by Tybalt, Juliet's cousin who recognises Romeo and swears vengeance for his presence at his uncle's ball. As soon as the party is over, both Juliet and Romeo learn of each other's identities, but it is too late, for both have fallen deeply in love with each other. Secretly, Romeo goes to the Capulets' garden to speak to Juliet and there they decide to get married and plan their wedding.

The next day, along with Juliet's nurse and Romeo's servant, they go to Friar Lawrence's cell to be married. The Friar marries them with the hope that their marriage will bring the two families together and stop the ancient hatred between them. On his way from the Friar's cell, Romeo is met by Benvolio, Mercutio, and Tybalt who challenges Romeo to a duel. But Romeo, who is now married to Juliet, refuses the challenge. Mercutio, offended by Romeo's cowardly act, takes up Tybalt's challenge to defend Romeo's name. In their fight Romeo steps in to intervene and holds Mercutio back. But Mercutio gets hurt under Romeo's arm and Tybalt runs away. Soon after, Mercutio dies and Tybalt, who comes back to the scene, is killed by Romeo. While Romeo flees, the Prince, the Capulets and the Montagues enter the scene. Learning of what happened, the Prince banishes Romeo from Verona.

That night, as arranged before, Romeo goes to Juliet's chamber but leaves early morning for Mantua. Back in Verona, Juliet's parents, despite her refusal and pleas, arrange for her to be married to Paris, a kinsman to the Prince. Juliet, who is abandoned by everyone including her nurse, visits the Friar for advice on what to do and is given a sleeping potion by him, which will put her to sleep for 42 hours and make her appear dead.

In the meantime, the Friar writes a letter to Romeo informing him of the sleeping potion. He tells Romeo to meet Juliet at her family tomb to take her to Mantua until he can settle the matters in Verona. Unfortunately, the person taking the letter gets delayed in Mantua and Romeo never hears of the Friar's plan. Instead he is informed by Balthasar, his servant, that Juliet is dead. Hearing this news, Romeo buys some poison and goes to the Capulets' tomb. In the tomb, he is met by Paris, Juliet's suitor, and kills him when Paris tries to prevent Romeo from going to Juliet. Then, seeing Juliet's seemingly dead body, he

drinks the poison and dies immediately. Minutes afterwards, Juliet wakes up from her induced death and not bearing to be without Romeo, kills herself with his dagger. Soon, the families and the Prince find out what really happened and they pardon the Friar. In memory of the lovers, Capulet and Montague vow to erect statues to honour their love.

Layli and Majnoon

Nezami's *Layli and Majnoon* is a long narrative poem about a boy and a girl, Qays and Layli, from Bedouin tribes in Arabia, who meet and fall in love at school. Though they try hard to hide their love, soon everyone finds out. Qays, who dotes on Layli and is impatient in his love, earns himself the title of Majnoon, meaning the madman. Once their secret love is revealed, Layli's parents hide her from Majnoon, who becomes even more impatient and acts stranger than before. He wanders in streets composing beautiful poems about his love and his grief on being away from the beloved. Then he takes to the mountains near which reside Layli and her tribe, while he is singing and crying for a beloved he is not allowed to even see, refusing to return home till night time.

Nothing and no one can help him, not even his father who tries to unite the lovers in marriage. Despite all his father's efforts, Majnoon is refused by Layli's father who considers it a disgrace to have a madman for a son-in-law. Being refused Layli's hand in marriage, he is taken by his father on a holy pilgrimage to Makkah, with the hope of getting his son cured. But instead of wishing to be cured, Majnoon prays for Layli's health and for the strengthening of their love. From then on, Majnoon takes to the wilderness and lives among animals. While living in caves, he meets Nofel, a young nobleman who vows to

help Majnoon and unite him with his beloved. Nofel gathers an army and fights Layli's tribe twice, winning the second battle. Yet he gives up on Majnoon when Layli's father, fearing shame and disgrace, threatens to kill the girl should Nofel insist on her marriage to Majnoon.

Once again Majnoon takes to the wild, this time on a more permanent basis, returning to his tribe only when he hears of his parents' deaths. On both occasions, he goes to his parents' graves and asks for forgiveness while lamenting his sorrowful destiny. On his return from Nofel's place, he meets hunters who have captured gazelles and a stag. Remembering his beloved, he gives all his belongings to the hunters to free the animals. In the wilderness, animals gather around Majnoon, and under his rule, forget their bestial ways and live peacefully together. Majnoon, who has given up hope on people, takes the animals as his companions, caring for them and sharing his food with them. Majnoon thus gets fame through his poetry, his love and his life among the wild, and occasionally people come to visit him, in the hope of hearing his beautiful poems. One such is a young lover named Salam who comes to live with Majnoon to hear his poems. But Salam cannot endure the hardships of Majnoon's life very long and is soon forced to return to the city.

Layli, on the other hand, has no choice but to keep her feelings secret. She dares not speak of her love and lament her lover's absence openly, and only when alone she mourns for her beloved. But she never hesitates to get news from Majnoon or send him words. She always seeks strangers who have heard of Majnoon and asks them to recite his poetry for her and sends him the poetry she has written herself. After the war with Nofel, her father marries her to Ibn Salam, a young man who has seen her earlier in a garden and has fallen in love with her (not to be confused with Salam, the lover who visits Majnoon in the caves). But even in marriage, Layli remains true to her love. She never

consummates her marriage and refuses her husband, threatening to kill herself should he try anything with her. Afraid of losing her, Ibn Salam gives in to her wish. Despite being married and guarded constantly by servants and family members, Layli takes every opportunity to keep in touch with her Majnoon. Once again, through a passerby she sends him a letter, apologising for her forced marriage, and informs him of her loyalty to him. She even arranges to meet Majnoon to speak to him.

After sometime, Ibn Salam, Layli's husband, dies and it is only then that, under the pretext of her husband's death, for the first time Layli is able to openly lament her love for Majnoon. Not long afterwards, Layli herself falls ill and dies. On her deathbed she reveals her secret love to her mother, begging her to treat her lover well when he comes to mourn for her at her grave.

Hearing of her death, Majnoon, followed by his animals, goes to Layli's grave and stays there until his death. Since Majnoon is surrounded by wild animals, no one dares approach and therefore, no one finds out of his death until a year later. Majnoon is left alone until only his bones remain, and that is when the wild animals scatter away, leaving his bones untouched. He is buried beside his true love and a shrine is built in place of their graves.

The lovers are described in their life and death as:

> Two lovers lie awaiting in this tomb
> Their resurrection from the grave's dark womb.
> Faithful in separation, true in love,
> One tent will hold them in the world above. (XLV, 58-59, *LM*e, 214)

Appendix B: Previous critical studies of *Romeo and Juliet*

This section contains past critical commentaries on Romeo and Juliet. *They have been provided here as further reading on the play.*

Many critics, especially the older ones, have refused to regard *Romeo and Juliet* it as a proper or “mature” tragedy:

- H. B. Charlton (perhaps the most prominent critic in this regard) sees the play as a deviation from “the current dramatic tradition” of its day and hence as “a comprehensive experiment” that fails.[1]
- Maynard Mack regards the tragedy as “an innovation” and “an experiment.”[2]
- Harold C. Goddard believes *Romeo and Juliet* to be an inferior tragedy which “betrays signs of immaturity and lacks some of the marks of mastery which are common to the other tragedies.”[3]
- Holland (in a fashion similar to Goddard) considers *Romeo and Juliet* to be “simply not a very good play,” and at best “the least of Shakespeare’s major plays.” He believes the play to be a result of Shakespeare’s lyric, not dramatic, imagination, an

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[1] Charlton, p. 49.
[2] Mack, p. 275.
[3] Goddard, p. 153.

example of "Shakespeare's early style," giving us what he calls "the lesser Shakespeare." [1]

- Stoll also regards the play as "an early and lesser" tragedy,[2] and Stauffer cannot see the play as a "serious tragedy."[3]

Shakespeare's later tragedies, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, are known as his "mature" tragedies. *Romeo and Juliet* has never been granted this status.

Two features *of Romeo and Juliet* which make it different from Shakespeare's later tragedies, as well as the classical conception of tragedy, are its characters and events. For Elizabethans, tragedy was expected to depict the fall of princes, people of high importance, or historical figures whose actions and decisions had wide social implications for nations. But *Romeo and Juliet* is neither a revenge tragedy nor a "Fall of Princes". Instead, it deals with the love and death of two young people who are "of the minor aristocracy" and their fame is only a result of their passion. In this sense, Romeo and Juliet can be any "boy and girl in love." Hence, to make a tragedy out of the private lives of two quite "ordinary" people was what Charlton has called "well-nigh an anarchist's gesture," since for the Elizabethans the theme of love was a subject fit only for comedy, not tragedy.[4]

Another feature of the play which makes it different from Shakespeare's other tragedies is its "hybrid" genre.[5] Though a tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy about young love, and

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[1] Holland, pp. 189, 198.
[2] Stoll, p. 21.
[3] Stauffer, p. 56.
[4] Charlton, pp. 50-51; Mack, p. 275; McAlindon, Romeo, p. 257; Bevington, p. 54.
[5] Pollard, pp. 29, 30; Bevington, pp. 54-55.

hence it also belongs to the realm of romance. Since romance was a subject fit for comedy, this mixing of genres means the play contains elements borrowed from the world of comedies, such as "deadly feuds, masked balls, love-at-first-sight, meetings and partings by moonlight and dawn, surreptitious weddings, rope-ladders."[1] Hence, many critics highlighting the comic side of *Romeo and Juliet* see the play as starting off in the fashion of Shakespeare's romantic comedies.[2] Even the characters seem more fit for comedy than tragedy, since tragedy dealt with princes or people of higher status than two young lovers from a small city like Verona.[3]

But as well as having a hybrid genre, half way through, the play changes course and, moving away from the world of comedy, suddenly turns tragic. With Mercutio's death, the romantic world of comedy dies and the events take on a serious and deadly tone. Therefore, this "defiantly uncalssical"[4] change from comedy to tragedy means that *Romeo and Juliet* "becomes, rather than is, tragic."[5]

There is yet another feature of the play which makes it differ from the other tragedies and has made the play somewhat problematic for Shakespearean critics. While Shakespeare's other tragedies usually present their protagonists as free agents, choosing their own destiny, and responsible for their fall, the traditional approach to *Romeo and Juliet* has been to see it as a tragedy of fate, wherein Romeo and Juliet become innocent

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[1] Mack, p. 275; Edwards pp. 76-77; Pollard, p. 29.
[2] McAlindon, What is, p. 5; Bevington, p. 54; Synder, pp. 19-22.
[3] Mack, p. 275; Synder, p. 20; Charlton, pp. 50-51.
[4] McAlindon, What is, p. 5.
[5] Synder, p. 19.

victims of fate and destiny[1] (See Chapter 1). Some of the familiar arguments are:

- *Tragedy of Fate:* H. B. Charlton, for instance, believes that the play contains "scattered suggestions of doom and of malignant fate" and hence, from the very beginning, the lovers "are doomed to piteous destruction."[2] For Davis, also, *Romeo and Juliet* is "'a tragedy of fate' similar to Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy.*"[3] In a similar fashion, Stoll finds no fault in the lovers and blames "the feud and destiny" as the causes of tragedy.[4] J. W. Draper takes the Prologue's "star-crossed" in a literal sense and regards the lovers as "the puppets of the stars and planets and of days and times of day."[5]
- *Sacrificial Offering:* Although Stauffer believes that the lovers can be held responsible because of their "extreme rashness," he considers the play, overall, as a tragedy of fate because "the moral punishment of the raging clans becomes more powerful in proportion to the innocence and helplessness of" the lovers who are offered as sacrifices.[6] Bevington exonerates the lovers of all guilt and considers them as sacrifices "to the unfeeling world" who have to take part in "a larger pattern of guiltless suffering."[7]

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[1] White, p. 1; Evans, pp. 13, 14; Bloom, Ages, p. xii; Synder, p. 27; Siegel, pp. 69-70.
[2] Charlton, pp. 58, 51.
[3] Davis, p. 28.
[4] Stoll, p. 4.
[5] Cited in Ryan, p. 117.
[6] Stauffer, pp. 55- 56.
[7] Bevington, pp. 63-64.

Frye also regards the lovers as sacrifices because they are "perfect and without blemish" and hence cannot stay in "the world of ordinary experience."[1] Susan Synder, too, considers the lovers as sacrifices who are "destined for destruction."[2]

- *Tragedy of Mischance:* For another group of critics, *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy of "mischance" since most of the actions of the play seem to depend on chance and accidents and are in some way mistimed. According to these critics, it is mere bad luck which prevents the Friar's message from reaching Romeo in Mantua or it is mistiming that Juliet should wake up minutes too late in the tomb.[3]

Another somewhat controversial issue regarding the play concerns its ending and the question of the lovers' success, with critics arguing equally on both sides. For some critics there seems to be no hope at the end, despite the promised reconciliation of the fathers.

- Bloom, for instance, believes that the play ends in ironies and at the end we are left with "an absurd pathos" and not "images of reconciliation."[4]
- For Synder, the irony lies in the reconciliation itself. The promise of a statue in gold highlights the parents' failure to understand the real value of their children's lives and deaths, and their continuous preoccupation with purely materialistic terms. The ending, thus, points to a new rivalry between the

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[1] Frye, p. 253.
[2] Synder, p. 20.
[3] Granville-Barker, pp. 9, 18; McAlindon, Romeo, p. 265.
[4] Bloom, An Essay, p. 214.

parents wishing to build monuments for the other's child. Even if a positive reading of the parents' reconciliation is granted, it would be overshadowed by the fact that ideology continues its reign in society without any changes.[1]

- Kinney also sees signs of the renewal of the feud between the parents with their hope to erect memorials in gold, confirmed by the Prince's reference to a "glooming peace" (V.iii.305).[2]

On the other hand, there are those who read a more positive ending for the play. For these critics, the reconciliation of the parents promises peace, new hopes and a new social order, and hence the play ends with the triumph of love over hate, death, fate and time, since it brings to an end an ancient feud "Which but their children's end nought could remove," (Prologue, 11).[3] Love is "triumphant" simply because it "exists" in a world full of "malice and pettiness" and thus becomes its own "justification,"[4] and the lovers' victory lies in their ability to overcome separation and be finally united in death.[5] Hence, the play comes to "sanctify" and "celebrate" love.[6]

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[1] Synder, p. 193.
[2] Arthur F. Kinney, "Arthur F. Kinney on Authority in *Romeo and Juliet*," *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Bloom's Guides*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 83.
[3] Stauffer, pp. 55, 58; Edwards, pp. 71- 76; McAlindon, What is, p. 13; McAlindon, Romeo, p. 269; Brown, p. 311; Siegel, pp. 100, 101-102, 105. See also Charlton, pp. 51-52; Evans, pp. 19-20.
[4] Edwards, p. 81.
[5] McAlindon, What is, p. 13.
[6] Pollard, pp. 30-31; Edwards, p. 72; Stauffer, pp. 57-58.

Appendix C: Theoretical underpinnings

Appendix C contains further elaboration on the theoretical concepts and definitions used in the book, provided here as extra reading.

Patriarchy

Apart from the three main characteristics explained earlier, patriarchy has other features one of which is the concept of control. Under patriarchy, control becomes "a core value around which social life is organised." Since patriarchy is a hierarchical system whereby men are privileged over women, this privileging of men comes through their control over "women and anyone else who might threaten" male privilege.[1]

Patriarchy is a system based on inequality, oppression, male privilege and male dominance. This system maintains inequality not only in the "distributions of power, rewards, opportunities, and resources" between men and women, but also between men and men who have to "compete" in order "to gain status, maintain control, and protect themselves from what other men might do to them." Yet, it focuses on male control only, since

[1] Johnson, p. 14.

under patriarchy men define their manhood through controlling women.[1]

Patriarchy is maintained through a suppression of "intimate relationships" and "personal voice." This suppression is achieved through reinforcing "honour," institutions that define "social boundaries," and violence for maintaining control.[2] Hence, any relationship that is based on equality and freedom poses a threat to patriarchy and defies its "Love Laws", i.e. "laws that constrain whom and how and how much we may love." As Gilligan and Richards rightly point out, such liberating love based on equality and freedom can in essence be seen as "political resistance" against the constraining and limiting system of patriarchy.[3]

As in other systems, violence plays a crucial role in patriarchy and is directed toward both men and women.[4] As Walby argues, male violence is part of patriarchy's "social structure." Although patriarchy may not openly approve of violence, it does so through "the state's refusal to intervene against it except in exceptional instances," hence allowing it to become "legitimised" and part of the system.[5]

Generally, violence takes on many forms (sexual harassment, rape and wife beating) and appears in both public and domestic spheres. Sexual assault is a form of violence which victimises women only. Because it is a "volatile mix of sex and power", in societies where men are given more power and status, women are more likely to face sexual assault. This is because sexual violence denotes power or the possession of power over women, and therefore, for men it is a way of asserting their

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[1] Johnson, pp. 41-42, 15.
[2] Gilligan and Richards, p. 21.
[3] Gilligan and Richards, pp. 19-20
[4] Rudman and Glick, pp. 270-271; Johnson, p. 16.
[5] Walby, pp. 21, 128.

dominance. Rape is the epitome of male violence. It becomes a means by which men come to show and perpetuate their dominance and power, especially in societies where women are given less social power and status.[1] This is evident in the attitude of the servants toward sex. The same goes for Mercutio who believes you have to "Prick love for pricking" you (I.iv.28). Hence, in Verona for men, violence and sex are related.

A situation in which men are highly likely to use aggression toward women is during war and "intergroup conflict." In such instances violence against women becomes "a strategy to demoralize the enemy." Targeting women of the enemy party can also be seen as a way to "emasculate" the enemy since it proves the enemy's failure to protect their women from strangers.[2] Hence, for Sampson and Gregory to assert their dominance over the Capulets and their masculinity they have to show violence toward women as well as men.

It is not only women, however, who become targets of male violence, since violence exists between men as well. This violence arises out of competition for "status and resources" and when defending one's honour.[3]

Patriarchy also promotes violence through establishing the concept of honour within society. In addition to promoting violence, honour is also one of the means by which patriarchy maintains control of people's lives.[4] Since honour means different things for men and women it helps to reinforce gender divisions. It also promotes male privilege and male control while

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[1] Walby, p. 128; Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 278, 280-282, 283; Johnson, p. 38.
[2] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 283.
[3] Rudman and Glick, pp. 5, 270.
[4] Gilligan and Richards, p. 21.

"demanding" male violence. At the same time it makes sure that women are kept down and under control.[1]

To be considered honourable, men need to achieve "autonomy and toughness." Hence, in cultures of honour (or honour cultures),[2] men's prime concern is to establish – and defend – their reputation as "tough and unwilling to back down from a fight or a threat," which may ultimately result in violence. This notion of honour, however, is not confined to the individual's reputation only, but includes that of "an in-group" which may be their "family, tribe, clan or nation."[3]

For women, honour is seen in their "purity, self-sacrifice, and deference to their fathers, brothers and husbands." A woman's honour also represents that of the man since another aspect of men's honour is their control of the women in their family. Hence, women who come to be considered "indiscreet" or "disobedient" will become targets of violence from men in their own family. Since any defiance on the part of women would be met with male violence, women have no choice but to consent to be controlled by men in order to "secure or to 'deserve' protection from male violence." It is still possible, however, to become targets of male violence with "the mere hint of sexual impropriety or defiance," which would stain the honour of the man as well as that of the woman.[4] This is what drives Layli's father to threaten to kill his daughter if Nofel should insist on her marrying Majnoon, the fear of his honour stained to have a madman for son-an-law; similarly, Juliet's father threatens to turn her out of the house if she refuses to marry Paris.

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 277.
[2] Both terms are used by Rudman and Glick interchangeably.
[3] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 266-67.
[4] Rudman and Glick, pp. 275, 277, 274.

Gender

"Psychological essentialism" regards biological differences as the determining factor in creating differences between men and women. It argues that differences between men and women arise out of sex differences which are "biologically fixed and immutable." Men and women are different because all men or all women share "deep, immutable properties that fundamentally determine 'who they are.'" Therefore, cultural conditions play no role in how men and women behave since their differences are biologically fixed and immutable.[1] To avoid this essentialism, cultural theorists make a distinction between sex and gender. [2] Early proponents of this view are such feminists as Virginia Wolf and Simone de Beauvoir. In "The Second Sex" de Beauvoir rejects the essentialist view that gender is a "fact of biology," and instead, argues that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman."[3] This distinction is also emphasised by the second wave feminists who regard sex as "a stable biological category" while gender is referred to as "a socially created and changing set of values."[4] In contrast to radical feminists who emphasise essentialism, socialist feminists also regard sexual inequality to be a cultural phenomenon arising out of social and cultural conditions rather than naturally or biologically occurring.[5] In this sense, gender can be defined as "social and cultural interpretations that turn sexual difference into more than a merely biological distinction." Gender defines masculinity and

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 6-7.
[2] Rudman and Glick, pp. 6-7. See also Gilchrist, p. 9; Chancer and Watkins, pp. 17-18; Bolin, p. 24.
[3] Hall, p. 106; Chancer and Watkins, p. 18.
[4] Gilchrist, p. 9.
[5] Gilchrist, pp. 9-10. See also Susan Hekman, "Feminism," *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory,* ed. Simon Malpas and Paul Wake (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 92-96.

femininity according to a system of binary oppositions which are assigned respectively to male and female sexes.[1]

Gender, however, is more than character traits. It "intersects other social divisions and inequalities, such as class, 'race' and sexuality"[2] and divides everything "into separate but unequal spheres."[3] Hence, not only our social life, but our personal life is also gendered.[4]

Social constructionism challenged essentialism and introduced the nature-culture debate between these two approaches for more than thirty years. More recently, however, the social constructionist view of gender has been questioned by findings in such fields as cognitive science and queer theory.[5]

Recent findings in cognitive science show that biology still plays a role in determining gender and cannot be dismissed as wholly irrelevant. Although cognitive sciences have found slight differences in men's and women's abilities, these differences are too insignificant to account for the variety of gender roles that exist within and between different cultures.[6]

An influential critic of queer theory is Judith Butler. In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* Butler criticises the sex/gender distinction advocated by feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir. Butler rejects the constructionist view that sex is a natural "pregiven," a biological fact, on which gender is constructed, arguing instead that both sex and gender are cultural constructions.[7]

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[1] Chancer and Watkins, pp. 18, 22.
[2] Jackson and Scott, pp. 1-2.
[3] Chancer and Watkins, pp. 19-20.
[4] Bolin, p. 24. See also Jackson and Scott, p. 1.
[5] Gilchrist, pp. 9-10.
[6] Gilchrist, pp. 11-13. See also Howson, p. 57.
[7] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 11.

Based on the sex/gender distinction, sex is a stable biological category which leads to gender being constructed according to social and cultural norms. Consequently, sex comes first, a "prediscursive," and gender comes second. Hence, it is one's sex that determines his/her gender which leads to sex as "simply given" and largely "untheorised."[1]

Butler argues that it may indeed be the other way round: it is gender, itself a construction, that determines sex. She agrees with Beauvoir "that one 'becomes' a woman" as a result of "a cultural compulsion." This does not mean, however, that the person becoming a woman has to be "female," and the "compulsion" is not a result of "sex." This is because the body to which we refer as a fixed point of reference has itself "always already been interpreted by cultural meanings." Consequently, "sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along."[2]

For her, there is no fixed or natural "pregiven" sex. Instead, gender, she argues "is the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts." Since "sex itself is a gendered category" gender cannot be "the cultural interpretation of sex." That sex is assumed to be the prediscursive of gender is "the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*."[3]

Despite her criticism of the sex/ gender distinction, she still sees gender as a construction which "'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness."[4]. She applies Foucault's conception

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[1] Jackson and Scott, p. 15.
[2] Butler, p. 12.
[3] Butler, p. 11
[4] Butler, p. 178.

of power to define gender.[1] Foucault sees power as a "performance" and a "strategy," it is "a verb rather than a noun."[2] Similarly, for Butler gender is "not a noun," but rather a "doing." It is a "ritual social drama" which is repeated and hence, has the potential to be subverted. Gender is "a series of acts", a "performance." We perform gender in order to survive within the system. Therefore "gender performance" is "a strategy of survival." The aim of this performance is to keep gender "within its binary frame." The actions of gender have "temporal and collective dimensions." They are collective in the sense that although gender is performed by individuals, it is in fact a "public action."[3]

She rejects the notion of a stable gender identity, viewing gender instead as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*."[4] Recently, Butler's views on gender have been criticised as nothing "more than jargon for an elite group of feminists and other social critics." [5] This, however, does not concern the present study.

Gender Roles

Gender roles can be said to be based on stereotypes or "cultural stereotypes". Rudman and Glick define cultural stereotypes as "stereotypes that are widely socially shared, at least in the sense

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[1] Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Colorado: Westview p, 2009) 281. See also Jana Sawicki, "Queering Foucault and The Subject of Feminism," *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault,* ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge up., 2005) 381; Mansfield, pp. 75-76.

[2] Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2003) p. 35.

[3] Butler, pp. 177, 178-179.

[4] Butler, p. 179.

[5] Tong, p. 283.

that people within a society have a common understanding of the content of the stereotype." In this sense, stereotypes ascribe distinctive features to different groups or members of the society in order to categorise people.[1]

To define gender as a social construct would mean that gender roles would differ from one society to the next based on what each society deems as appropriate gendered behaviour.[2] According to social role theory, however, since many cultures have similar patterns of "gendered division of labor and a gender hierarchy," there should be "cross-cultural consensus" about gender roles. This means that there should be similar patterns of behaviour and gender stereotypes ascribed to men and women in many cultures.[3] The same holds true for the societies of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Layli and Majnoon*. Although there will not be a one to one correspondence, similar patterns will be shown to exist between the two cultures.

Qualities traditionally associated with masculinity include rationality, logic, control, aggression or violence, activity, adventure, competitiveness, strength, toughness, courage, dominance, autonomy, independence, self-sufficiency, decisiveness, invulnerability and stability. Femininity is associated with emotionality, intuition, weakness, tenderness, passivity, gentleness, sharing, dependence, compassion, vulnerability, plurality, inconsistency and instability.[4]

Patriarchy uses a "classification system" which works on the basis of binary oppositions.[5] These oppositions go beyond character traits to include:

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[1] Rudman and Glick, pp. 82, 83.
[2] Jackson and Scott, p. 2.
[3] Rudman and Glick, p. 88.
[4] Johnson, pp. 7, 14; Rudman and Glick, p. 89; Gilchrist, p. 64; Chancer and Watkins, pp. 19-20; Mansfield, p. 95.
[5] Hall, pp. 105-106.

> Activity / passivity,
> Sun / Moon,
> Culture / Nature,
> Day / Night,
> Father / Mother,
> Head / heart,
> Intelligible / sensitive,
> Logos / Pathos.
> Form, convex, step, advance, seed, progress.
> Matter, concave, ground – which supports the step, receptacle.
> Man
> ―――――
> Woman[1]

These binary pairs are hierarchised and hence, one side of the binary, which is assigned to masculinity and all associated with it, is always privileged and prioritised and considered the norm. Against this, all that is feminine falls on the other side of the binary pair and is devalued and considered inferior.[2]

Gender Reversal

Butler, for whom gender is a set of "socially repeated acts," locates this change "in the possibility of a failure to repeat" which results in "gender transformation."[3] Changes in gender are also termed "gender reversal" which can be defined as

> any change, whether "total" or partial, in social behavior, work, clothing, mannerisms, speech, self-designation, or ideology, which brings a person closer

[1] Cixous, p. 264.
[2] Chancer and Watkins, p. 19; Hall, pp. 105-106.
[3] Butler, p. 179.

> to the other (or, in polygender systems, *an*other) gender.[1]

Gender reversal, however, has serious consequences. People who violate gender roles are severely punished.[2] The punishments vary from "social isolation and mockery" to "violence, rape and even death."[3] Those who undergo gender reversal may also come to be seen as "psychologically disturbed."[4]

Power Relations[5]

In a patriarchal society the many institutions that make up the patriarchal structure are responsible for perpetuating gender divisions and patriarchal values. These different institutions help to maintain the privileging of men and the oppression of women. They include the state (law and politics), family, as well as cultural institutions such as religion and education.[6] These institutions which are responsible for "reinforcing" patriarchal values are called "gender police."[7]

The concept of gender police is somewhat similar to Althusser's definition of what he terms Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA's). In his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,"[8] Althusser put forward his

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[1] Ramet, p. 2.
[2] Rudman and Glick, pp. 143-145.
[3] Mansfield, p. 77.
[4] Rudman and Glick, pp. 160, 173.
[5] Power relations have not been dealt with in this book. This section is only provided as further elaboration and reading on concepts mentioned earlier.
[6] Walby, p. 21. See also Johnson, pp. 41-42.
[7] Ramet, p. 2.
[8] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin, Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review p, 1971).

theory of ISA's to improve the existing Marxist theories and to explain how the Capitalist regime "reproduces its existing relations," that is how it makes sure everyone functions in society according to capitalist ideology.[1]

Instead of seeing ideology to be enforced only through a single institution, mainly the government, Althusser argued that the government is only one of the many institutions through which the system propagates the ruling ideology, that is "the ideology of the ruling class." The different ISA's "reproduce the relations of production" by enforcing the Capitalist ideology. They generate the values, meanings and beliefs of the dominant ideology and help perpetuate the relations which are essential for Capitalist structures. Hence, they reinforce the "capitalist relations of exploitation". The meanings and values produced by the many ISA's will be different, or even seem contradictory, but in fact they all contribute to the same end which is to reinstate the current system and its power structures within society.[2]

The Ideological State Apparatuses function through a number of institutions which include:

- "the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,
- the legal ISA."[3]

These ISA's work alongside what he terms the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), such as the police, the army, and the prison system. Whereas the RSA uses force and violence to maintain

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[1] John Lechte, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 43.
[2] Althusser, pp. 149, 155.
[3] Althusser, p. 143.

the current relations, the ISA's do so by teaching individuals to accept, advocate and live according to the dominant ideology.[1]

Though Althusser had specifically the capitalist regime in mind, these ISA's could be seen to function in any society, working to enforce the ruling ideology of that society. Hence, in a patriarchal society, the ruling ideology will be patriarchal, looking to enforce its gender divisions, hierarchies and the privileging of men.

Althusser, however, has been criticised for offering what to many seems a "deterministic" view. In his model people become mere puppets who are victimised by ideology, hence having no chance for change or resistance.[2]

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[1] Althusser, pp. 149-150.
[2] David Carter, *Literary Theory* (Herts: Pocket Essentials, 2006) 64.

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