

Romeo and Juliet – The loveless romance

Shakespeare's play, "Romeo and Juliet" is often called the "greatest love story of all time", but to what extent is that true? Was it truly love or just the infatuation of their dreams being fulfilled? How can we call Romeo and Juliet the greatest love story of all time if there was nothing beyond their superficial and self-centred love. Today, I shall be exploring the ideas of what Romeo and Juliet both secretly longed for and why their love would have never blossomed into anything further had fate been kinder to them.

At the start of the play, we are introduced with a shallow conflict: Romeo's unrequited feelings of love towards Rosaline. When Shakespeare revealed this dilemma of his, we as an audience already know that Romeo's feelings for Rosaline will die overtime, as the title of the play stars Juliet, not Rosaline. It is a commonly known fact that he did not have any true feelings for Rosaline when Romeo begins to bleat unreal things, shown in the oxymorons "feather of led" and "bright smoke" and "cold fire" – Romeo names things non-existent to describe his feelings because he is not actually in love with her. Rather he has been captivated by her beauty and confuses his awe of her beauty for his love for her. Later in the play however, Romeo quickly manages to overcome his unresolved feelings for Rosaline when he meets another beautiful girl, Juliet. When Romeo speaks of Juliet, he often uses sensory imagery about her, calling her a "snowy dove" and contrasting her to "trooping crows" and when he speaks of his love for her, it is often religious or heavenly, showing that he has created this grand idea of love as to be something to be put on a pedestal, something he wishes to attain. Romeo's love for Juliet is entirely outermost or perhaps a jest at love because love is what he desires the most.

Juliet's love for Romeo however is a means to seek control. Shakespeare set Romeo and Juliet to be in a patriarchal society, a society where women are used as a means of trade for families to increase in wealth and status. Juliet is highly aware of her purpose as a woman at this time as her mother tells her that she "was a mother much upon these years" suggesting that she will need to get married soon or her worth will fall and she will soon expire. This brings marriage to the forefront of Juliet's mind (meaning that Juliet was lying when she said that marriage was "an honour I dream not of"). She is aware that someday she will have to marry Paris. When Juliet meets a younger and loving boy, Romeo, she seeks to use him as a means of getting married to someone of her own choice. She has power over Romeo which makes their romance appear unconventional as the man is meant to have power over the woman and she is able to steer the relationship into the course that she wants it to go. She compares Romeo to a rose, which is natural imagery suggesting that her love is more real and worldly than Romeo's; however she also manages to make Romeo appear more feminine with this descriptor, making Juliet once again more powerful than him. Another prime example of Juliet's control over Romeo is when she tells him that they must get married by tomorrow and he obliges without question, whereas in a patriarchal society, it is known for women to obey what the man says. Juliet seeks control within their romance because she wants freedom from the expectations of society and how a woman should behave.

Although their love does fulfil what they themselves want, it does not take into account the others feelings, with Romeo's love for Juliet being for her beauty and his rose-coloured outlook of love and Juliet's love for Romeo being a means for control and finding freedom within their love. There is a lack of communication between the two of what they both desire, so instead of using this chance to share and grow their love by helping the other attain their goal, they instead keep to themselves and their love ends up having walls built up around it. Love, or loving, has a purpose of being there for the other which is unseen within their romance. Had the two lived, their romance would have died quickly as there was no real feeling for the other behind it, only gluttonous feelings for themselves.