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C.    Wild, uncontrollable passionate love appears in many of the great books we have read in class this term.  Choose several examples, three or four, from different books, and discuss love's key role; show in your essay how, in each case, we learn about this overwhelming experience and the havoc it sometimes---but not always---wreaks in human relationships.

**Love: The Greatest Motivator of Peasants, The Rich, Gods, and Heroes**

Love in literature is a force of overwhelming power. It causes people to act their bravest, to stick together during moment of greatest tumult, and to create the most beautiful of poetry, at same time it causes people to act against their better judgement. Love can cause a person to act irrationality, to reject social norms despite danger, and to cause one to act in such a way that the very love they strive for is lost. Love is multifaceted, but always powerful and it is therefore no surprise that it is so prevalent in the plots of so many masterpieces of literature. This includes the story of Aladdin, Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, the Ramayana, and Ovid’s tale of Orpheus. Many of these stories have a central conflict stem from some core love between two characters that causes them to act out of the ordinary. It is only in the story of Aladdin where the love is at its most simple.

Within the story of Aladdin there exists a fairly conventional, fair tale-esque, love story. An impoverished boy, our titular Aladdin, falls in love with the daughter of the Sultan, a beautiful princess. To win the princess’ heart the boy has to grow out of poverty to become like a prince. Though the text includes a troubling section where the Aladdin kidnaps the princess, this does not become a central conflict of the work, it is basically skimmed over. In the story of Aladdin, we can see what a “conventional” romance looks like. This is helpful for analyzing other works, we can compare and contrast them to the story of Aladdin. The story of Aladdin serves as the textbook romance plot which other love stories are born from.

This story includes many story beats that will reoccur in future texts. For example, it includes the story of a man who becomes a better person due to his love for a woman. The power of love compels the change in Aladdin’s character that turns him from a poor idle boy into a wealthy focused man. At the same time, it forces him to be brave and to be quick thinking. At the end of the story, the princess is kidnapped and Aladdin must rescue her. Love is a compelling force that causes personal change and allows Aladdin to become a hero. The Story of Aladdin also includes an irrational or extreme action taken in the name of love.

Before Aladdin even meets the princess face to face, she has been wedded to the son of the Vizier. This infuriates Aladdin who uses the power of the magic lamp to kidnap the Princess and her husband, bringing them to his home. Aladdin does this out of his extreme love for the Princess, he acts irrationality and extremely because he loves her so. It is important to note that while this action comes off awfully from a modern reading of the text, there is little evidence in the story that says that this action should register poorly with the readers. This action does seem to upset the princess in some way, but she is given so little character that we as readers are not made to feel how she feels. Instead we see this from Aladdin’s perspective where this is an action of love.

**Act of bravery (Orpheus)**

**Love between warring classes (like families)**

**Love causes large irrational action (Ramayana)**

In this story love does no damage to Aladdin, it is not a cautionary tale about love. Instead love is a catalyst for the actions in the text, it motivates Aladdin to want something more. In the other books we have read this semester, love is a lot more complicated.

Take Romeo and Juliet. In many ways Shakespeare’s play starts off a lot like the fairy tale archetype that Aladdin has. Romeo is able to go from being an idle person spending all his time loving from afar Rosalind into a husband for Juleit. His love for Juliet serves as the catalyst for him to go from a boy into a man. This is very similar to how Aladdin’s love for the princess lets him grow from an idle boy into a wealthy man. Shakespeare shows this in the way that Romeo acts towards his previous enemy in Capulet. At the beginning of the play Romeo is all to comfortable to participate in the squabble between the families. However, at the end of the text, even when the Capulets come at Romeo with harsh words, Romeo tries to keep the peace. He tries to make friends with his enemies despite cruel language. However, this is obviously not enough.

While in Aladdin love conquers all, this is not true in Romeo and Juliet. Aladdins committed love for the princess allows him to breach the class divide that separated them, but in Shakespeare’s tale the love that bounds Romeo and Juliet is unable to overcome their familial differences, at least in life. While Romeo tries to make Mercutio warm towards the Capulets, he is unsuccessful. They fight, Mercutio dies, Romeo kills Tybalt and is therefore banished.

Even after this Juliet loves Romeo and Romeo loves Juliet. They love each other so much that when Romeo thinks Juliet is dead he takes his own life. In turn when Juliet finds Romeo truly dead, she takes her life in turn. Their love for each other was so strong that it ultimately leads to their deaths. However, Shakespeare is not blaming love here, nor is he blaming Romeo and Juliet.

The love between the main characters is beautiful. Shakespeare shows this by delighting us with the poetry between our leads. Whenever the characters are most in love, whenever they are together, they deliver the most beautiful lines in the whole play. Shakespeare would not reward his characters with the greatest beauty the play has to offer if he felt what they were doing was wrong. The text lays no judgement on Romeo and Juliet for their love, it rewards them whenever it can. Instead the problem lies in their families.

Romeo and Juliet shows how easily love can be corrupted by hate. In the story of Aladdin, Aladdin is lucky to have the mother he has. She is patient with her son and helps him however she can to satisfy his passion for love. She loves and understands her son and is accepting of his love even when it is so behind the pale (a peasant asking for the hand of a princess is thought to be ludicrous). In addition the king is also very welcoming, he loves the present Aladdin gives him and is impressed with Aladdin’s devotion to his daughter as shown through his fantastic gifts.

However, in Romeo and Juliet the Capulets and th Monatgues hate eachother. Their hate for the other families far exceeds the care and love they have for their own children. They do not listen and they do not understand. Instead of listening to and nurturing the love their respective child feels, they cast it off. Shakespeare uses his text to show the deadly results this can have. The main difference between Aladdin and Romeo is how their love was understood by their parents. In one text, family nurtures the love and therefore the love can blossom. In the other, family casts off the love and therefore the love leads to death.

Neither Romeo and Juliet or the story of Aladdin focus on an intrinsic downside to love, in both stories the central conflict is brought upon by other characters’ actions towards the lovers not the lovers themselves. This is not true for the Ramayana.

In the Ramayana, we have Rama and Sita, the two most perfect humans possible. Their love is touching and beautiful as it the love between two gods, though they are unaware of who they are. Throughout the story their dedication to each other never wavers, Sita even throws herself into a fire because she thinks that Rama doubts her faithfulness. That is how strong and important the bond between these two characters is, one would rather die than to see it severed. In many ways their romance is great, however it also is the catalyst for the central conflict of the story.

Rama and Sita are in the wilderness with Rama’s brother Lakshmana. While they are resting in their makeshift home, Sita spots a lovely deer. This deer is coated in gems of incredible beauty; Sita wants it. She asks Rama to go and catch the deer for her, but Rama’s brother Lakshmana warns him against it. Lakshmana warns his brother that this could easily be a trick by a demon. Lakshmana is a character that Rama normally trusts, his brother normally has very wise advice that Rama makes a good point to heed, however this time he does not. Rama is so in love with Sita that he feels he must get this deer for her, and he throws caution to the wind. This allows the demon king to come and snatch Sita away, creating the central conflict of the rest of the story.

This can be seen as a parallel of Rama’s father King INSERT NAME HERE. The King promises his wife, INSERT NAME HERE, whatever wish she wants. He does this because he is so in love with her after she says his life. He feels that he owes her anything that she could ever want. In his haste to give this wish he has unknowingly set the seeds for Rama’s possible destruction. What his wife requests is Rama’s banishment. Rama is the King’s favorite son, and his banishment ends up killing the king, delaying Rama’s rule for many years, and eventually setting up the situation that allows Sita to be captured.

In both stories we see that love itself can be the cause of human folly. Love is so possessing of a person, even a perfect person Rama, that it causes one to act irrationally. This tale is telling us about the power of love, about its beauty and overpowering nature. At the same time the tale does not cast judgement on mortals consumed by love. Rama is the perfect human and he makes this same mistake, so it does not seem like any other human has any ability to properly defend ourselves for love.

This can also be seen in the way that Rama addresses his father after he is banished. As Rama comes to understand the situation he does not chastise his father. He understands what would motivate his father to act in the way he did, he understands that the power of love can cause a man to act foolishly. We can also see examples of this in Romeo and Juliet and Aladdin, though they are more romanticized. Romeo and Juliet foolishly embark on a quest for love in spite of their families hate, and Aladdin foolishly asks for the hand of royalty in marriage as a commoner. However, in each of these tales the love itself does not breed disasters in the plot.

Romeo love Juliet and Juliet loves Romeo. They share many beautiful lines of poetry and joy despite their foolishness, and they are not brought down by themselves but by their families. In the story of Aladdin, Aladdin is successful in getting the hand of the princess, and they live happily with only a handful of pages dedicated to disposing of a magician who cares little about their love and just wants magical powers.

The conflict in the Ramayana is much more reminiscent of the conflict in the story of Orpheus in the Metamorphoses.

In the story of Orpheus, his wife, INSERT WIFE NAME HERE, is killed by the bite of snake. Orpheus, being a beautiful musician, goes to the underworld to beg for his wife’s life with the moving power of his INSTRUMENT HERE. His love for his wife allows him to brave the depths of Hades and face the god of dead himself. His love for his wife is so great that the song that comes from it is even able to stop, at least temporarily, the suffering of the Sisyphus who can rest on his boulder when listening to Orpheus’ song. His love for his wife is so great that he is able to get her back by expressing fully his love through song. This is how great the love is between Orpheus and HIS WIFE HERE. At the same time his love for his wife is so great that he ultimately again dooms her to Hades.

Orpheus is told that his wife will come back to him if she follows behind him out of Hades. The one stipulation is that Orpheus must not look back behind him to see his wife, however Orpheus is unable to. Orpheus misses his wife so badly that he cannot help to look back behind him and see her image. This ends up sending her back to Hades and Orpheus is so distraught that he never again seeks love from any other woman. However, quite like the Ramayana, Ovid is not judging Orpheus for his actions.

The text makes a point to say that ORPHEUS’ WIFE does not judge him for his actions. She looks on him with sympathy and understanding. Indeed, even the narrator can understand why Orpheus does why he does, he is possessed by love. Love is so powerful an emotion that it can overpower a mortal’s normal senses. Sometimes this great, it allowed Orpheus to play a song so great that it overpowered the punishment of the gods, but sometimes it isn’t. Here Ovid shows us both the best that love can offer and the way that it can drive us to actions that are out of our best interests.

In every story discussed in this essay love has been a central motivating force for the characters, and in each of these stories it has been a source of at least some good. These authors knew that love was a powerful and often beautiful force that can push a man to act in ways he never thought possible. This includes a commoner asking for a hand of a princess, the binding of two feuding families, surviving a trial by fire, and inspiring a tune that moves the gods. Love is a force that that allows people to act as greater than their place, it elevates them and moves them to do extraordinary things, but at the same time it can be destructive.

Love overpowers a man, making him do things that he would never do before, but that also means that it can overpower his sense of judgement. In Romeo and Juliet, the young lovers foolishly pursue a romance that is so detested by their families. Their love while beautiful and pure is lacking in judgement. If these characters weren’t so in love they might’ve been able to understand that the situation they are pursuing will lead to their deaths. However, Shakespeare does not judge them, he takes their side. Romeo and Juliet, though foolish and lacking in judgement, are right in their actions. While pursuing, love leads to their death, the blame lies most on their parents who corrupt that love. However, love still leads to a foolish decision, much like in the Ramayana.

In the Ramayana Rama’s love for Sita overpowers his better judgement, leading to Sita being captured by a demon. Though love between Rama and Sita is as great as it can be, they are still overwhelmed by the power of love and can make poor judgements. However, the text is not using Rama’s poor judgement to moralize to the reader. Rama does something wrong, but the text makes a point to say that he is the perfect. If the perfect human makes this mistake, then it cannot be blamed on him. Perfection means that no better could be achieved, and since that is the case for Rama then love must be that powerful. Love is so powerful a force that it can even overpower the good judgement of the most perfect human, this is why Ovid does not judge Orpheus for his mistake.

Orpheus goes to Hades to ask for his dead wife’s return. Orpheus is so powerfully affected by the love for his wife that he can brave the underworld and play music so beautiful that he moves the gods. At the same time love makes him look back, therefore casting his wife back to Hades. However as shown in the Ramayana, this is not the fault of Orpheus. Love is so great that it can overpower the perfect human, so it is not surprise that Ovid does not judge Orpheus for his actions. Even his wife is understanding about why Orpheus looks back, she and Ovid know that love is can overpower a man’s judgement, they are sympathetic.

In these stories love allows a person to be something bigger than themselves. Love takes a person over and makes a person act as love’s servant. This allows for some beautiful poetry, heroic acts of bravery, and powerful dedication, but it can also lead one to foolishness. These texts showcase both the good and bad of love, and they are always consistent in showing its true overwhelming power. Love in these texts is something that takes a person over and overpowers their judgement, mostly for good but occasionally for ill.