



Comparing Pyramus and Thisbe with Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet to Examine Forbidden Love and Familial Conflict

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, the themes of forbidden love and familial conflict are compared between William Shakespeare's well-known play "Romeo and Juliet" and Ovid's "Metamorphoses," notably the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. These works' narrative structures and cultural settings offer an engaging starting point for exploring the nuances of love hampered by familial opposition. This paper draws comparisons between the tragic love tale of Romeo and Juliet and the forbidden love between Pyramus and Thisbe, as well as the familial tensions that stand in the way of their union. The research aims to shed light on the theme's timeless and universal quality by examining the tragic aspects, cultural influences, and enduring legacy of these tales. By contrasting these two well-known stories, the goal of this study is to further our understanding of how familial strife and forbidden love are portrayed in classical and Renaissance literature, emphasising the themes' ongoing influence on cultural narratives throughout history.

Key Words: familial conflict, forbidden love, miscommunication, religious dogma, mulberry tree

Introduction

Ovid describes in his *Metamorphoses* the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, two young Babylonians who fell in love but were prevented from being married due to a long-standing and intense parental feud between their families. However, the families despise one another. Being neighbours, they decide to flee together and communicate with each other in secret. A significant misconception results from doing this. When Thisbe gets to their meeting first, a savage lion that has just finished devouring its kill scares her away and takes hold of her cloak. When Pyramus arrives, he assumes the worst has happened when he finds the lion gnawing on Thisbe's cloak and having blood on its mouth. Thinking Thisbe is dead, he ends his own life. Thisbe kills herself after discovering Pyramus is dead when she returns because she can't bear to live without her true love. Ill-fated love is a theme in both William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Every story has a tragic coupling: Pyramus is the male character who symbolises Romeo, and Thisbe is the feminine character who represents Juliet, and vice versa.

Background

The tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was composed in the early first century of the common era, during the Roman era. Ovid wrote during what is known as the Golden Age of Latin literature, which also included such luminaries as Virgil and Horace. Ovid was renowned for his avant-garde approach to poetry, especially elegy. A compilation of mythical tales presented in hexameter verse, *Metamorphoses*, demonstrates Ovid's talent for fusing disparate stories into a coherent whole.

A tragic love story set in Verona, Italy, *Romeo and Juliet* is one of William Shakespeare's most well-known tragedies. Two teenage lovers from rival families—the Montagues and the Capulets center the story. The Montague and Capulet families have a long-standing rivalry at the start of the play. Romeo, a Montague, enters a Capulet celebration covertly and meets Juliet, a Capulet, with whom he falls in love amidst the continuous strife. They decide to get married after sharing a romantic moment without realising each other's family ties. Romeo leaves Verona and is exiled. Despite Juliet's grief, Friar Laurence comes up with a scheme to get the lovers back together. With the intention of temporarily putting Juliet to sleep until Romeo can join her, he gives her a potion that makes her feel as though she has passed away. Romeo hears of Juliet's "death" and quickly returns to Verona, not knowing about the plan. He discovers Juliet to be lifeless and, in desperation, ends his own life next to her. Juliet kills herself with Romeo's blade as soon as she wakes up and learns of his passing.

Forbidden love in Pyramus and Thisbe

Like the rivalry between the Montagues and Capulets in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," the main cause of the familial conflict in Pyramus and Thisbe's story is a long-standing rivalry between their families. The myth does not go into great detail about the origins of this conflict, but it is suggested that it is the result of a long-standing animosity that has endured over time. Pyramus and Thisbe are compelled to carry out their love affair in secret due to objections from their families. The element of secrecy and secret encounters highlights the difficulties faced by their family situation. Their relationship is severely hampered by the conflict or rivalry between their families. The story is made more suspenseful and dramatic by the families' opposition to their relationship and rejection of it, which gives the impression of forbidden love.

Comparative Analysis: Pyramus and Thisbe vs. Romeo and Juliet

Even though "Romeo and Juliet" and "Pyramus and Thisbe" are two sad love stories set in very different historical and cultural situations, they nevertheless have a lot in common. In Thisbe and Pyramus the miscommunication between the couple is a key component of the tragedy. Pyramus believes Thisbe is dead because of the bloodstain on her veil, which ultimately leads to their terrible demises. In the play Romeo and Juliet, tragic miscommunications permeate the entire play, as evidenced by Romeo's ignorance of Juliet's staged death, setting off a series of events that ultimately result in the lovers' premature deaths. Tragically, Pyramus chooses to terminate his own life after wrongly thinking Thisbe has passed away, leading to the demise of both loves. After seeing Pyramus's lifeless body, Thisbe likewise makes the decision to take her own life. The play Romeo and Juliet Romeo and Juliet die tragically at the end of the play. Romeo poisons himself because he thinks Juliet is dead, and when Juliet wakes up and finds Romeo dead, she ends her own life with his dagger.

Cultural and literary context

Shakespeare and Ovid were two significant writers who lived in different eras and cultural environments. Shakespeare was an English playwright and poet who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, while Ovid, a Roman poet, lived from the first century BCE to the first century CE. Notwithstanding their disparate locations and ages, both were greatly impacted by the cultural environments in which they were raised. Their capacity to both contribute to and draw from the literary traditions of their various eras was a common trait among them. Both came from diverse cultural backgrounds that influenced their viewpoints and the works' continuing popularity.

Both "Pyramus and Thisbe" and "Romeo and Juliet" depict forbidden love in ways that are strongly impacted by the social mores and cultural conventions of their respective settings. The limitations, expectations, and repercussions of partnerships that go beyond social conventions are reflected in these works.

In Thisbe and Pyramus, Roman religion and mythology are weaved throughout the story. The change in the mulberry tree represents both supernatural intervention and the results of going against social conventions. The play Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare's characters' choices and moral quandaries are influenced by the widespread Catholicism of the day. The conflict between religious dogma and private wants is reflected in the friar's assistance to the lovers.

Use of symbolism

Love is a major theme and is shown in both tales as a strong, transformational force. Romeo and Juliet, as well as Pyramus and Thisbe, exhibit a love that surpasses societal and familial norms, highlighting the enduring power and innocence of passionate love. Both pieces make considerable use of natural images to portray the protagonists' emotional states. In "Romeo and Juliet," nature is frequently used—for example, through the use of light and dark imagery—to reflect the lovers' feelings.

The mulberry tree's berries turning red from white in Pyramus and Thisbe represents the lovers' terrible fate's lasting effect on the natural world. In both tales, misinterpreting signals results in disastrous outcomes, highlighting the vulnerability of communication when it comes to personal matters. In all stories, death is a potent symbol that stands for the ultimate result of forbidden love. Romeo and Juliet's, Pyramus', and Thisbe's deaths serve as moving reminders of the price paid for breaking social conventions. The use of symbolism in "Romeo and Juliet" and the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe serves to enhance the thematic richness of the stories, providing readers with timeless insights into the complexities of love, fate, and the human condition, despite the fact that these works are set in different cultural and historical contexts.

Conclusion

Despite the years that separate their stories, Pyramus and Thisbe and Romeo and Juliet both explore the complexity of love that is impeded by familial turmoil. Beyond time and cultural barriers, the impact of family on the course of the lovers' destiny unites these two historically distinct periods: ancient Rome and Renaissance England. The misinterpretations, errors in judgement, and tragic choices highlight the frailty of these doomed relationships and highlight the dramatic power of forbidden love mixed with familial disapproval. To sum up, comparing Pyramus and Thisbe to Romeo and Juliet not only deepens our comprehension of these distinct works but also emphasises the timeless ability of writing to cross cultural and chronological barriers.

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