

In the figures of the civil watch and the Prince, the brawl introduces the audience to a different aspect of the social world of Verona that exists beyond the Montagues and Capulets. This social world stands in constant contrast to the passions inherent in the Capulets and Montagues. The give-and-take between the demands of the social world and individuals' private passions is another powerful theme in the play. For example, look at how the servants try to attain their desire while remaining on the right side of the law. Note how careful Samson is to ask, "Is the law on our side, if I say 'Ay,'" before insulting the Montagues (1.1.42). After the Prince institutes the death penalty for any who disturb the peace again, the stakes for letting private passions overwhelm public sobriety are raised to a new level.

Finally, this first scene also introduces us to Romeo the lover. But that introduction comes with a bit of a shock. In a play called *Romeo and Juliet* we would expect the forlorn Romeo to be lovesick over Juliet. But instead he is in love with Rosaline. Who is Rosaline? The question lingers through the play. She never appears onstage, but many of Romeo's friends, unaware that he has fallen in love with and married Juliet, believe he is in love with Rosaline for the entirety of the play. And Friar Lawrence, for one, expresses shock that Romeo's affections could shift so quickly from Rosaline to Juliet. In this way, Rosaline haunts *Romeo and Juliet*. One can argue that Rosaline exists in the play only to demonstrate Romeo's passionate nature, his love of love. For example, in the clichés he spouts about his love for Rosaline: "Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" (1.1.173). It seems that Romeo's love for chaste Rosaline stems almost entirely from the reading of bad love poetry. Romeo's love for Rosaline, then, seems an immature love, more a statement that he is ready to be in love than actual love. An alternative argument holds that Romeo's love for Rosaline shows him to be desirous of love with anyone who is beautiful and willing to share his feelings, thereby sullyng our understanding of Romeo's love with Juliet. Over the course of the play, the purity and power of Romeo's love for Juliet seems to outweigh any concerns about the origin of that love, and therefore any concerns about Rosaline, but the question of Rosaline's role in the play does offer an important point for consideration.