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Research Paper

Love as Marginality: A Literary and Philosophical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT
This essay explores love as a form of chosen marginality rather than merely an emotion, romantic ideal, or social bond. Drawing on literary, philosophical, and popular-cultural representations, it argues that love frequently displaces the lover from normative structures of rationality, productivity, and social belonging. Rather than functioning as a shelter, love operates as a border — a liminal space between presence and absence, strength and suffering, self and loss. Through readings of Urdu poetry (Ghalib, Faiz), Romantic poetry (Shelley, Keats), canonical Western texts (Shakespeare, Brontë, Joyce, Fitzgerald), and popular cinema (Devdas, Padmaavat, Rockstar, Khamoshi Titanic, La La Land), the essay demonstrates how love unsettles identity, intensifies vulnerability, and produces existential isolation. Philosophically informed by thinkers such as Plato, Barthes, Beauvoir, Kristeva, and Bauman, the essay contends that love reveals human fragility while also deepening meaning, suggesting that marginality — rather than belonging — is central to the experience of loving.

KEYWORDS: *Marginality, Subjectivity, Liminality, Memory, loss, poetry, subjectivity.*

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I. INTRODUCTION- LOVE AS BORDER: BETWEEN BELONGING AND EXILE

Love is not a home; it is a border.
It shelters us and unhouses us at the same time.
We stand inside its light and outside ourselves.

Love has been imagined, fantasized, romanticised in various literary texts, popular and contemporary culture; it is often depicted as something soothing, happened to anyone and at any point of time — a home for the restless soul, a sanctuary where the self finds completion. Contemporary culture honours love through customs, conventions, images, and icons—Valentine's Day, candlelit dinners, heart-shaped icons, curated assertions on social media—suggesting that love is synonymous with happiness, fulfilment, emotional security, and sometimes a tragedy. Yet such representations risk flattening love into a sentimental cliché, concealing its more unnerving, disruptive, and morally demanding dimensions.

In fact, it does not have any relation to the wealth and materiality, does not conform to the norms of gender, class, and social status; it defies all boundaries. The meaning of love is far more complex, and broader; it is not just between partners, but also towards one's goals, dream, aspiration, a family member, a teacher, a mentor. It is a distinct and unique experience that varies from person to person; shaped by the social, cultural environment. It exists in its paradoxical eccentricities; it is life-giving, regenerative, constructive, progressive but at the same time it can be degenerative, life-sapping, destructive, and regressive. But whatever love is, we all fall in love — or with the idea of falling in love — at some point in our lives, a paradox that has been theorized since Plato's *Symposium* (380 BCE) and later elaborated by Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse* (1978).

Love is not a shelter at all, but a border; to love is not to arrive, but to stand perpetually at the edge — between belonging and exile, presence and absence, certainty and vulnerability? To fall in love is to step slightly outside the world — away from its speed, its logic, its neat calculations. The lover does not walk in rhythm with others. They are late, distracted, sleepless, wounded storytellers[1], and strangely quiet. Their body moves through everyday life, but their mind lingers elsewhere — in memory, anticipation, longing, or regret. Their eyes carry a distant light, as though they are always looking past what is immediately visible. Love, in this sense, is not merely

[1] Wounded Storytellers draws from Arthur Kleinmna's seminal book, "Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics."

an emotion; it is a relocation of the self. Society rewards composure, efficiency, productivity, and emotional restraint. The lover or the dreamer disrupts all of these. A person in love often becomes irrational, impulsive, or "impractical" in conventional terms — less organized, less pragmatic, and less reliable by everyday standards. They may forget meetings, miss deadlines, neglect routines, or withdraw into silence. As Bauman (2003) suggests, such a person may appear socially present but remain inwardly distant, caught in the fragility of modern emotional bonds. This is not weakness; it is a shift in the axis of existence. Love turns the self-inward while simultaneously pulling it toward another — a paradox that creates tension, anxiety, and isolation. Drawing on Barthes (1978), the lover inhabits a double consciousness: they are both intensely alive and strangely detached from ordinary life**.**

This essay examines a different way of thinking about love: not as contentment or an emotional truism, but as marginality. Rather than treating love merely as romantic attachment between partners, it conceptualizes love as a condition that displaces the subject from normative structures of rationality, productivity, emotional composure, and social belonging.

II. LOVE, LOSS, AND MARGINALITY IN LITERATURE

In Urdu poetry, this condition has long been recognized — not as pathology, but as an existential state. Ghalib (1847) famously asks:

"Dil-e-Nadaan[2] tujhe hua kya hai?"
Akhir is dard[3] ki dawa[4] kya hai?"

Translation: "What happened to you O! my naive heart"
What is the remedy and cure to this state?"

This is not a medical question. It is philosophical. Ghalib does not seek a cure; he interrogates the nature of love itself. The heart is not ill — it is transformed. It has crossed a boundary beyond which everyday logic no longer applies. Another of Ghalib's couplets deepens this idea:

"Koi mere dil se poochey[5] tere teer[6] neem-kash[7] ko;
Ye khalish[8] kahan se hoti jo jigar[9] ke paar[10] hota."

Translation:

"O! Somebody should ask about the condition that your half- pierced arrow caused,
This pain would not be there, if the arrow would cross through my heart"

The half-embedded arrow hurts more than a fatal blow. Total destruction would end suffering; partial wounding prolongs it. Love, therefore, is neither death nor life — it is suspended agony. The lover lives, but differently. They breathe, but with a constant ache beneath every breath. This liminal space is precisely where marginality emerges (Kristeva, 1987). The lover is not ostracized from society, but they either do not feel connected to it or want to stay reclusive. They walk among the crowd of people, yet they feel disconnected from them. Their internal and external embodiment gets tethered from themselves and the outside world; in that they create a new and unfamiliar space, where rationality, sense, and meaning differ from the normative norms. They walk among people yet feel separate from them—a kind of loneliness in the crowd. They speak, yet their words are laden with unspoken yearning. They participate in daily life, yet remain fettered to an invisible emotional orbit like some fallen star outside its orbit. Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1952) captures beautifully in the following excerpt:

"Raat[11] yun dil mein teri khoyi[12] hui yaad[13] aayi,
Jaise veerane[14] mein chupke[15] se bahar[16] a jaye.

[2] Dil- e-Nadaan refers to the heart that is naïve and do not understand the ways of life and love.
[3] Dard means pain
[4] Dawa: medicine
[5] Poochey: To ask
[6] Teer: arrow
[7] Neem-kash: half- embedded
[8] Khalish; pain accompanied by restlessness
[9] Jigar, here means chest
[10] Paar; across
[11] Raat- night
[12] Khoyi-forgotten
[13] Yaad; memory, longing
[14] Veeraney: deserted place
[15] Chupke; slowly
[16] Bahar; spring

Jaise seharaon[17] mein hauley[18] se chale[19] bad-e naseem[20] Jaise beemar[21] ko bewajah[22] qarar[23] a jaye."
In the above lines, the lover talks about the memory of his beloved and uses poetic metaphors to articulate the yearnings. The poet says the memory of his beloved wandered to him last night, like spring entering into the barren landscape and making it bloom with gaiety and happiness, like a soft and pleasant breeze into a desert and barren landscape, as if a person inflicted with any ailment gets relieved unexpectedly—the memory of the beloved that is not dramatic, not overwhelming, but quietly transformative. It brings comfort but also makes the lover yearn for her absence. The beloved is present in the subconscious, conscious, memory, and breath of the person in love all the time, perpetually present with her absence. The memory is sweet, yet it deepens solitude. In such moments, love does not connect the lover more deeply to the world; it pulls them further into themselves. Romantic poetry in English articulates a similar paradox: love elevates yet disrupts the self. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1820), in *Love's Philosophy*, imagines love as a cosmic principle that binds the universe together:
"The fountains mingle with the river, And the rivers with the ocean; The winds of heaven mix forever with a sweet emotion."
Yet even in this cosmic vision of unity, the lover remains isolated — asking why human beings alone should remain disconnected. Shelley's poem suggests that love promises connection, but concurrently reveals the painful awareness of separation. As Plato (380 BCE) argues in the *Symposium*, love emerges from a sense of lack rather than fulfilment. The lover becomes marginal not because love fails, but because love heightens consciousness of what is missing.
Similarly, in *Ode to the West Wind,* Shelley (1819) frames longing as both creative and unsettling:
"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"
Hope is present, yet it emerges only through upheaval, loss, and transformation — much like love itself. John Keats (1818) gives perhaps the most devastating articulation of love's vulnerability in *When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be:*
"When I have fears that I may cease to be Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain…"
The poem does not speak directly of romantic love, yet it captures the lover's condition — anxiety, impermanence, and the terror of loss. The lover, like the poet, lives on the brink of an end, a death — emotionally and existentially. As Kristeva (1987) reminds us, such instability and unpredictability form the very texture of melancholic subjectivity and marginality. In another celebrated line from *Bright Star*, Keats binds love to stillness and endurance:
"Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art."
Here, love yearns for permanence, yet human experience is mutable and fragile. The lover desires stability but lives in instability — a condition that mirrors the essay's argument about love as selective isolation, and displacement from normal life. This dynamic appears repeatedly in literature across cultures.
The most common trope of unrequited love is presented is reflected in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare,1597) love isolates the lovers from family, civic duty, and social order. Their love is not merely forbidden — it is existentially excessive. Their language is poetry when others speak in prose. They think unequivocally, when society functions in settlements. Their marginality is not only imposed by their family's differences; it arises from the intensity of their passion, and unwavering commitment. They do not confront or challenge the societal norms — they occupy a different emotional and arousing reality altogether. Shakespeare persistently frames love as both an enlightenment and expulsion. In Romeo and Juliet, Romeo describes Juliet as: "O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!" Love makes the beloved radiant, yet it also makes the lover ignorant to mundane and immediate reality. Later, when Romeo speaks of his exile, he equates parting from Juliet with death itself:
"There is no world without Verona walls, But purgatory, torture, hell itself."
This is a perfect example of love as marginality: expulsion is not merely social, but ontological. Romeo is alive, yet existentially disconnected, disjointed.

In Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 (1609), love is defined as absolute: "Love is not love, which alters when it alteration finds." Yet this very ideal creates tension — because lived love is always changed by time, distance, and circumstance. The lover is caught between ideal intransience and actual frailty. Similarly, in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights (1847), Heathcliff's love for Catherine is not gentle or liberating; it is volcanic, obsessive, and destructive. Society does not simply reject Heathcliff — his own love results into abandonment, bitterness, and

[17] Seharaon; deserts
[18] Hauley; hush hush
[19] Chale; to flow/ to move
[20] Bad-e-naseem; cool and pleasant breeze
[21] Beemar; sick person
[22] Bewajah; unnecessary/ unwarranted
[23] Qaraar; peace, relaxation

rage. He transforms into a person who exists outside ethical and societal norms, consumed by a passion that refuses restraint. His love situates him at periphery long before society does. Fitzgerald's classic novel, The Great Gatsby (1925), Gatsby's love for Daisy transforms him into a dream-driven figure, a spectral presence, an illusion who does not quite belong to the world he actually lives in. He is extremely wealthy, yet emotionally a beggar; socially visible, yet existentially secluded. His love makes him gallant or great in imagination but situates him at borders in reality — a man who lives more in fantasy than in the palpable present.

In James Joyce's short story "The Dead," Gretta Conroy's enduring, almost sacred love for her adolescent sweetheart Michael Furey — who died after exposing himself to the cold in an attempt to see her — unsettles the entire narrative. Her memory of this youthful, sacrificial love quietly disrupts both the overt political debates about Irish nationalism that frame the story and Gabriel Conroy's confident self-image as a rational, cultured, and superior man. Gretta's love, rooted in loss and devotion, exposes Gabriel's emotional insecurity and the fragility of his masculinity. The following excerpt poignantly and beautifully captures the entire essence of love present with its absence in the story (Joyce, 1914).

"*Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, further westwards, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling too upon every part of the lonely churchyard where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. The Dead- James Joyce*

In this closing passage of "The Dead," Joyce transforms snow into a metaphor for emotional numbness, memory, and universal vulnerability. The falling of the snow (a metaphor of death) on every part and geography of the Ireland; on every animate and inanimate entity, human emotions, memories (immortal); the living and the dead echoes the inner collapse of Gabriel Conroy's inner self as he confronts Gretta's everlasting love. Michael Furey's love, although socially marginal and physically absent, becomes spiritually omnipresent, affecting Gabriel's sense of self and masculinity. The snow flattens all peculiarities — life and death, presence and absence, centre and margin — indicating that love, anguish, and loss exist beyond societal, experiential and political boundaries. In this moment, love arises not as possession or union; it rises as a haunting, memory, and existential displacement, quietly displacing Gabriel to the edges of his own life.

Across these texts, love does not amalgamate the lover into society; it sets them apart. Yet love is not confined to romance. Even in contemporary life, this pattern persists. Think of a person deeply in love with a creative dream. They may work tirelessly without financial reward, neglect practical security, and endure scepticism from family and friends. Society may see them as impractical or irresponsible. Yet they experience a richness of inner life that others may never know. Think of someone devoted to a mentor, a teacher, or a spiritual guide. Their loyalty may seem excessive to outsiders, but for them, it is a source of meaning and transformation. Their marginality becomes a space of devotion rather than deprivation. Think of a person who loves another human being so deeply that they are willing to endure pain, sacrifice, or separation. Their suffering may appear irrational, but it reveals the depth of their commitment. In all these cases, love is not weakness — it is a different mode of strength. But it is not strength in the conventional sense. It is not dominance, control, or resilience; it is openness, receptivity, and willingness to be changed. One can love a dream with the same passion — a creative ambition, an intellectual calling, a spiritual path, or a moral commitment. The scholar who gives up luxury for knowledge, the artist who chooses art over future safety, or the devotee who renounces worldly attachments all occupy similar marginal positions. Love among families, love for children, love for parents and grandparents, love among best friends and childhood friends, and love for a teacher or a celebrity—all aspects and colours of love—can lead to marginalization; this includes the fear associated with mortality and the fear of losing loved ones, whether they are family members or friends. Parents often fear losing their children when they go away for their settlement. Children fear losing their parents with growing age. The fear of separation and mortality always resides in the heart and consciousness of the person in love. Consider Vincent van Gogh. His devotion to painting relegated him socially and financially. He was disdained, scorned, and ridiculed for his unconventional choice. Yet his love for art gave his life existential meaning. His marginality was not imposed solely by society; it was chosen through his obdurate and unflinching devotion towards art. Similarly, many Urdu poets lived at the fringes of monetary stability because of their passion to poetry. Ghalib (1847) himself had faced financial instability, emotional upheaval, and social alienation though out his life, yet he remained fiercely devoted to language, memory, and longing and never gave up over his ambition and art. His words echoed his helplessness and persistent offence he used to face.

"Har ek baat pe kahte[24] ho tum ki tu kya hai,
Tumhi kaho ki ye andaz-e guftagun[25] kya hai."

[24] Kahtey; to say
[25] Andaz-e- guftagun- way of talking or conversing

Ghalib asked the society, that why people asked about my existence and social relevance at every step? Then the second line states in a telling irony that Is this the way to have a discourse or conversation with the marginalized? His pain, aggression, and vulnerability are reflected in these lines. His marginality was both lived and poetic. Love, therefore, is not merely personal; it is structural in its effects. It deconstructs a person, also it can re-construct through an act of self- realization and self- actualization; an individual comes more closer to oneself. It restructures priorities, alters values, and redefines what matters.

III. LOVE, MEMORY, AND TRAUMA: THE AFTERLIFE OF ATTACHMENT

Memory is the most significant aspect in love; it only has the power to hold the fragmented discourse of love; it has the ability to hold back the emotions perpetually; forever; Memory is the only space of reprise for the person in love and a very powerful tool to re-live the feelings; emotions through an act of re-membering even after the person , who is loved has departed both physically or emotionally. Don' t we all understand and re-live this experience of love retained in our memories for loved ones, families, friends after they left us?

Love does not always endure through presence. More often, it survives through memory. When the beloved is lost—through death, separation, or emotional rupture—love does not fade away; instead, it transforms into remembrance, where it continues to hurt, uphold, and shape the lover's interior and emotional self. In such moments, memory becomes the primary site in which love persists. Love, endured through memory, attains a temporal marginality: it belongs neither completely to the past nor totally to the present, but exists in a deferred, delayed time.

James Joyce's *"The Dead"* offers one of the most thoughtful literary representations of this suspended state. Gretta Conroy's reminiscence of Michael Furey—her teenage love who died after standing in the cold and rain to see her—silently but irrevocably disrupts and deconstructs the narrative's poignant, conceptual, and ethical centre. Michael Furey is non-existent (physically), socially insignificant, and long dead; yet he remains emotionally alive and dominant in Gretta's memory. His love, preserved through re-membrance, unsettles Gabriel Conroy's prudently upheld and concealed sense of male authority, marital intimacy, and intellectual dominance. The most searing irony is that, the love that endures through memory only marginalizes Gabriel Conroy, leaving him existentially and emotionally dead (Joyce, 1914).

This moment epitomises the Cathy Caruth argument that describes the *belatedness* of traumatic experience, the idea that certain events are not fully known or understood at the moment of its occurrence, but return later in bits and pieces, memories, and emotional outbursts (Caruth, 1996). Gretta's love for Michael Furey was never determined in life; she herself was not aware of her love towards him; it returns years later, unexpectedly and with renewed intensity. Love here functions as a traumatic memory: not because it is pathological or irrational, but because it defies closure. It denies to be present in the past.

Love, endured by memory, becomes more powerful than social credibility or marital legitimacy.

This entanglement of love and memory recurs across literary traditions. In Urdu poetry, love is often fantasized as something that deepens through remembrance rather than its accomplishment. Ghalib's wounded heart does not seek healing; it yearns for enunciation. The person loved persistently present more intensely as memory than as actual presence, and yearning becomes a ritual of devotion to loss. Faiz, too, records love as a memorized presence—where absence aggravates connection rather than dismantling it. In these poetic conventions and representations, memory is not passive recollection; it is an active emotional power that keeps love alive and immortal while intensifying pain.

Marianne Hirsch's notion of *postmemory* provides a useful lens. Although Hirsch creates the term in relation to historical and hereditary trauma, its emotional logic illustrates how love functions through memory. Postmemory explains a relationship to loss that is facilitated through affect, fancy, and recurrence rather than actual presence (Hirsch, 2012). Love often functions in precisely this way: the lover remains tethered to what cannot be regained, carrying the imagination of beloved forward through memory. Love becomes a legacy of absence, lived not in retrieval, but in steadiness with loss.

This dynamic helps explain why love so often assumes a melancholic form. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's understanding of melancholia, love formed by loss does not liberate the lost object; it internalizes it. The beloved constitutes part of the self, and suffering is no longer external to subjectivity—it becomes integral to it (Kristeva, 1987). In this way, love is not inclined or concerned toward healing or replacement, but toward sustainability. The lover learns to live *with* pain rather than beyond it.

Such survival situates the person in love at the margins of normative emotional life. Contemporary culture values strength, emotional closure, and forward movement. The lover who continues to remember, mourn, and remain truthful to loss looks extreme, inefficient, or insane. Yet this marginality is not a failure; it is a moral standpoint. To remember is to deny erasure. To love through memory is to resist the demand that affection must be resolved, substituted, or elapsed.

Trauma, then, does not solely supplement love; it often shapes or re-shapes it. Love interrupted by death or loss does not diminish, it returns through memory, dreams, bodily sensations, and narrative repetition. Both

love and trauma resist linearity in time, insisting on the persistence of what is no longer exist corporeally. In this conjunction, love becomes a means of temporal dislocation.

Thus, love's marginality is not only emotional or social; it is existential and temporal. It unfolds in the afterlife of connection, where the beloved is always perpetually alive in the lover's memory and trauma prevents love from neat resolution. In this deferred space, the lover stands at the fringes of mundane reality, enduring the weight of a love that sustains precisely because it cannot be resolved.

IV. REPRESENTATION OF LOVE IN POPULAR CULTURE AND CINEMA

In contemporary and popular culture, love is portrayed in many paradoxical and varied ways. Love allows to decipher its meaning and it has been a fascinating imagination for the artist, authors, poets, film makers and philosophers, and thinker for centuries. Film and cinema are an interesting medium to explore love and marginality. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's classic novel, *Devdas (1917*), a story of unrequited love of the protagonist Devdas for his childhood love, Parvati, whom he lovingly calls, Paro, and the graceful Courtesan, Chandramukhi's unconditional love for Devdas, has been adapted as a film several times for almost a century. Still, people want more to see the longing and yearning of love of Devdas. Devdas love for Paro is self- consuming, and destructive in nature. He loves her, but unable to protect her from the societal standards.

Devanand directed film, *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971), talks about the unconditional love of a brother to his sister, who gets absconded and joins a group of hippies and falls to drug and substance abuse. The brother relentless love to bring back her sister is profoundly portrayed in the film.

Love of Allauddin Khilji for Rani Padmavati in the movie *Padmaavat (2018),* is portrayed in the eyes and gestures of the powerful ruler. He has lost his power, his control over his kingdom and his senses, he visibly looks so disturbed and emotionally unstable. His heart yearns to see a glimpse of Rani Padmawati is drenched in his desire and the state of his helplessness; he never meet or saw the queen; but through the poet's imagination he miserably falls in love with the queen. This shows another side of love: it can marginalize others through desire. Paradoxically, Rani Padmavati's love is not just romantic, it is tied to her honour, dignity, and identity. Her love becomes a site of sacrifice and self-erasure (Jauhar). She chooses death rather than allow love to be violated, a tragic form of marginality. Love can marginalize the lover (Padmavati) or justify marginalizing others (Khilji).

Rockstar (2011) movie, love becomes the condition of artistic marginality — the price of authenticity. Jordan (Ranbir Kapoor) believes that only pain makes art and music authentic. His love does not bring happiness; it brings suffering that fuels creativity. He becomes socially and emotionally at the fringes — lonely, broken, and disconnected.

*Khamoshi (Silence) (*1970): A movie where love defies the language; it exists within the silences of the protagonist, Waheeda Rehman, played the character of a nurse in the psychiatric ward. Love in the movie also suggests insanity; when someone tries to pretend to be in love; it draws a person to the brink of insanity. One cannot be deceitful to love, otherwise it will deceive you and strip one's identity and agency.

Titanic (1997) — Western popular culture- Rose's love for Jack is not about marriage but freedom and transformation. Jack's love is sacrificial — he dies so she can live. He says just before drowning that I wanted you to live a full and complete life with marriage and children. You are a wonderful and complete woman. Love becomes memory, loss, and lifelong marginality for Rose. Jack still resides in the inner most core of Rose's memory, when she at the age of ninety stands on the ship's deck and throws that diamond necklace in the ocean, where it originally belongs to. Jack becomes immortal in her memory through his love similar to Gretta and Michael Furey in Joyce's "The Dead."

La La Land (2016): A very modern example of love vs. dream. Mia and Sebastian love each other, but their dreams pull them apart. Love does not end in union or resolves into a happy ending — it ends in bittersweet separation. A different dimension of love is shown in this movie, a more practical, unfinished, and marginal to career success.

In popular culture, love is recurrently portrayed as a power that dislocates the self rather than protecting it. From Devdas's self-destruction to Khilji's emotional collapse, from Padmavati's sacrificial death to Jordan's tortured creativity in Rockstar, love consistently re-creates figures who stand at the margins of society, sanity, or selfhood. Even in film like Titanic, love does not guarantee belonging; instead, it creates lifelong exile through memory and loss. These narratives propose that love is less an assurance of fulfilment than a state of existential vulnerability.

V. LOVE AS VULNERABILITY AND CHOSEN MARGINALITY

The lover no longer measures success by materiality, social status, or social approval. Instead, they measure life by intensity of feeling, authenticity of connection, and conformity to desire. But this reorientation is costly. A person in love is often anxious — not because love is inherently insecure, but because it makes the self, susceptible. To love deeply is to risk loss, deception, dismissal, or abandonment. As Barthes (1978) suggests, the lover is always contemplating separation even in presence.

This produces a peculiar kind of loneliness: one can be surrounded by people and still feel intensely alone.

This loneliness is not merely emotional; it is existential and deeply embedded. The person begins to feel that no one fully understands the inner world. Their joy and sorrow become too intimate, too clandestine, too passionate to be easily shared. They speak, but their language carries a burden that others may not recognize or understand. And yet — paradoxically — this loneliness also becomes meaningful. The lover begins to inhabit suffering as a form of depth rather than a deficit. As Kristeva (1987) reminds us, pain is no longer something to escape; it becomes part of the texture of being. Pain defines love; nobody escapes the feeling of indescribable pain accompanied by suffering in love. This is why love is often described as both blessing and curse. Ghalib's wounded heart does not seek relief; it seeks articulation. Faiz's longing does not seek closure; it seeks remembrance. Heathcliff's obsession does not seek peace; it seeks permanence. Following Beauvoir (1949), love here is not a riddle to be solved but a lived reality to be lived.

This is where marginality becomes profound rather than tragic. Unlike poverty, caste, disability, or social exclusion — which marginalize people against their will — love creates a chosen marginality. The lover willingly steps outside normal life, knowing the risks. They choose vulnerability over safety, restlessness over comfort, and trials over convenience. This choice does not make love easy; it makes it morally complex. Love weakens the self, but it also reveals something truer within it. It dismantles superficial identity while exposing deeper authenticity and bringing a person closer to the self beneath social masks. As Bauman (2003) argues, this fragility is central to the experience of modern love rather than a failure of it.

VI. COCNLUSION

The Romantic poets, Mirza Ghalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Shakespeare deepen the essay's central claim: love does not merely connect; it unsettles. Shelley's cosmic longing, Keats's existential anxiety, and Shakespeare's tragic devotion all reveal love as a force that elevates consciousness while estranging the self from ordinary life. The lover becomes marginal not because of societal rejection, but because love creates a sensitive, uncertain, and inward world that cannot fully coincide with everyday existence. In literature, lovers are rarely "normal" people. They are dreamers, rebels, outcasts, visionaries, obsessives, or poets. They inhabit thresholds rather than centres. They are drawn to edges, emotional, moral, or existential. To love is to allow oneself to be affected, and that is profoundly radical in a world that prizes self-sufficiency. This is why love is marginal: it resists the logic of modern life, which values speed, productivity, and emotional detachment. The lover moves slowly in a fast world, feels deeply in a shallow one, and remains vulnerable in a culture that celebrates invulnerability. And yet, without this marginality, life risks becoming empty. If no one loved irrationally, intensely, or obsessively, literature would lose its heartbeat. Poetry would become mechanical, novels would become sterile, and human experience would flatten into mere survival. Love, in all its fragility, preserves the depth of our humanity. Perhaps this is why lovers continue to haunt our stories. They remind us that meaning does not reside in comfort, but in connection; not in certainty, but in risk; not in belonging, but in longing. To love is to stand on a threshold, a liminal position, suspended between joy and grief, presence and absence, self and other. And in that delicate space, we discover what it truly means to be alive. Love is not a home; it is a horizon. Not a shelter; but a border. Not safety; but exposure. Not completion; but transformation. And in that marginal space, where the self trembles, breaks, and reassembles, we come closest to understanding what it means to be human.

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