

Iris Deckers
s4617991
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English Language and Culture
Supervisor: C. Louttit
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Violent Delights and Violent Ends on Screen
A Feminist Approach to Adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*



Top: Romeo and Juliet in the 1968 adaptation directed by Franco Zeffirelli
Bottom: Romeo and Juliet in the 2013 adaptation directed by Carlo Carlei

Abstract

This research is concerned with the analysis of two adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from a feminist perspective. Several gender-related aspects are considered through a discussion of the most important scenes related to three main topics; the concept of Juliet as an early feminist, the use of the male and female gaze and the way in which the directors dealt with the subject of sexuality. The analyses of these topics point towards the idea that Carlo Carlei, director of the 2013 adaptation, employed a much more progressive approach towards gender-related issues when compared to Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 adaptation. This difference is explained by the changing attitudes towards feminism over the years that passed between the creation of the films. The research found merely one gender-related aspect which is not in line with the main conclusion. Zeffirelli chose to maintain the original homoerotic traits in the character of Mercutio from Shakespeare's text, whereas Carlei unexpectedly did not.

Keywords: *Romeo and Juliet*, Feminism, Adaptation Studies, Film Theory, The Gaze, Sexuality

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Introduction

Maurice Hindle states in his book *Studying Shakespeare on Film* that “of all the dramatic genres for which Shakespeare wrote plays, it is his tragedies which have proved most attractive for directors to adapt to film.”¹ A classic text which is known worldwide and has been adapted numerous times is Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Franco Zeffirelli and Carlo Carlei are two directors who took it upon themselves to create an adaptation of the play. They both created an authentic ‘period look’ characterizing their films by Italian landscapes and buildings. They also cut a lot of Shakespeare’s lines. Maurice Hindle even states that Zeffirelli kept only 30% percent of the original lines in his play.² It appears as though Zeffirelli and Carlei both had a preference for action over dialogue. Considering the fact that they created a film and not a play on stage this seems like a rather logical approach to the adaptation process. Shakespeare’s text was originally written to be performed on a stage. The portrayal of actions and feelings had to be illustrated mainly by the means of words, whereas the screen opens up a whole new range of ways in which the story can be shown. The camera can shape and manipulate the audience’s feelings and viewpoint, and the amount of performance spaces is almost unlimited compared to the theatre.³

The 1968 adaptation and the 2013 adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* are particularly interesting to compare because at a first sight they both appear to adhere quite well to Shakespeare’s main plot lines and character descriptions.^{4/5} It is the smaller differences like the point of view in the famous balcony scene for instance which will be considered in this research.

¹ Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 168.

² *Ibid.*, 173.

³ *Ibid.*, 6-9.

⁴ Franco Zeffirelli, dir. *Romeo and Juliet*, BHE Films, Verona Produzione, Dino de Laurentis Cinematografca, 1968, DVD.

⁵ Carlo Carlei, dir. *Romeo and Juliet*, Amber Entertainment, Echo Lake Productions (I), Indiana Production Company, 2013, DVD.

Shakespeare is an enormously popular topic in the field of adaptation studies and his texts have been analysed rather extensively. The relevance of this research therefore does not lie in the analysis of his original text but rather in the fact that the 2013 adaptation is fairly recent which leaves a gap in the discussion of Shakespearean adaptations. The main aim in this thesis is to learn more about how directors can put Shakespeare's story onto the screen differently while still working from the same source text. This work, therefore, could help readers to understand how an adaptation might seem to convey a relatively accurate portrayal of the original story, but there are still many possibilities and options in which to do so.

The adaptations were created with over forty years between them. A lot can change in such a large amount of time; film technologies improved for example and the approach which the directors took in adapting the play might also have been influenced differently by particular contemporary ideas. This research will investigate what gender-related differences exist between the 1968 and 2013 adaptations and will try to explain them in relation to the different decades in which they were filmed. The anticipated outcome would be that since feminists mostly made progress throughout the years, that the 2013 adaptation appears to be more aware of issues around gender in *Romeo and Juliet* than the one from 1968. This idea led to the following research question: How does the difference between feminist theory in the late 1960s and the twenty-first century provide an explanation for any differences between two adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*?

The previous research into the main topic is centred around discussions of the 1968 adaptation since the 2013 film has not yet been thoroughly discussed by academics. Maurice Hindle, for instance, discusses Zeffirelli's cinematic style and how he interpreted the original text

in the adaptation process.⁶ The main goal of the director was to put the heart-breaking sentimental story at the centre according to Zeffirelli.⁷ There is also Deborah Cartmell who discusses Zeffirelli's adaptation in the light of sexuality which is particularly useful when having a look at the adaptation from a feminist perspective.⁸ One of her main conclusions is that the 1968 adaptation shows the older generation corrupting "the innocent and wholesome sexuality of the young."⁹ Another gender-related aspect in *Romeo and Juliet* is pointed at by Hatice Karaman. She uses Irigaray's theory of gender to discuss the topic of motherhood in the play. The outcome of her article was that Lady Capulet is repressed by the patriarchal society in which she lives.¹⁰ These academics all wrote about gender-related issues in *Romeo and Juliet* and that is also the topic which I would like to investigate and contribute to.

The analyses of the films will focus on three main topics which are all connected to gender-related issues: the first chapter will be concerned with feminism, and focus on the character of Juliet, the second chapter concentrates on the topic of gazing, in which the male and female gaze of Romeo, Juliet and Lady Capulet are discussed, and the final chapter will turn to the subject of sexuality and how the directors dealt with this aspect of the play. The research question calls for a brief overview of feminism in the 1960s and more contemporary feminist ideas before tackling the actual adaptations.

As Barbara Winslow explains; "women's lives today would be unrecognizable to those of their grandmothers."¹¹ She discusses the impact of feminist movements on the lives of women.

⁶ Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 173.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰ Hatice Karaman, "The Mother, Who is not One: Reflections of Motherhood in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014): 42.

¹¹ Barbara Winslow, "Feminist Movements: Gender and Sexual Equality," in *A Companion to Gender History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 186.

Feminism has transformed the lives of women, men and children in every aspect over the past two centuries. Winslow's work incorporates the following definition of feminism: "a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other hierarchies."¹² The resurgence of women's liberation movements in the 1960s triggered the rise of feminist critique in many fields.

The 1960s hosted the beginning of a period in which feminism thrived: "women who came of age in the 1960s enjoyed unprecedented opportunities."¹³ There was an expansion of higher education, thus expanding educational opportunities, oral contraceptives entered the market and the attitudes towards sexual expression became more open. There were however still a lot of constraints limiting women's opportunities and choices, and "women who challenged gender roles and defied conventions remained a minority."¹⁴ Andrew August's conclusion about the 1960s when it comes to women is that even though they remained a minority, young feminists who disregarded societal conventions in favour of freedom and independence were already starting to raise their voices regarding feminist matters.¹⁵ This sense of change was also reflected in the field of cinema to some extent.

Laura Mulvey brought up the idea that when it comes to feminist critique "femininity is [...] understood as a signifier of the sexual."¹⁶ Early feminist critique of Hollywood cinema was a revolt against sexually exploitative images. The interpreting of questions of sexuality in politics

¹² Ibid., 186.

¹³ Andrew August, "Gender and the 1960s Youth Culture: The Rolling Stones and the New Woman," *Contemporary British History* 23, no. 1 (2009): 81.

¹⁴ Ibid., 81.

¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹⁶ Laura Mulvey, "1970s Feminist Film Theory and the Obsolescent Object," in *Feminisms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2015) 22.

was relevant to the representation of women on screen.¹⁷ Cinema works like an imaging machine which produces images and thereby also produce women as images.¹⁸ Feminists therefore felt really motivated to intervene at the theoretical level of cinema.¹⁹ This explains why they were insistently engaged with practices of cinema. Feminists were active as theorists, critics and filmmakers. Feminist film theory in the 1970s was associated with the use of psychoanalytic ideas based on Freud in order to create a feminist critique of patriarchy.²⁰ This encounter between psychoanalysis and feminism came into being because feminists were trying to understand the sources of women's oppression and how femininity and sexuality became displaced in images of women under patriarchal society. Questions of gender and sexuality arose in increased numbers due to this.²¹ The interest in Freud's ideas continued in the 1980s where one of the main methodological approaches, psychoanalytical theory, made the invisible visible.²²

The more contemporary ideas about film from a feminist perspective have led to the development of US independent women's cinema over the last twenty years. Veronica Pravadelli argues that this type of cinema busies itself with narrating the metamorphosis of female subjectivity within identity politics.²³ These narratives deal with subjects like gender, sexual preference and race.²⁴ This shows how ideas around the portrayal of women on screen have evolved into a more conscious process of showing aspects of femininity. Winslow emphasizes this idea of a more conscious attitude claiming that at "the beginning of the twenty-first century,

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²⁰ Ibid., 20.

²¹ Ibid., 21.

²² Ibid., 25.

²³ Veronica Pravadelli, "US Independent Women's Cinema, Sundance Girls, and Identity Politics," in *Feminisms* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam UP: 2015), 149.

²⁴ Ibid., 149.

feminists still continue to demand full economic, political, social, and sexual equality for women.”²⁵

The following chapters will be concerned with discussing the two adaptations from a feminist perspective on gender-related issues. The core of feminist theory can be defined as “a struggle with representations and with established forms of knowledge which align the personal with specific representative (or usually unrepresentative) social identities.”²⁶ The task of feminist theory is to understand the personal as political and how identity is represented and constructed.²⁷ The power of feminism in film critique is its ability to show the political construction of individual women on screen and how they are usually oppressed.²⁸

The analysis of the films will include the use of this feminist perspective and look at how the directors dealt with specific gender-related issues. A guiding aspect will be the ways in which the female protagonist Juliet is potentially oppressed by male authorities or presented as an object and how these ways might differ between the two films. This feminist perspective will be combined with looking at the film techniques which the directors used to see how they put a particular scene on the screen. Several film stills have furthermore been included in the appendices to illustrate the analysis of several scenes.

²⁵ Barbara Winslow, “Feminist Movements: Gender and Sexual Equality,” in *A Companion to Gender History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 204.

²⁶ Maggie Humm, *Feminism and Film* (Indiana: Indiana UP: 1997), 193.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

Chapter 1

Feminism in *(Romeo) and Juliet*

There are merely three significant female roles in *Romeo and Juliet*. Two of them are Lady Capulet and the Nurse who might be seen as mostly providing background information to the main female personality: Juliet. This chapter will therefore focus on the extent to which Juliet might be considered an early feminist and how this manifests itself in the two adaptations. The relationships between Juliet and her guardians are rather significant in this context. It will be interesting to have a look at how they expect Juliet to behave in a certain way and how she defies their expectations for the sake of her own desires. First it might be beneficial to discuss how Juliet's character in itself comes across in the original text and how this image is portrayed differently by the actresses. The discussion of Juliet's character in the source text will be followed by the manifestation of this characterization on screen. The analysis will then turn to her relationship with a couple of side characters; Friar Lawrence and Juliet's parents. It might be useful for the sake of clarity to repeat here that Zeffirelli is the director of the 1968 adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, and Carlei directed the 2013 version.

Shakespeare's Juliet

A sense of maturity is reflected in the decisiveness which Juliet as a character manifests throughout the play. She is decisive and is not afraid to disregard her parents' wishes. She lies to her parents and the Nurse when they want her to marry count Paris. She pretends to agree with them only to run straight to Friar Lawrence asking him for a solution because otherwise she would rather kill herself for loyalty to Romeo than grant her guardian's wishes and marry their choice of a husband. In terms of feminism, it might be said that Juliet does not let any man, or woman for that matter, tell her what to do if it prevents her from doing what she feels is right. This claim is supported by Katherine Duncan-Jones who also argues in favour of Juliet's

autonomy. Juliet is left to the power of her parents with the banishment of Romeo and the death of Tybalt.²⁹ Her bond with the nurse is also broken after a lifetime of emotional and physical proximity when her guardian cannot understand why she will not simply marry the young and handsome Paris as a substitute for Romeo. Duncan-Jones sees Juliet's resolute determinedness to kill herself rather than marry another man as a form of autonomy.³⁰ This sense of autonomy is mostly reflected in the 2013 adaptation.

Juliet on Screen

There are several instances in the 2013 film which could not have been taken from the source text, but must have come from the input of the director, which reject the idea that Juliet is an obedient little girl. First of all, Carlei's Juliet is the one who leads Romeo out of the crowd to a room where they can speak privately at the evening of the Capulet ball. She is also the first one to talk when she says "Speak Sir, you are too grave for one who cuts a country dance" after which Romeo starts with the famous line "if I profane with my unworhiest hand this holy shrine" which starts the interaction between the two in a perfect sonnet.³¹ The fact that Juliet was given an extra line before Romeo starts his love talk gives a sense of equality between the two. Juliet is also the one leading Romeo to the bed where he follows her meekly on the couple's wedding night. These examples already show how Carlei approached the character of Juliet in a feminist way. The discussion below will examine this notion further in various scenes.

Cedric Watts in his introduction to the Wordsworth Classics edition of the text states that although "Shakespeare's Juliet is only thirteen years old, she displays a precociously independent

²⁹ Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Oh Happy Dagger: The Autonomy of Shakespeare's Juliet," *Notes and Queries* 45, no. 3 (1998): 314.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 315.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

intelligence.”³² Following Watts’ introduction to the book, there are several lines in the text which show Juliet’s shrewdness compared to Romeo as well as her independence which were also preserved in the films.³³ Juliet is critical of conventional lover’s rhetoric which becomes evident in the balcony scene. In Carlei’s film we see Romeo climbing passionately up a plant to get to Juliet who is standing on a rather high balcony. Romeo says that he swears by the moon that his love vows are real. Juliet reacts to this by interrupting him and claiming that swearing by the moon is not a substantial enough claim because the moon changes monthly and thus so may his love. Juliet keeps looking at Romeo with a severe expression while questioning him about the validity of his love in this scene. For a thirteen-year-old, this is a rather mature way of conversing. She is also clever enough to press the courtship towards marriage.³⁴ The 2013 version of Juliet really seems to have the upper hand in the conversation, whereas Romeo appears like a lovesick puppy dog. Hatice Karaman describes how feminists “claim that rational speech is something possessed by men and from which women are excluded.”³⁵ In this particular scene it rather appears as though Juliet performs the most rational speech which provides an argument for the idea that Carlei was in favour of making Juliet an equal to Romeo if not more autonomous in this particular scene.

The dialogue in Zeffirelli’s film is very similar although the autonomous speech of the 1968 version of Juliet is pushed to the background in favour of the non-verbal communication between the two lovers. Deborah Cartmell points to the idea that Zeffirelli sacrificed “the words of the play for visual spectacle” when he chose fifteen-year-old Olivia Hussey and sixteen-year-

³² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 12.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵ Hatice Karaman, “The Mother, Who is not One: Reflections of Motherhood in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014): 42.

old Leonard Whiting “who look the part even though their ability to speak the lines is often in question.”³⁶ Zeffirelli’s Juliet is very convincing as an infatuated thirteen-year-old and utterly expressive with her face and body. Her powerful physical expression however seems to prevent the detailed information which the lines originally convey in the source text to come across. It rather distracts the audience from paying attention to what Juliet actually says. This difference seems to suggest that the 2013 film was more considerate of feminist issues because there is more of a focus on the meaning of the sentences which Juliet pronounces.

A striking difference between the two films is that Juliet is sat at a desk two times throughout Carlei’s film. Right before the Nurse arrives with news about Romeo’s wedding plans, Juliet is situated in front of a desk writing in what appears to be a leather-bound booklet (Appendix 1.1). The shot does not reveal anything about what she was writing, but it does vaguely show an embellished initial letter which looks like medieval calligraphy. This highlights the idea that Juliet is an educated bright young woman. She appears again in front of a desk on her wedding night while she is waiting for her husband. Romeo is sneaking through the garden towards the balcony while Juliet recites lines of a poem aloud which she appears to be writing. The following lines were taken from the original text where Juliet is still revelling in happiness after her wedding night before the Nurse comes in and tells her about Romeo’s banishment and Tybalt’s death:

“Give me my Romeo, and, when he shall die,
 Take him and cut him out in little stars,
 And he will make the face of heaven so fine
 That all the world will be in love with night

³⁶ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 43.

And pay no worship to the garish sun.”³⁷

The entire speech is not included in the 1968 adaptation, whereas Carlei seems to have considered the lines as a useful tool to establish a sense of maturity in Juliet’s character. Thus while she is only thirteen years old, and the 2013 actress was actually fourteen years old when the adaptation was filmed, there is an air of maturity that surrounds her.

Juliet and Friar Lawrence

Carlei’s film shows Juliet disregarding the male authority that Friar Lawrence presents and she even lies to him so that she can kill herself to be united with Romeo in death. Juliet wakes in the presence of Friar Lawrence and finds that Romeo poisoned himself for thinking that she was dead in the last scene of the play. Friar Lawrence briefly tries to persuade her into leaving Romeo behind. He says “Come, I’ll dispose of thee [a]mong a sisterhood of holy nuns” after which he states that he no longer dares to stay in the tomb for fear of the watchmen coming in and he flees it seems.³⁸ The 2013 adaptation uses a lot of time for this particular scene. When the Friar comes running in Juliet has already wakened and lies heartbreakingly crying on her lover’s chest. Friar Lawrence also starts shedding tears and we can see him truly mourning the loss of a boy he loved as a son. The Friar hears the watchmen and tries to convince Juliet to come with him. He also violently takes the empty vial from her so that she has no chance at taking any poison that might be left and he dramatically smashes it on the floor. Juliet answers that he should go because she needs to say her goodbye. The Friar believes her and tells her to stay until she is at peace. He even goes to hold back the watchmen for her. Juliet says: “I’d kiss my love for one last time. Then follow you at once.” In the source text Juliet pronounces no such lies but

³⁷ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

straightforwardly tells him that she will not leave her love. The 2013 version thus establishes a sense of autonomy by acting on her own deliberate will in this scene.

Zeffirelli's motion picture takes up less time for this particular scene and the dialogue adheres almost perfectly to the original text. Zeffirelli's Friar Lawrence briefly tries to convince Juliet to come with him and then flees the tomb, nor does he come back like Carlei's friar does. The 2013 film's director appears to have found an opportunity in this scene for Juliet to defy male authority one last time before she takes her own life. He broadened the character of the Friar into a man who acts almost like a father to Juliet extending and deepening his urge to save the young girl rather than saving himself from becoming associated with a dreadful situation. This change which Carlei made to the original story seems insignificant in terms of the main happenings in the play, but it does show how these small alterations can point to a more feminist approach to the character of Juliet.

Carlei's film also reflects a sense of autonomy when his Juliet rejects a man's wishes in a piece of added dialogue at the Capulet ball. At the end of the ball her cousin Tybalt grabs her by the arm and pulls her aside. He is filled with his own anger towards his rivals and addresses Juliet on having seen her dance with Romeo. Tybalt puts a hand on her cheek and says that he loves her and that her honour is as dear to him as life. Juliet takes his hand off her face and sternly walks away from him proclaiming "and with that warming thought I'll take my leave." She does not care about her cousin's opinion and thereby shows her independence regarding her male superiors.

Another significant comparison in the portrayal of Juliet in the two films can be found in the *mise-en-scène* of Juliet's suicide. There is a lingering moment of complete and utter misery in Juliet's facial expression after Friar Lawrence flees the tomb in the 1968 adaptation. What is interesting about this moment is that she kneels down next to Romeo who lies on what appears to

be an elevated pedestal positioning him higher than the ground on which Juliet kneels. She stabs herself and falls onto her lover's chest aligning her head with Romeo's after which her face turns to a peaceful expression (Appendix 1.2). Romeo is already dead at this point, yet Zeffirelli positioned Juliet in such a way that her final action does not convey any sense of authority.

A contrast might be found in the mis-en-scène of the 2013 film which again points to a more progressive outlook on feminist matters. The moment that Carlei's Juliet kills herself she is shown with Romeo lying lifelessly in her arms, which seems an instance of a reversion of traditional gender roles. Juliet is portrayed as really brave in this moment whereas Romeo lies with his head hanging backwards almost like a fainted lady in her arms. This is emphasized by the final shot of this particular scene. The friar comes running in and sees the two dead lovers. Romeo is still lying in Juliet's arms who appears as though she is nearly sitting up (Appendix 1.3). This makes for a sense of more equality between this man and woman than what can be found in the same scene in the 1968 adaptation.

Lord and Lady Capulet

The relationship between Juliet and her parents holds some further interesting points in the discussion of Juliet regarding feminism. The focus will first be on Lady Capulet after which it will shift to Lord Capulet. Besides Juliet and the Nurse, Lady Capulet is one of the few ladies with a prominent role in the play. Hatice Karaman explains the absence of any lines for lady Montague in Shakespeare's play as necessary for the masculine maturing of Romeo.³⁹ She also claims that Lady Capulet acts as the voice of Lord Capulet throughout the play. Karaman in her article about motherhood in Shakespeare, describes Lady Capulet's attitude as patriarchal and as her husband's ventriloquist, whereas Juliet tries to position herself as a subject against the law of

³⁹ Hatice Karaman, "The Mother, Who is not One: Reflections of Motherhood in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and The Taming of the Shrew," *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014): 38.

her father.⁴⁰ Lady Capulet's own agency is silenced and suffocated which is why the relationship with her daughter is far from close in the original source.⁴¹ The relationship between the 1968 Juliet and her mother reflects this claim. Lady Capulet is very stiff towards her daughter and Juliet does not dare to raise her voice against her.

The portrayal of Juliet's relationship with her mother is much lighter in the 2013 adaptation. Carlei's version of Lady Capulet comes across as kind, loving and caring for her daughter. The wide friendly eyes of the actress also help in this aspect. She holds her daughter's hand while she asks Juliet about her thoughts on the subject of marriage and then gently strokes her cheeks when her daughter answers "I'll look and try to like [Count Paris] if that is my parents' wish" (Appendix 1.4).

The portrayal of Lady Capulet in the 1968 adaptation appears to adhere more to the source text, whereas the same part in the 2013 film does not conform to Karaman's description. In the light of feminism, it might be deduced here that Carlei did not want to maintain the original relation between Lord and Lady Capulet, but rather show more equality in the relationship between them. One scene in the 2013 adaptation which confirms this claim can be found on the morning of the day Juliet was supposed to marry count Paris. Lord and Lady Capulet are preparing for the feast and we see a moment of candid love between the two which hints at a happy marriage. The 1968 mother comes across as a victim of the patriarchal society whereas the 2013 version depicts this female character in a much happier position.

It has already been established that Juliet defies her father's patriarchal control when she follows her own heart and marries Romeo after which she even kills herself in order to be reunited with him. The patriarchy which Lord Capulet presents comes best across in the scene

⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁴¹ Ibid., 46.

where he becomes outraged at Juliet's refusal to marry count Paris. The 1968 film shows Juliet being hurled around the room with her father yelling at her on the edge of insanity. The Nurse has to come in between and tries to protect her. Deborah Cartmell interprets this scene as though it reveals "unembarrassed and undisguised child abuse."⁴² Juliet sits trembling and crying on the floor behind the nurse and does not dare to speak up against her father.

Lord Capulet's part in this scene in the 2013 adaptation starts off much lighter. He comes in and lovingly kisses his daughter on the forehead. His angry speech starts, however, after Lady Capulet informs him of her daughter's refusal. Lord Capulet then makes some violent threats to his daughter and throws her back on the bed when she tries to come close to him, but a significant difference with the 1968 film here is that Carlei's Juliet never crouches back or tries to flee from her father. She even tries to reason with him at first. Thus even though in both the films Juliet is silenced by her father, the 2013 film shows a less subjective attitude from Juliet compared to Zeffirelli's adaptation.

⁴² Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 44.

Chapter 2

Love at First Sight

The portrayal of the gaze is an interesting film technique for which the theatre offers no opportunities. The audience's focus is dictated by what the camera sees as opposed to their view when visiting a play in a theatre.⁴³ Film can accentuate the intimacy of every single detail of acting through the use of close-ups.⁴⁴ The audience can literally look through the eyes of an actor. The source text, as presented in the Wordsworth edition, states the lines which Romeo utters at seeing Juliet for the first time. The text describes how he feels when he says "I ne'er saw true beauty till this night", but a film offers the opportunity to actually show what he sees and how exactly the sight of Juliet caused him to become infatuated with the "snowy dove trooping with crows."⁴⁵ Zeffirelli shows how the clinging gazes of *Romeo and Juliet* upon another at the ball trigger them into falling in love. The inserted sentimental song "What is a youth?" allows the lovers to fall in love before any verbal exchange and sets off the remaining emotional effects on both them and the susceptible screen audience.⁴⁶ The way in which the gaze is used to account for the motivations of the dramatis personae will be the main focus below after a brief discussion of the theory behind the film technique.

Laura Mulvey was the first to create a substantial text dedicated to the gaze. This text "argues that the visual pleasures offered by traditional cinema reflect contradictions inherent in the patriarchal psychical order dominant in our societies, and that film theory should expose the mechanisms."⁴⁷ She used her theory as a means to reveal the patriarchal dominance of the film

⁴³ Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 53.

⁴⁶ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 46.

⁴⁷ Christopher Pullen, "The Hetero Media Gaze," in *Straight Girls and Queer Guys: The Hetero Media Gaze in Film and Television* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 16.

industry. Her focus was on how heterosexual male subjectivity was employed, in particular with regard to the representation of females.⁴⁸ Maggie Humm agrees with this theory stating that mainstream cinema inevitably reduces women to the objects of a male gaze.⁴⁹ Film techniques exclude the viewer of controlling ‘looks’ and the gaze is one which “is both a metaphoric concept in film criticism and an integral part of film construction.”⁵⁰ Feminist film theory thereby theorizes visual desires created through gendered features.

The relation between desire and the gaze might be explained as a relation between identity and desire. Activity is thereby associated with masculinity, and passivity with femininity. The viewer will then identify with the active protagonist, i.e. the male actors, and desire the passive object of the gaze, which are the female actors in this context.⁵¹ Kelly Oliver even makes a similar claim as Humm stating that in “this world all agents and identity are male and all objects to be desired are female.”⁵² The bodies of women are thereby objects which give pleasure in looking. The male gaze is created through movement of the camera in films. It enacts the male gaze moving to close-ups of the female body with usually a special attention towards the face.⁵³ Christopher Pullen critiques this view by claiming that this notion is too simplistic because it only focuses on the male gaze. He claims that women can also be the ‘dominant gazer’ and men can likewise be objectified.⁵⁴

An interesting difference between the text of *Romeo and Juliet* in the Wordsworth edition and the films is that on screen Romeo comes in first at the Capulet ball whereas Juliet enters after

⁴⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁹ Maggie Humm, *Feminism and Film* (Indiana: Indiana UP: 1997), 39.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁵¹ Kelly Oliver, “The Male Gaze is More Relevant, and More Dangerous, than Ever,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 15, no. 4 (2017): 452.

⁵² Ibid., 451.

⁵³ Ibid., 451-452.

⁵⁴ Christopher Pullen, “The Hetero Media Gaze,” in *Straight Girls and Queer Guys: The Hetero Media Gaze in Film and Television* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 17.

him and immediately catches his attention by her arrival in the room. The text however states that Juliet is already on stage when Lord Capulet welcomes his guests and the ball begins. This scene is without a doubt the most significant when it comes to the male and female gaze. The two youngsters appear to fall in love with each other without the exchange of a single word. This scene therefore seems like the most logical place to start a discussion of the male and female gaze on screen.

The Capulet Ball

Juliet comes in at the ball after Romeo has already positioned himself among the guests which gave the directors a way to capture and give voice to the moment when Romeo first sees Juliet and experiences what might be described as love at first sight. This is where the film techniques of the gaze and close-ups are at their finest. The *mise-en-scène* depicts a deep emotional experience before the utterance of a single word. This kind of depiction can only be captured on a screen and is lacking in a performance at the theatre.

Maurice Hindle claims that Zeffirelli's main goal in the film was "to capture the heart breaking sentimental story at the centre."⁵⁵ The director himself was "trained in the Italian school of Visconti's cinematic neo-realism where acting skills were frowned upon in favour of a beautiful look."⁵⁶ The actors which he chose for the role are attractive and believable. The 1968 film shows Romeo at the ball being occupied by a brunette right before Juliet comes dancing into the room accompanied by two men at her side. The beauty of the brunette pales when Juliet enters. Her dress has the brightest colour in the room which distinguishes her from the crowd and apart from that the beauty of her face also stands out. Hindle describes Olivia Hussey as voluptuous, her bone-structure as magnificent, her eyes as wide and expressive, and altogether "a

⁵⁵Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 174.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 175.

gawky colt girl waiting for life to begin.”⁵⁷ The beauty of the actress makes the viewer believe that it is possible to fall for this young lady merely because of her looks. Romeo watches Juliet dance and the camera appears to look through his eyes adhering to the film technique which Kelly Oliver described for the portrayal of the gaze. Romeo puts his mask on and continues to watch her after which she catches his stare and almost immediately looks away shyly (Appendix 2.1 and 2.2). Romeo greets her with a nod after which there is a rather long and more dynamic dancing scene in which the two lovers continue to glance at each other. Juliet is very much objectified in Zeffirelli’s adaptation of this particular scene through Romeo’s gaze.

Romeo pronounces his “teaching the torches to burn bright”-speech whilst the screen alternates between looking at Juliet as though through his eyes and him staring uninterrupted. This part of the scene is in line with the idea of Maggie Humm that Juliet is reduced to an object of the male gaze. They dance with each other for a moment, but Romeo is wearing a mask and thus prevents Juliet from the use of a female gaze (Appendix 2.3). She only slightly changes her status of passive to active when Romeo grabs her hand from behind and she at first refuses his kiss on her hand. Juliet turns around and appears to be mesmerized at her first sight of Whiting’s face without a mask. The camera is zoomed in on the faces of the lovers as they appear to stare into each other’s’ eyes. Romeo is surrounded by an air of authority throughout the entire scene.

The 2013 version also makes use of masks and the gaze, but appears to be more progressive than Zeffirelli’s approach when it comes to gender-related issues. Carlei shows a ball scene which is rather similar to Zeffirelli’s at first sight, but also reveals a lot of small deviations which point to a more ‘feminist-friendly’ approach when looked at in detail. Firstly, Romeo’s attention is not firmly set upon any other girl when Juliet comes in which makes his interest in

⁵⁷ Ibid., 175.

her less objectifying when compared to the 1968 film. Zeffirelli's Romeo's interest was hopping from one girl to the next until he found the most beautiful one. Secondly, Carlei's Romeo only gets a couple of seconds to gaze at Juliet from a distance before she notices and starts to stare at him as well. The camera zooms in on their faces as they gaze at each other and their expressions convey a sense of mutual attraction. The close-ups which are shown at this point must have been filmed separately, but they succeed in making it appear as though the two youngsters are staring into each other's eyes from a distance.

Another aspect which sets the 2013 scene apart from the 1968 film in terms of gender equality is the fact that everyone at the ball is wearing a mask, as opposed to merely the Montagues in Zeffirelli's adaptation. The 1968 Juliet was prevented in a way from performing a proper female gaze because Romeo was masked whereas she was not. Carlei's film puts the two lovers in a position that conveys much more equality. They both have a mask on which covers half of their face and Juliet actually stares back at Romeo (Appendix 2.4 and 2.5). Following Christopher Pullen's idea it might be claimed that there is a male and female gaze on the screen at the same time. Both the actor and the actress are thereby objectified.

Romeo gets another chance to gaze at Juliet while she is dancing with Paris. This moment is relatively brief compared to the 1968 film while Romeo tells Benvolio of his attraction to the lady "which doth enrich the hand of yonder knight."⁵⁸ He then moves to dance with her and they again gaze into each other's eyes. Carlei appears to really have tried to avoid the objectification of Juliet as a passive female in this particular scene. He gave her more authority than the 1968 Juliet received by letting her stare back at Romeo. This idea is emphasized by the fact that Romeo's mask is taken off first and Juliet gets to gaze at his face whilst hers is still partly

⁵⁸ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 52.

covered. The extent to which the two youngsters are objectified on screen is much more equal rather than the more prominent objectification of the female which is the case in Zeffirelli's film.

The Balcony Scene

A second significant scene, and perhaps even the most well-known although often misremembered moment in *Romeo and Juliet*, is the balcony scene. The famous line “wherefore art thou Romeo?” is often interpreted as though Juliet asks *where* Romeo is, rather than what it means to *be* Romeo.⁵⁹ The image of a balcony with Juliet on it and Romeo below is a frequently adapted image. The balcony might even be said to serve as a synecdoche for the play.⁶⁰ Leveen described an utterly striking fact about the balcony: the particular setting never came from Shakespeare's hands.⁶¹ She points out that “the earliest known use of the word ‘balcone’ didn't occur until 1618, two years after Shakespeare died.”⁶² This claim is supported by the fact that the Wordsworth edition of the text never mentions a balcony, it merely speaks of Juliet appearing aloft at her window.⁶³ It is however not surprising that both the directors used a balcony in their adaptations.

Leveen makes a thought-provoking connection between this textually erroneous balcony and an issue of gender. The balcony allows for communication with the world outside of the domestic space in which daughters of families of means had to remain in fourteenth-century Verona.⁶⁴ The architectural structure allows Juliet to act outside of the paternal control that tries to regulate who has access to her and what she herself can access. Juliet's own desires and

⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁰ Lois Leveen, “Putting the “where” into “wherefore art thou”: Urban Architectures of Desire in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare* 13, no. 3 (2017): 155-156.

⁶¹ Ibid., 158.

⁶² Ibid., 159.

⁶³ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 58.

⁶⁴ Lois Leveen, “Putting the “where” into “wherefore art thou”: Urban Architectures of Desire in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare* 13, no. 3 (2017): 159-160.

desirability move her to dismiss her role as the dutiful daughter being secured within her parents' house.⁶⁵ The balcony scene presented the directors of the films with another opportunity to employ the gaze, besides offering this thought-provoking gender related issue.

Zeffirelli's film shows Romeo peeking through greenery at Juliet who is leaning on the railing. This scene presents another moment in which the female is objectified by the male gaze. Romeo is praising the beauty of his love while Juliet is merely staring at the sky. She is leaning forward and thereby showing a lot of cleavage (Appendix 2.6). Romeo does not sexualize Juliet with his gazing, but Zeffirelli does present a sexualized image of the girl to the audience watching the screen because of her clothing and posture. Juliet is also completely startled and lets out a scream when Romeo comes out of the bushes and speaks to her. This emphasizes the idea that Zeffirelli's Juliet is objectified and passive in this scene whereas Romeo plays a more active role.

The ball scene in Carlei's adaptation shows a sense of equality in the utilization of the gaze, but it is inevitable for Juliet to become objectified in the balcony scene. Carlei took the line "but soft! what light through yonder window breaks?" quite literally as he depicts Juliet's shadow appearing at a window before she comes out onto the balcony. Romeo wears a cloak in this scene and is actually hidden from sight when Juliet asks "what man are you that hides within the shadows of the night to spy on me?" Juliet is completely unaware of Romeo gazing at her while she speaks the famous "wherefore art thou Romeo"- speech. The screen alternates between a close-up of Juliet's face looking up at the sky, Romeo's face staring at the subject of his love and shots which show Romeo's back and Juliet in the distance depicting the actual position of the two in the *mise-en-scène*. The scene is in line with Kelly Oliver's description of the male gaze. The

⁶⁵ Ibid., 161.

camera enacts merely Romeo's gaze moving to the close-ups of Juliet's face. She is objectified by the camera but not sexualized like Zeffirelli's version of the scene and neither does she show any cleavage like the 1968 Juliet (Appendix 2.7). This difference accounts for Carlei's more progressive approach towards feminist matters when compared to Zeffirelli's film.

Lady Capulet's Gaze

This chapter will be concluded with a discussion of Lady Capulet in relation to the male and female gaze. Lady Capulet's attitude toward her daughter is characterized by formality and distance in the original text.⁶⁶ This is reflected in her attitude towards marriage. When she calls her daughter to discuss a potential marriage to count Paris she tells Juliet to look upon him and find enough beauty to consent to marry him. Lady Capulet states: "this night you shall behold him at our feast: read o'er the volume of young Paris' face, and find delight writ there with beauty's pen."⁶⁷ The lines give insight into the mother's character and example which Juliet could follow. She tells her daughter to fall in love through gazing at the face of a man. Juliet does so, but not for the man her parents had in mind.

Deborah Cartmell makes an interesting statement about how "Lady Capulet looks disgustingly at her husband and knowingly at Tybalt" in Zeffirelli's film.⁶⁸ Hatice Karaman described the relationship between Juliet's parents as patriarchal and how Lady Capulet is silenced and suffocated by her husband's rule.⁶⁹ The first chapter in this thesis established how there is more equality between the 2013 version of Juliet's parents. The section below will be concerned with testing if this claim holds when looking at the male and female gaze.

⁶⁶ Irene G. Dash, *Wooing, Wedding, and Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 70.

⁶⁷ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 47.

⁶⁸ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 43.

⁶⁹ Hatice Karaman, "The Mother, Who is not One: Reflections of Motherhood in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014): 39.

Zeffirelli shows Lady Capulet for the first time when Lord Capulet and count Paris are discussing whether Juliet is ripe enough for marriage. Lord Capulet tells count Paris “let two more summers wither in their pride ere we think her ripe to be a bride”. The camera zooms in on a window in which Lady Capulet shows up as the audience appears to look through Lord Capulet’s eyes. She looks disgustingly at her husband and resolutely closes the window (Appendix 2.8). Lord Capulet declares that girls who are made early mothers are “too soon marred” revealing his troublesome relationship with his wife. Lady Capulet’s face is furthermore filled with joy while she is dancing at the Capulet ball, but turns sour when she has to tell her husband off for screaming at Tybalt.

The 2013 adaptation shows the first moment of proper interaction on screen between Lord and Lady Capulet at the ball. Tybalt is mumbling away about how he dislikes the fact that Romeo is dancing with his niece while Juliet’s parents are cheerfully chatting with each other. Lady Capulet looks and acts much more lovingly towards her husband in this scene while she asks him why he “is so hot”. This sense of a happy marriage is also reflected in the look which Lord Capulet receives from his wife on the morning when they are preparing for the wedding between Juliet and count Paris. Carlei added a moment of playful interaction between the two. Lady Capulet looks with admiration and longing towards her husband in this scene which is in contrast to what occurs in the 1968 film. This difference establishes the idea that Carlei was considerate of feminist matters in his use of the gaze film technique.

Chapter 3

Sexuality on Screen

Giles tries to explain what love is and attempts to make a distinction between love and other forms of liking.⁷⁰ He claims that love appears swiftly and is more volatile and fragile. This idea is reflected in the play when Juliet briefly questions if their contract of love is “too rash, too unadvised, too sudden” after which she marries Romeo the next day.⁷¹ Another distinction is that “while liking is often thought to be based on actual rewards that persons give each other in an interaction, the intensity of love seems to be more connected with the person’s anticipation or even fantasizing of the future rewards that the relationship has to offer.”⁷² Experiences which are usually thought of as negative, like frustration, fear, rejection and suffering, do not reduce love, but rather appear to intensify it. Romeo expresses similar feelings of anguish when he is banished and exclaims “there is no world without Verona walls, but purgatory, torture, hell itself” after which he declares he would rather die than live apart from his Juliet.⁷³

The experience of being in love might be described as involving “a longing for union with the other, where an important part of this longing is sexual desire.”⁷⁴ James Giles explored the experience of being in love and its relationship to sexual desire. There are two sides in the ongoing debate about being in love. One side argues that modern western culture constructed the notion of romantic love, whereas others claim that there are biological roots for the attachment process which is partly the basis for love.⁷⁵ Social psychologists Hatfield and Walster define love

⁷⁰ James Giles, “A Theory of Love and Sexual Desire,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 24, no. 4 (1994): 342.

⁷¹ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 61.

⁷² James Giles, “A Theory of Love and Sexual Desire,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 24, no. 4 (1994): 342.

⁷³ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 86.

⁷⁴ James Giles, “A Theory of Love and Sexual Desire,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 24, no. 4 (1994): 339.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 340.

as a state of extreme longing for union with another. If this union is achieved it leads to feelings of ecstasy and fulfilment whereas if it remains unrequited it can lead to despair, anxiety and emptiness.⁷⁶ An important feature of this kind of love is sexual desire. All of these elements and descriptions can be found in *Romeo and Juliet*. Zeffirelli's and Carlei's adaptations both put a prominent emphasis on the longing and sexual desire between the two main characters.

The aim of this chapter will be to explore the ways in which the directors dealt with the subject of sexuality. The discussion will first focus on the sexuality between Romeo and Juliet in relevant scenes. The analysis will then turn to a rather different aspect of sexuality concerning the homoerotic traits that surround the relationship between Romeo and Mercutio and how the concept of homoeroticism was dealt with by the directors.

Deborah Cartmell considers the story of *Romeo and Juliet* as the 'straightest' from Shakespeare's romantic dramas: "no gender bending, no women falling in love with other women, no mixing of races."⁷⁷ Deborah Cartmell defines the term 'sexuality' as creating, directing and expressing desire as well as referring to erotic practices and desires.⁷⁸ She presents a general idea about sexuality in the 1968 film by stating that "the older generation is seen to corrupt the innocent and wholesome sexuality of the youth."⁷⁹ Lord and Lady Capulet's attempt at controlling Juliet's sexuality might even be seen as a revelation of child abuse. Lord Capulet hurls his young daughter around the room when she refuses to marry count Paris. Cartmell argues that Zeffirelli's lovers are unaware of the corrupt world around them until the very end.⁸⁰ She believes that the message of the 1968 film is that youth is superior to age. The whiteness of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 340.

⁷⁷ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 42.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 44.

Juliet's room thereby symbolizes the pureness of their love-making.⁸¹ She also points to the idea that the death of the lovers leads to no societal change in this film. Its focus lies on the opposition between the innocent youth and the corrupted old.⁸² The idea of the lovers' sexuality as innocent is also reflected in both the adaptations.

The Consummation of the Marriage

The most significant scene in terms of sexuality in both the films is the morning after the consummation of the marriage of the two young lovers. The original text does not make any explicit references to the actual deed. Romeo is persuaded by the Friar and the Nurse to find and comfort his Juliet after which *Act 3 Scene 4* depicts a discussion between Lord Capulet and count Paris in which they decide on when Juliet will marry the count. The text then moves straight to the dialogue between Romeo and Juliet in which they discuss whether the morning has come already and they consider whether they would prefer Romeo to "be gone and live, or stay and die."⁸³ The Wordsworth edition of the text places the two standing by the window whereas both the directors situated Romeo and Juliet in bed during this scene. The adaptations will first be discussed separately after which a comparison will be made to see if a different attitude towards gender can explain any differences between the films.

There are several moments which lead up to the wedding night of Romeo and Juliet in Zeffirelli's adaptation. The kiss at the Capulet ball might be said to be relatively gentle. The passion between the two lovers heightens however at their second encounter. The 1968 film shows Romeo pulling Juliet to him on her balcony after which he starts kissing her fiercely. Juliet even pauses for a split second to grasp a breath of air because it becomes very passionate and

⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

⁸² Ibid., 45.

⁸³ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Cedric Watts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 83.

almost wild. This moment of intense passion is repeated right before the Friar marries the two youngsters. The Wordsworth edition of Shakespeare's text describes Juliet as entering 'somewhat fast' after which the two lovers exchange a few words expressing their happiness and love.⁸⁴ Zeffirelli shows Juliet rushing into the church and the *mise en scène* depicts the two running towards each other into an embrace followed by kisses whereby the two cannot keep their hands off each other. Friar Lawrence literally has to pull them apart and escorts Juliet to the altar. The scene exemplifies the intense sexual desire which the two feel for each other.

Zeffirelli chose to depict Romeo joyfully leaving the Friar's chambers after which the screen turns to a long shot of the two lovers lying in bed the next morning. The director first shows a close-up of their faces whilst asleep conveying a sense of innocent and pure love. The camera slowly zooms out revealing the naked bodies of Romeo and Juliet sleeping in a loving embrace (Appendix 3.1). Glimpses of Whiting's bottom and Hussey's breasts are "suggesting rather than demonstrating sexual consummation."⁸⁵ Romeo wakes up first and lovingly places a kiss on Juliet's lips before getting up to open the curtains. Juliet looks really young when she struggles to open up her eyes but also rather comfortable with Romeo when she starts to talk about the song of a nightingale while Romeo is getting dressed. Juliet asks him to stay and he consents for a moment placing himself back in her arms. The room is filled with warm daylight accompanied by the sound of chirping birds and the whole atmosphere conveys a sense of peaceful happiness. Their moment of harmony is disturbed when Romeo is forced to leave and there is a sad parting when he descends from the balcony and runs away. The whole scene really emphasized the innocent young love which the two lovers feel for each other. Cartmell however points to how the "well-known all-too-brief glimpses of nudity provided the incentive to watch

⁸⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁵ Deborah Carmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 44.

the whole film” for students in their adolescence. Carlei’s film contains no such nudity, whereas Zeffirelli’s scene sexualizes the bodies of the youngsters by using a relatively large amount of time to show their nakedness.

Carlo Carlei chose to dedicate a lot of time on the screen to the consummation of Romeo and Juliet’s marriage. The 2013 adaptation extends the interaction between the two lovers on the night preceding the ‘morning-after’ scene. Romeo is seen sneaking through the Capulet garden whilst Juliet recites the aforementioned poem praising her love. Romeo appears at the entrance of Juliet’s chambers and after exchanging a look burning with desire and a sense of relief at their reunion they hug. Juliet then leads Romeo by the hand to her bed chamber. The room is filled with candle light, warm colours and an overall romantic atmosphere. They kneel on the bed facing each other and Romeo carefully but purposefully removes Juliet’s earrings and hairclip (Appendix 3.2). Romeo’s shirt is also removed and they share a few seconds of what appears to be a moment of giving consent to what is about to happen. They put each other’s hands on the other person’s heart and reaffirm their new status as husband and wife. The music then intensifies while they kiss and the last thing which is shown is Romeo laying Juliet down on the bed. The camera then appears to turn to the ceiling giving the two lovers more privacy. The entire scene does not sexualize the two actors, but rather conveys a sense of intimacy and innocent love.

Carlei is more explicit than Zeffirelli in suggesting the actual consummation of the marriage took place even though there is no nudity. This scene which Carlei added to the original work might be said to intensify the sense of equality between the male and female protagonists of the story. Juliet does not appear to be forced in any way but seems rather eager to lie with Romeo, who in turn comes across as utterly gentle and loving. The sexual desire which the two youngsters feel appears to go hand in hand with their feelings of love as well as duty. Their

sexual desire was there from the beginning, but their morals encouraged them to get married before satisfying their desires.

The 2013 versions of *Romeo and Juliet* also wake up embracing each other in a room filled with daylight and a peaceful atmosphere (Appendix 3.3). A difference compared to the 1968 film is that when Romeo is about to descend from Juliet's balcony she tells him to follow her through a different way out. Dramatic music plays as the two run down stairs surrounded by a beautiful Italian garden. They exchange their promises to stay faithful and write to each other after which they share a passionate kiss and part. Juliet might be said to show a sense of authority in how she drags Romeo along with her compared to what happens in the 1968 film. She is clever enough to find her way passed any kinsmen while briefly extending Romeo's presence.

The most significant difference between the two films in the context of feminist film critique is the extent to which the youngsters are sexualized on the screen. Carlei shows more in terms of the actual sexual acts on the couple's wedding night, but he does so in a non-sexualized manner. The focus created by his *mise-en-scene* is really on the idea that Romeo and Juliet have intercourse out of innocent love for each other. The 1968 film is more sexist in the sense that a lot of attention is drawn to the nudity of the two main characters. It might be argued that it is Zeffirelli's way of suggesting the consummation of the marriage, which Carlei did through the added scene from the night before, but the camera lingers on the naked bodies of the youngsters for a rather substantial amount of time.

Mercutio's Sexuality

Deborah Cartmell disregarded one important character when she claimed that *Romeo and Juliet* can be considered as Shakespeare's 'straightest' romantic drama. The death of Mercutio in

the third act eliminates the leading candidate for Romeo's homoerotic affections.⁸⁶ Romeo's desire consists of a place previously held by Rosaline and potentially by Mercutio, which then becomes occupied by Juliet. As Keith Dorwick states; "Romeo is often associated not with homosexuality but with bisexuality."⁸⁷ The portrayal of Mercutio in the films allows for the exploration of a completely different aspect of sexuality. Before engaging with the adaptations it is useful to briefly discuss the changing attitudes towards sexual orientation over the last few decades.

The general attitude towards sexual diversity has changed in a positive way over the last years. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s initially evoked horrific media responses which were really negative about homosexuality.⁸⁸ The ultimate result was much less gloomy though because "the collective public and governmental response brought many positive changes as Europeans developed greater comfort both with negotiating sexual practices and with appreciating human sexual diversity."⁸⁹ Dagmar Herzog describes how this change is reflected in society through examples connected to politics. Prime Minister Theresa May for instance emphasized her support for the International Day Against Homophobia back in 2010.⁹⁰ This idea that homophobia has become passé in the twenty-first century is, however, not reflected in Carlei's 2013 adaptation. Considering the fact that he shows a rather progressive outlook on gender-related issues connected to feminism it would have been logical if he had adapted Mercutio's homosexual traits into his film. The most plausible explanation for the change he

⁸⁶ Will Stockton, "The Fierce Urgency of Now: Queer Theory, Presentism, and Romeo and Juliet," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality and Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 289.

⁸⁷ Keith Dorwick. "Boys Will Still Be Boys," *Journal of Bisexuality* 7, no. 1-2 (2007): 84.

⁸⁸ Dagmar Herzog, "Partnerships and Practices 1980-2010," in *Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 176.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

made to the original source is that he wanted to focus on the heterosexual love which prevails in the story. An analysis of Mercutio's personage on screen in both the films might reveal more about the directors' approach towards this rather different aspect of sexuality. The two most significant scenes in this context are Mercutio's speech about Queen Mab and his death.

The 1968 adaptation first shows Mercutio as the witty leader of a relatively large group of men on their way to the Capulet ball. The blonde 1968 version of the character comes across as a born-storyteller when he utters a shortened version of the Queen Mab speech. He is very expressive with his hands and face as he describes the fairies' midwife and it becomes a very humorous and dynamic scene. The crowd of men surrounding Mercutio react to almost every line he utters with laughter. He appears to become a bit distressed at the end though. The screen now captures him all alone in front of city buildings covered in shadows screaming the final lines of the scene. His words are echoed in his now empty surroundings. Romeo comes up to him and holds his face between his hands and calmly says "peace Mercutio, peace. Thou talkst of nothing". The next shot might be said to contain a homoerotic atmosphere. The foreheads of the two men are pressed together and they look into each other's eyes while they conclude on the subject of dreams with an earnest turn that they are but "the children of an idle brain" (Appendix 3.4).

The 2013 adaptation shows how two directors can interpret a scene and character in completely different ways. Carlei's version of Mercutio comes across as much more of a ladies' man. He has a brotherly bond with Romeo but there are no sensual moments between the two like the ones in Zeffirelli's film. The Queen Mab speech in this film is performed to entertain himself and Benvolio whilst making fun of Romeo's romantic thoughts. The line "peace, peace Mercutio, enough! You talk of nothing" is expressed by Romeo merely to stop Mercutio from making fun of lovers after which Mercutio speaks to Romeo about how dreams are nothing but vain fantasy

as though to his little brother. There is one particular additional line in the 2013 film which confirms the idea that this version of Mercutio is not homosexual. Right after entering the ball he says “methinks we have the pick of what’s on show, they all look hungrier than a starving dog” implying that he, Benvolio and Romeo should try and find themselves a lady because there are many eager women in the room after which he appears to go on a hunt for one. This makes for a huge difference between the two versions of the character in the films.

A second act which confirms this difference is Mercutio’s death scene. Mercutio and Tybalt have a sort of epic fight before Mercutio dies through Tybalt’s sword. Prior to the sword fight there is a relatively long dialogue between the two in the 1968 adaptation in which they each make fun of each other. The entire fight is also very theatrical in this film and the whole atmosphere suggests that Mercutio and Tybalt are almost putting up a show for the surrounding men watching them. Their intention never appears to be death and there is again a lot of laughter in this bit. Mercutio also puts up a show before his men when he realises he is about to die and only confides in Romeo how he was harmed. His death is not very heroic, especially compared to the more masculine version of the character in the 2013 film.

Carlei created a scene with much more earnest rivalry when he places the Montagues opposite the Capulets. Mercutio has a conversation with Benvolio right before the fight and declares he feels not a single drop of fear for battling Tybalt. The fatal blow which kills Mercutio was without a doubt purposely shoved into his body by Juliet’s cousin. Mercutio’s death is much more heroic and tragic in the 2013 film. Zeffirelli remained close to a theatrical approach in the transition of Mercutio’s character from the text to the screen whereby he maintained the homosexual traits which surround the character. Carlei on the other hand appears to stay clear of any homosexual tensions between Romeo and Mercutio.

Conclusion

Carlo Carlei discusses his adaptation in a video of ‘Academy Conversations’. He explains the adaptation process in the following manner; “the question is; why [would you make] another Romeo and Juliet? [...] do you go more classical or bigger in scope than Zeffirelli?” He declares that his film is different and new in that “for the first time, he wanted all the characters, even the secondary ones [...] to participate [in] this tragedy and to [...] function as an emotional conduit between the story and the audience.”⁹¹ Throughout the thesis I have not considered any material in which the directors voice their intentions and approach to the adaptation. I have done so purposefully to focus on what is actually shown on screen and avoid any biases taken from the words of the directors. The issue of Mercutio’s sexuality on Carlei’s screen however, required an investigation of the director’s motives to find a possible explanation for the unexpected finding.

A featurette of the 2013 film titled ‘Men of Verona’ shows some of the male actors outlining the function of their character in the story. Christian Cooke, who plays Mercutio, describes his character in the following manner; “Mercutio is the best friend of Romeo. He is [...] very cynical about love and about Romeo’s feelings towards Juliet. He has this [...] relentless love for Romeo so [...] he stands up for him.”⁹² Cooke expresses here how Mercutio has a brotherly love for Romeo. This idea is in line with Carlei’s aim to include every side character in the tragic conclusion of the main love story. Mercutio is not a love interest for Romeo in this film, but merely jokes around about the meaning of love with him. It appears as though it was never Carlei’s intention to purposefully exclude Mercutio’s homoerotic traits out of the story. It must have happened due to the film’s intense focus on directing everything towards the tragic

⁹¹ Oscars, “Academy Conversations: Romeo and Juliet,” filmed September 2013, *YouTube Video*, 6:01, posted October 2013, <https://youtu.be/8eZ1c6zTLU4>.

⁹² EdWestwickSpain, “Romeo and Juliet (2013) Featurette: ‘Men of Verona’,” *YouTube Video*, 2:50, posted September 2013, <https://youtu.be/YSZfIVcYHFM>.

climax. This is in line with the earlier tentative explanation of how Mercutio's original homoerotic traits got lost due to Carlei's focus on the main heterosexual love story.

The relationship between the films and gender-related issues has been discussed through several aspects. The first chapter revealed how the 2013 version of *Juliet* shows how Carlei took a much more progressive approach in adapting the character to the screen. He put a focus on her feminist side, whereas Zeffirelli's *Juliet* comes across as much less feminist in comparison. An analysis of Juliet in the original play and the portrayal of her character on screen revealed many opportunities for the directors to show her as an early feminist. The relationships between Juliet and her lover, her parents as well as Friar Lawrence showed how she denies any authority trying to intervene with her own will.

The second chapter focussed on how the technique of the gaze was used by the directors to first of all show the way in which the two youngsters fell for each other, but also to capture the way in which they are objectified by each other. It also confirmed the more progressive approach in terms of equality which Carlei chose in the portrayal of Lady Capulet in relation to her husband. The gaze posed a vital part in the adaptation process in terms of feminist film theory. Several academics have argued in favour of the idea that females are always objectified on screen by looking through the eyes of a man. Carlei showed how the male and female gaze can be combined into a much more equal manner of objectification on screen by letting Romeo and Juliet gaze at each other, whereas Zeffirelli chose to objectify his female protagonist.

The final chapter centred around the subject of sexuality and how the directors dealt with two features of this aspect. The first was the depiction of sexual desire between Romeo and Juliet. The conclusion which can be drawn from the analysis of scenes related to sexuality is that Carlei gave his Juliet much more authority whereas Zeffirelli sexualized the bodies of the youngsters. This claim is supported by Zeffirelli's lingering shots of the naked bodies of the two

lovers, as opposed to Carlei's non-sexualized *mise-en-scène*. The second issue of sexual orientation in the character of Mercutio however was not in line with the overall outcome.

The discussions all point to the expected outcome of the comparison: the 2013 adaptation's director seems to have been more considerate of issues around gender than Franco Zeffirelli. There was only one outcome in the analysis which posed a problem in this conclusion. Mercutio's sexual orientation in Carlei's film did not reflect a progressive attitude towards gender-related issues, but as discussed above, this does not take away the idea that Carlei was very considerate of the feminist issues of his time.

The focus in this thesis was mostly on the two protagonists of Shakespeare's story. It was fixated even more on Juliet than Romeo. Feminist theories played a large part in the discussion of the adaptation and therefore the focus was bound to be on the most important female character. The results of the research show how two directors can adapt the same story in rather different ways. Carlei was most likely influenced by the more progressive outlooks on feminist matters around him in the twenty-first century, whereas Zeffirelli created his film at a time when feminist critique in the field of cinema was only just emerging.

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Student number : 4617991

Appendix 1

1.1 Juliet sat at a desk (2013)



1.2 Romeo and Juliet's death scene (1968)



1.3 Romeo and Juliet's death scene (2013)



1.4 Lady Capulet stroking her daughter's face.



Appendix 2

2.1 Romeo staring at Juliet (1968)



2.2 Juliet shyly glancing at Romeo for a brief moment (1968)



2.3 Romeo and Juliet dancing with each other (1968)



2.4 Romeo staring at Juliet (2013)



2.5 Juliet staring back at Romeo (2013)



2.6 Juliet in the balcony scene (1968)



2.7 Juliet in the balcony scene (2013)



2.8 Lady Capulet (1968)



Appendix 3

3.1 Romeo and Juliet on the morning after their wedding night (1968)



3.2 Romeo and Juliet on their wedding night (2013)



3.3 Romeo and Juliet on the morning after their wedding night (2013)



3.4 Romeo trying to calm Mercutio down (1968)

