

# The treatment of love in shakespeare's play and in the zeffirelli

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'Romeo and Juliet' is the fictional tragedy about the love-hate relationship between two families in Shakespearian times. The play by Shakespeare is often depicted in differing ways and there have been many film versions made but two of the most well known are the Zeffirelli and Luhrman versions. In the play and both of the films the love between Romeo and Juliet is always present. Love has a transforming effect upon Romeo and Juliet. Romeo appears to be in love with the idea of being in love rather than Juliet. Upon seeing Juliet, Romeo forgets about the rest of his life and regards Juliet as the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.

Romeo undergoes a change from a shallow affection to a binding love upon seeing Juliet. In the Zeffirelli and Luhrman film versions the play is portrayed in different ways. In the Baz Luhrman version the play is modernised and Americanised in a number of ways including the use of modernised weapons, names, clothes and settings. To modernise the play further both families own their own tower blocks on Verona Beach in Los Angeles (instead of Verona in Italy). As this play has been modernised so much it is very appealing to today's audiences because they can associate with these modernisations such as tower blocks.

Whereas the Franco Zeffirelli version is depicted in a more traditional way being set in Italy in Shakespearian times, as well as all original names being kept, this makes it more difficult for us to associate with, as it is not what we are used to. As gun crime was not so well known at this time, Zeffirelli has chosen to use swords and other less modern weapons. We can see from this that Zeffirelli did try to make his film more appreciable for his generation,

but since he made it everything has moved on and become more modernised.

The film he made would have been more popular at the time when he made it in comparison to now (nearly 40 years later on ). In many scenes throughout the play the love- hate relationship is very clear more so in Act 1 Scene 5. The Capulets are holding a party which Romeo and his friends have attended without an invitation. In this scene Romeo and Juliet meet each other and fall in love immediately only to discover that they are the children of deadly enemies. 'My only love sprung from my only hate! ' This key scene in the play is depicted very differently in the two films.

Unlike the audiences of the Lührman version, Shakespearian audiences would have found this scene very shocking, that upon a first meeting Romeo touches Juliet's hand, making physical contact and then proceeds to kiss her. The audience of the Lührman version would not have thought that there was anything unusual about this physical contact, apart from the language used, and the way in which Romeo asks Juliet if he may have the pleasure of kissing her. In this film version, it is difficult to see how in love and devoted they immediately become, as it is quite a normal sight for modern day audiences.

This scene in both of the plays has definitely been modernised, more so in the Lührman version than the Zeffirelli, this makes the scene easier for modern day audiences to understand. For the play to still be popular four centuries after Shakespeare wrote it, it has had to be altered in a number of

ways. The play has been modernised to show the love Romeo and Juliet immediately showed for each other. The Lührman version shows this in a more obvious way, whereas in the Zeffirelli version this is not so clear.

The Baz Lührman film has been altered in many ways with the exception of the language which has remained as it was 400 yrs ago. In the Zeffirelli version the language amongst other aspects is almost unchanged from when Shakespeare wrote it. This makes it more difficult for people to relate to as they may not understand what some of the language means, this will if anything make it less popular with modern day audiences especially younger children. In the Baz Lührman film the love hate relationship is shown only by Romeo's generation who fight in the streets with each other.

When it is discovered that Montague's have made their way into the Capulet's party it is once again only Tybalt who is concerned and not his father. This is also a more modernised interpretation because modern day arguments between teenagers don't normally involve their parents. This makes it a lot easier for modern day audiences to associate with and therefore makes it more popular 400 years after it was written. Whereas in the Zeffirelli version more than one generation of the families fight and brawl in the streets with each other. This sword fighting is more difficult for our generation to relate to making it less popular.

During the fighting that goes on between the families Romeo and Juliet both love and hate members of the same family, they know that they should not be seeing each other in private, but cannot help the fact that they are madly

in love . After the fighting in the streets, when Juliet discovers that Romeo has killed one of her closest family members, she is struck by both the hatred she should possess for him, and the love that she shows. In this scene the fancy dress costumes that the characters are wearing is very important, especially in the Luhrman version.

In this film Juliet is wearing an angel costume to show her innocence and beauty. Romeo is dressed as a knight in shining armour which is what he is to Juliet. Cleopatra and Julius Caesar costumes are also worn by other guests which is ironic considering the tragic love affair they had, which ended with Cleopatra committing suicide rather like Juliet. Paris's astronaut costume is highly appropriate because he comes across as being dim, as he is totally unaware that Juliet has no intention of ever being with him.

Tybalt is dressed as a devil which is a good interpretation, considering the way that the audience never seem to like him. The fancy dress in this scene makes it much more appealing to modern day audiences, as it is a point of much humour, where the most disliked characters are ridiculed. In the Zeffirelli version this scene is shown in a very different way with traditional costume and Juliet wearing a red dress, a colour widely associated with love. The idea of playing a love song when Romeo and Juliet meet also fits in with the idea of immediate love.

Act 1 Scene 5 is known well for containing a traditional Shakespearian style sonnet. This sonnet is used in both film versions when the two lovers meet. Romeo and Juliet both read parts of the sonnet which Romeo starts. They

speak using religious imagery Romeo acts as a pilgrim worshipping Juliet who is shown here as a saint. Normally the man would recite the sonnet whilst the woman is silent but here Juliet also speaks to make the sonnet fit in more accurately with the storyline, as Romeo takes the chance to ask Juliet for a kiss.

In the sonnet Romeo says things about himself such as unworthy- here he puts himself down to raise her higher. However Juliet responds by telling Romeo not to put himself down so much. People would have touched things that were sacred like statues, Romeo uses this idea to kiss Juliet on her lips. He says that he will lose his faith if he cannot kiss her, which is ironic because we know that they will lose faith as they both commit suicide. In the sonnet Romeo uses language such as 'thou' rather than 'you' to make her seem more important than himself.

This imagery used by Shakespeare is present in both of the film versions, and is one aspect which remains very similar to 400 years ago. This if anything will make it less popular among more modern audiences, because they may not understand the real meaning of some of the more 'old fashioned' vocabulary. The depictions in the plays make the Zeffirelli version popular with older audiences, and the Lührman version more popular with younger modern day audiences such as teenagers of Romeo and Juliet's age.

It is because of the modernisation choices made by the directors that the Lührman version is still popular with modern day audiences. The directors in the Lührman film version made choices that have ensured that the play can

still be enjoyed by everyone; just like it would have been when it was performed 400 years ago in Shakespearian England. However I do not think that the Zeffirelli version is as popular with modern day audiences especially with children because it is more difficult to understand, as they cannot appreciate the language or reason with the more 'old fashioned' setting.

Although both of the films have been made in the 20th century there is a time gap between them. During this time there have been many changes in peoples lifestyles and treatment of others. The Zeffirelli version is definitely less modernised than the Lührman version. Children such as Romeo and Juliet would have respected their parents and would have 'only spoke when spoken to'. However since it was written peoples respect for their elders has dramatically decreased. This is definitely reflected in these two versions of the play and they have been scripted to allow for this.