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Is Shakespeare still our Contemporary?
Shakespeare in Popular Culture

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Čestné prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně a s použitím uvedených zdrojů a literatury.

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Romana Pitáková

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1 Introduction

William Shakespeare is one of the greatest pop culture influencers of all times. Even the hundreds of years after his death, his work serves as an inspiration for music, TV series, movie adaptations, etc. This bachelor thesis concentrates on one of his most popular and frequently adapted tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet*. The objective of the thesis is to analyse two popular adaptations, *Romeo and Juliet* by Franco Zeffirelli (1968) and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann (1996).

The theoretical part of this thesis concentrates on movie adaptations and their history. It includes the explanation of the term "adaptation" and a brief history including the struggles that the movie adaptations had to face since the beginning of the film industry. There is also a short overview of the history of *Romeo and Juliet* movie adaptations. In addition, this part contains a short biography of William Shakespeare and the overview of his work. For the theoretical part, it is important to summarize the original play and select the key scenes that will be used in the practical part of the bachelor thesis.

As it was mentioned, the practical part analyses the movie adaptations of the two famous directors - Franco Zeffirelli and Baz Luhrmann. Each of the movie adaptations is compared to the original play by William Shakespeare. A personal reception of the play and the movies is supplemented with the research carried out by Courtney Lehmann summarized in her book *Romeo and Juliet: A Close Study of the Relationship Between Text and Film (Screen Adaptations)*.

Moreover, this bachelor thesis aims to find the similarities and the distinctions between these two adaptations and to see how each of these two directors modified the original play in order to make it likeable for their

target audience. In this respect, a hypothesis can be made that Franco Zeffirelli's movie will be perceived as more canonical, faithful to the original play, without any major changes in the script and the plot. On the other hand, Baz Luhrmann's movie adaptation will be more experimental, aimed particularly at the teenage audience and will contain a several major changes in the plot.

2 Movie adaptation

2.1 What is a movie adaptation?

The word adaptation comes from the Latin word *adaptare*, later *adaptatio* and the dictionaries provide explanation of this term as: “A play or film that is based on a novel”, eventually: “The state of process of changing to suit a new situation” (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary 2012). So, it is in fact, a transfer of text, style or genre into another text, style, genre. Linda Hutcheon in her book *Theory of adaptations* even describes this phenomenon as “an extended, deliberate announced revisitation of a particular work of art” (Hutcheon 2006: 170).

Nowadays, the wide-spread way of adaptation is a movie adaptation. This includes the movie adaptations of all kinds, for instance, novels, plays, video games and comic books.

Movie adaptations started to be really popular only in the last few decades, what could be a reason why they are still a target of criticism. Petr Bubeníček in his work *Filmová adaptace: Hledání interdisciplinárního dialogu* proposes that this criticism can be influenced by the way society perceives the act of reading a book versus the act of watching a movie. In his opinion, reading a book is perceived as an intellectual effort whilst watching the movie is perceived just like the act of having fun or even suppressing people’s own imagination. (Bubeníček 2010: 9)

2.2 History of movie adaptations

According to Linda Hutcheon, adaptations themselves are not a new way of art. In fact, they were particularly popular in the Victorian era. Hutcheon even observes that “The Victorians had a habit of adapting just

about everything-and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, play, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and tableaux vivants were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again.“ (Hutcheon 2006: XI) She also proposes the idea that we “inherited“ this habit and thanks to new types of materials, sources and technology, this form of art can be spread even more. (Hutcheon 2006: XI)

Movie adaptations have been present since the beginning of the film industry, but for a long time they were not viewed positively by critics and the general public. According to Bubeníček “film adaptations have been for a long time regarded as mere copies of more important and valuable literary works” (Bubeníček 2010: 7).

This attitude started to change in the 1960s and the 1970s of the 20th century, after the establishment of film studies at some American and British universities. However, it was not any major change, as it was still expected for adaptations to be canonical, well-made copies of “original” works and their purpose was to glorify the adapted book. Bubeníček also mentions that just the best director- “auteur”, had a courage to create an adaptation, as it was clear that it is not going to be received positively (Bubeníček 2010: 7).

Another step was made in the 1980s and the 1990s, when the movie adaptations seminars such as “Shakespeare on screen” or “Dickens in the movie” were established at several universities. However, a part of public and critics still could not avoid concerns about movie adaptations “ruining” the literature (Bubeníček 2010: 8). Nowadays, the discipline of movie adaptations still evolves and has to deal with criticism.

2.3 History of movie adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*

Considering the popularity of Shakespeare and his work, it is not surprising that his plays have appeared in the cinematography since its beginning.

Shakespeare's first play made into movie was *King John* in the year 1899, however, the first *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation was presented in the year 1908 by the Italian director Mario Caserini. The same year, this adaptation was followed by other ones from UK and USA.

Of course, it was a beginning of the cinematography and all these movies were just the first tries, short and silent. Directors were learning and experimenting with the motion pictures and the whole concept of the movie, and "*Romeo and Juliet* was clearly the most popular subject for the Shakespeare film..." (Robert Hamilton Ball 2013: 235)

One of the first attempts to create a sound version of this play was a short film directed by István Kató Kiszly in 1931. Five years later, in 1936, George Cukor's famous version of the play was presented to the audience. Courtney Lehmann describes this movie as "The first feature length effort to adapt *Romeo and Juliet* as a 'high period' film." (Lehmann 2010: 87).

The first world-famous movie adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* by Renato Castellani was released in 1954. The same year, the movie won several awards, for instance Gold Lion at Venice Film Festival and NBR award for Best Foreign Film.

Mentioning the world-famous adaptations released in the 20th century, *West Side story* (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins 1961), *Romeo and Juliet* (Zeffirelli 1968) and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (Luhrmann 1996) cannot be forgotten.

Besides the canonical adaptations, *Romeo and Juliet* was and still is a big inspiration for spinoffs. Lehmann claims that there are more than 230

spinoffs and citations of this play (Lehmann 2010: 95). She mentions movies such as *Ambikapathy* (Dungan 1937), a South Asian film about forbidden love between a princess and a poet; *Dakan* (Mohamed Camara 1997), an African film which shows a homosexual relationship between protagonists; or *Torn apart* (Jack Fisher and Barry Markowitz 1989), dramatic love story between a Jewish Israeli soldier and his childhood Arabic friend.

The 21th century spinoffs push the boundaries even further. For instance, the movie *Warm Bodies* (Levine 2013) shows a female protagonist Julie Cabernet (human) and a male protagonist R (zombie), and their love struggles in the world where people and zombies are enemies.

3 William Shakespeare

3.1 Life of William Shakespeare

It can be claimed without any doubt that William Shakespeare is one of the greatest authors and influencers of the history. No other author in the world is so popular among the people even hundreds of years after his death and also despite the fact that the authorship of his works is a quite controversial topic.

Work of William Shakespeare is still inspirational not only for older generations but also for young people. His work is still being published and read, and people still go to the theatre and cinema to see adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. It may seem unusual that his plays can still influence new generations, but in fact, the main themes of his plays are so universal, that they can address recipients of various generations. The topics used in his plays, for instance, jealousy, hate, love, etc., are timeless and current and spectators can identify with them at any time.

Despite the fact that every year new books about William Shakespeare's life are published, not much has been known about his life. Not many sources were preserved and the information about his life are often only "speculations" based on aspects of his surroundings.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford to the family of John Shakespeare who worked as a trader. The exact date of his birth is not known, however, Sidney Lee in his book *The Life of William Shakespeare* mentions that "the Stratford parish registers attest that he was baptised on April 26." Based on this fact, it is assumed that he was born on April 22 or 23 of 1564. (Lee 2017: 16)

For John Shakespeare, the education of his four sons was very important. Thanks to that, William could attend the grammar school of

Stratford, where he learnt mainly Latin language and literature. That might be the reason why many of his plays (including *Romeo and Juliet*) are based on antique plays. On the other hand, there are no pieces of evidence of his further education and that is one of the reasons why many are suspicious about William Shakespeare and his identity. It is considered that he finished his studies at the age 13, because of his father's financial difficulties, and did not obtain any further education.

William Shakespeare got married in 1582. He was 18 years old and his wife, Anne Hathaway, was 8 years older than him. Six months after their wedding, their first daughter, Susanna, was born. Lee mentions that she was baptised at Stratford parish church on the May 26th of 1583 (Lee 2017: 28). In 1585, the poet's wife gave birth to the other children– the twins Hamnet and Judith. However, the marriage was probably unhappy and William left Stratford three months after the birth of the twins. Lee in his book assumes that “although he was never wholly estranged from his family, he saw little of his wife or children for eleven years.” (Lee 2017: 31)

The next period of Shakespeare's life is one of the most mysterious. From 1585 to 1592 there are not many mentions of him. He is not mentioned in Stratford records anymore and it is suggested that he moved to London. Lee proposes that, in London, Shakespeare at first worked as a call-boy in the theatre, then he started to work as an actor. This theory is supported by the fact that he “remained a prominent member of the actor's profession till near the end of his life.” (Lee 2017: 38)

In 1594, Shakespeare has already been a member of the Lord Chamberlain's company. Lee mentions that “Under this company's auspices, moreover, Shakespeare's plays first saw the light. Only two of the plays claimed for him - *Titus Andronicus* and *3 Henry VI* – seem to have been performed by other companies.” (Lee 2017: 40) Later, he became one of the leaders of the Lord Chamberlain's company.

In the year 1598, he has been already known among the public for his plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's dream*, or *Henry VI*. That time, he was concentrating especially on comedies and historical plays. Since 1600, he was writing plays for the Lord Chamberlain's company and was a co-owner of this theatre. The plays such as *Henry VI* and *Julius Caesar* had a premiere here. Unfortunately, 1613 the building burned down.

In 1603, William Shakespeare has already been a successful playwright. It is possible that he went throughout some personal crisis because his plays were darker and deeper than his earlier work. In this period, he wrote plays such as *Hamlet*, or *Othello* and generally he was concentrating on tragedies. In these tragedies he started with the usage of blank verse. This is even more visible in his later work.

In the year 1611, he sold his shares of two theatres, Globe and Blackfriars theatres and, after 20 years of living in London, he moved back to Stratford. After the year 1613, he has not written any more plays and probably was not interested in his earlier work anymore.

On 23 April 1616, William Shakespeare died. The cause of his death is not known. Lee in his book mentions theories that Shakespeare was a heavy drinker but also claims that the most probable cause of the poet's death, was his illness. (Lee 2017: 225) Shakespeare was buried inside Stratford Church. Six years later, his widow, Anne, died and was buried beside him.

3.2 Work of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare wrote the majority of his plays in the period between 1591 and 1611. Concerning the authorship of these plays, Sidney Lee notes that "If the works traditionally assigned to him include some

contributions from other pens, he was perhaps responsible, on the other hand, for portions of a few plays that are traditionally claimed for others. When the account is balanced, Shakespeare must be credited with the production, during these twenty years, of a yearly average of two plays, nearly all of which belong to the supreme rank of literature.” (Lee 2017: 47)

Work of William Shakespeare can be generally divided into four periods. These periods differ based on their character, on the mood they reflect, a style which is used, and some of them probably reflect also the state of being of the author and his surroundings.

The first period ends in the year 1595 and shows that Shakespeare was mainly inspired by history and historical characters. He started with the drama *Titus Andronicus*, followed by the trilogy about *Henry VI*. The most significant work of this period is *Richard III*. In this period, he was interested in writing comedies, poetry, and sonnets.

The second period can be dated from 1595 to 1599. The most significant works of this period are tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and several comedies - *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew* or *Much Ado about Nothing*. In many of these plays, rhyming can be observed. Shakespeare was also still interested in writing the historical plays, for instance, *Richard II*. and *Henry IV*.

The third period of his work has already been mentioned as „deeper and darker”. It is dated from 1599 to 1609, a whole decade. He usually describes maleficence, jealousy, and tragedies of the main characters. It can be only guessed that he was inspired by his personal life or life crisis he went through. The most significant are tragedies such as *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. Also, his comedies started to be somewhat more sombre, for instance, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* or *Eye to Eye*.

The fourth period of his work starts in 1609 and lasts until the end of his interest in playwriting. His work was not so dark anymore and he started to

concentrate on fantasy and fairy-tale topics. This period contains fairy-tale plays - *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

4 Romeo and Juliet

4.1 Summary of the play

Romeo and Juliet is probably one of the most famous plays written by William Shakespeare and one of the most famous plays at all. This tragedy was inspired by the Italian novels, especially by the novel by Luigi da Porto, as many similarities between these two works can be observed. Jiří Josek in the Preface of the translation of *Romeo and Juliet* claims that the same story can be observed in Spain (by the author Lope de Vega), but there are also German, French and many other versions of this story. (Shakespeare 2016: 7)

The tragedy is set in the Renaissance Verona, Italy. There are two main characters, Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet, two young people who by accident fall in love, even though their families are enemies.

The first scene shows the hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets. The servants of the two families have a clash in the street until the Prince shows up and threatens them with punishment in the case of another such accident.

Right after that Romeo is presented for the first time. He is a 17 years old boy who seems to be hopelessly romantic. He is in love with a woman called Rosaline, who however does not return his affections. It is his friend Benvolio who gives him advice to “examine other beauties” and forget about Rosaline. (Shakespeare 2016: 26)

Meanwhile, a 14 years old girl Juliet is promised to the Prince’s kinsman, Paris. Her father arranges a ball where Juliet is supposed to meet Paris, her future husband. However, things go in a different direction. At the ball, Juliet meets Romeo. After the short dialogue, they kiss each other and it is the beginning of their eternal love.

The night after the ball, Romeo comes under the balcony of Juliet and they confess love to each other. They even start to plan a wedding, even though they know that their families will not approve their relationship. They refuse that their name should be a restriction of their love.

The next day, Juliet sends her Nurse to find out the date of the wedding. They make a deal that the Friar Laurence will secretly marry them. Meanwhile, there is another clash in the street. Mercutio, Romeo's friend, is killed by Tybalt, Mrs. Capulet's nephew. Romeo wants to revenge his friend and he kills Tybalt. As the consequence of this action, he is exiled from Verona and Juliet's father decides that Juliet should marry Paris as soon as possible.

Desperate Juliet is seeking for help from Friar Laurence, who offers her a potion that makes her look dead for 24 hours. Their plan is to persuade everyone that Juliet is dead. Juliet then will escape from Verona with her husband, Romeo. Friar Laurence sends Romeo a letter, in which he explains the whole situation about Juliet's fake death.

However, their plan does not work as they planned. Romeo has never received a letter with the explanation of the situation and as well as others, he thought that Juliet is dead. Desperate Romeo buys poison from the Apothecary and wants to drink it in Juliet's tomb. In the tomb, he runs into Paris and kills him in a sword fight.

In the last scene of the play, Romeo drinks the poison. Juliet pierces herself with Romeo's dagger the moment she wakes up and sees his dead body. With this great tragedy, the Montagues and the Capulets forget about their mutual skirmishes.

4.2 Key scenes of the play

To compare properly the play with the movie adaptations, it is important to select the key scenes, the most significant moments in the play. For every director, and in fact also for every reader or spectator, these scenes can differ and that is natural as it is the result of the perception of the piece by different people.

Royal Shakespeare Company proposes that the key scenes of the *Romeo and Juliet* are:

Act 1, Scene 1 – The clash between Capulets' and Montagues' servants in the street of Verona.

Act 1, Scene 4 - First meeting of Romeo and Juliet at Capulet's masked party.

Act 2, Scenes 1, 2 – The famous balcony scene, when young lovers exchange their vows and plan their wedding.

Act 2, Scene 5 – The secret wedding in the Friar Laurence's cathedral.

Act 3, Scene 1 – Mercutio's death and the swordfight between Tybalt and Romeo in which Tybalt dies.

Act 4, Scene 4 – The Capulets find out that Juliet is “dead”.

Act 5, Scene 1 - Romeo finds out that Juliet is “dead” and plans a suicide.

Act 5, Scene 3 - The conclusion of the play. Death of Paris, Romeo, and Juliet. Achieving the piece between two rival families.¹

¹ Key Moments and Facts. *Royal Shakespeare Company* [online].© RSC [cit. 28.04.2019]. Available at : <https://www.rsc.org.uk/romeo-and-juliet/about-the-play/key-moments-and-facts>

These key moments are used as a basis for the practical part of the bachelor thesis. Every scene in the list is compared with the same one in the selected movie adaptations.

5 *Romeo and Juliet* by Franco Zeffirelli

5.1 Characteristic of the movie

Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* movie from the year 1968 is even after several decades one of the most popular and the most awarded movie adaptations of this play. With the close look at the history of adaptations, it is not surprising that this movie is very canonical, trying to resemble the original play as much as possible.

The story itself draws upon the story of the play and all the characters in the movie stay faithful to the Shakespeare's characters. Zeffirelli mostly uses monologues and dialogues from Shakespeare's play, that are sometimes modified - some parts are left out or added.

It seems as if Zeffirelli tried hard to have this film as accurate, as possible. This accuracy starts with the setting of the movie-story is set in Verona, Italy, during the Renaissance, as well as the original play. Thanks to the fact, that director himself was Italian, he managed to choose apt destinations for filming and catch the real and authentic beauty of the Renaissance Italy. For shooting, he used locations such as Tuscania, Pienza or Gubbion, and he managed to create "his own Verona" which is very believable and becomes an important part of the movie. (Lehmann 2010: 140)

As well as the location of the movie, Franco Zeffirelli's work with time should also be highlighted. Even though the story takes place in a really short period of time, he managed to show the chronology of the story with the use of lights. For example, the famous balcony scene (Act II, Scene 2) starts in the night but ends in the morning, as the sun is raising and there is more light on the set.

Another realistic aspect is the cast members. Zeffirelli's priority was to choose actors with age as close as possible to Shakespeare's Romeo and

Juliet. He chose young, unknown actors. Olivia Hussey to play Juliet and Leonard Whiting as Romeo. Olivia was 15 years old at that time and Leonard was 17, and they were one of the youngest movie Romeo and Juliet ever.

Although, in some scenes, it is clear that these actors are not so experienced in acting, thanks to their young age and innocence, they managed to make the young love believable for the audience. With the look at their young, innocent faces, it is easier to believe in their naivety and amorousness. Quite highlighted is also chemistry arising between Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, which besides their acting skills could be the result of the personal relationship of these two actors.²

It should be also mentioned, that Franco Zeffirelli was successful also in choosing the minor characters, especially Nurse who was played by Pat Heywood and Mercutio, who was played by John McEnery and was also nominated for BAFTA Award for his performance.

The overall atmosphere in the movie is supported also by the music used. Zeffirelli chose a composer Nino Rota to write the music for this film, as in his music the whole spectrum of human emotions can be caught.

It should not be forgotten that the year 1968 was the period of time that belonged to young people, especially the rebellious and flower-child generation. Many of them could see themselves in the rebellion of Romeo and Juliet and they appreciated that the music used in the movie could reflect their own feelings. (Lehmann 2010: 134) Courtney Lehmann in her book notes that “Perfectly attuned to the impact of popular music on this group of rebels with a cause, the film made its way into audiences hearts through its musical score, in particular, composed by the legendary Nino Rota.” (Lehmann 2010: 134). She also particularly mentions a song “What

² Olivia Hussey, star of Zeffirelli’s Romeo and Juliet : I was wild. *The Guardian* [online]. © 2019 Guardian News [cit. 28.04.2019]. Available at : <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/aug/01/olivia-hussey-romeo-and-juliet-film-franco-zeffirelli>

is a Youth?” that was played by a troubadour during the Capulet’s Ball, describing it to “thematise Zeffirelli’s adaptation, which has nothing if not a *carpe diem* mood.” (Lehmann 2010: 136).

Another aspect which evokes authenticity, are costumes. They are very accurate to the time and place of the story and evoke a real Shakespearean essence. These costumes designed by Danilo Donati also earned the film an Academy Award.

Overall, thanks to the accuracy and realism, Franco Zeffirelli’s adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* shows respect to the original tragedy and does not try to change it or experiment with it.

5.2 Similarities and differences in the key scenes

Act 1, Scene 1: The movie starts with the original Shakespeare’s prologue, but instead of Chorus, the Narrator is speaking. Zeffirelli leaves out the second half of the Prologue and ends with the verse “Doth with their death bury their parents’ strife.” (Shakespeare 2016: 12)

The first scene is as well as in the play, set in the street of Verona. The dialogue between Samson and Gregory is mostly left out, replaced by a few sentences and a mention that Montagues are coming. This short dialogue is followed by Shakespeare’s verses, starting with “Quarrel, I will back thee.” (Shakespeare 2016: 16). From this moment, the scene is almost completely authentic to the play.

An interesting moment is when Zeffirelli added a sentence: “The Prince hath expressly forbid this bandying in Verona streets.” (Zeffirelli, 1968), by which he was in advance explaining to the audience the arrival of the Prince and the reason why the Prince is going to be upset about this behaviour. Other reason for this mention, as well as the mention that Montagues are

coming, can be to prevent the audience from being confused by the amount of the characters in the first scene.

The monologue of the Prince is somewhat shortened, Zeffirelli keeps only the verses important for the story, character presentation (“And hear the sentence of your moved Prince”), mention about previous clashes and warning that such a clash should not repeat. (Shakespeare 2016: 18)

The dialogue between Romeo and Benvolio in this scene is also quite brief as compared to the original. It seems like Zeffirelli put more emphasis on Romeo’s frustration with hatred than on his broken heart and love to Rosaline. It almost seems like a missed opportunity that he did not keep more Romeo’s verses and so did not show how hopelessly romantic the character of Romeo is. It can be assumed that Zeffirelli wanted to portray Romeo as more mature and responsible and so add more seriousness to the naive young love.

Act1, Scene 5: During the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, the advantage of movie versus play can be fully observed for the first time. Zeffirelli did not experiment with dialogues in this part, he kept the majority of the play dialogues, with just a few minor changes. But he managed to fully highlight the atmosphere by the camerawork (innocent looks of Romeo and Juliet at each other) and, of course, by the song “What is the youth?” which is sung by the troubadour the whole time the main characters are looking for each other in the crowd and during their whole dialogue (see also above).

Act 2, Scenes 1,2: As well as the Prologue, the act 2 in the play starts with the verses of Chorus. However, in the movie, the Narrator is not present and Zeffirelli leaves out this part. The scene in the movie starts with Benvolio and Mercutio looking for Romeo while he is climbing the wall

of Capulet's orchard. The director keeps few verses in which Mercutio makes fun of Romeo and his romantic nature and continues to the dialogues of the scene 2.

Unlike the play, where Juliet appears in the window, in the movie she stands on the balcony. This set is important for the movie, as Courtney Lehmann also claims that "The twisted vines of the Capulet grounds also provide the perfect backdrop to the lovers' constantly entwined bodies throughout the balcony scene..." (Lehmann 2010: 151) and proposes that this set makes the scene seem more passionate. The dialogues between Romeo and Juliet are, as well as the dialogue during their first meeting, authentic to the original.

Act 2, Scene 6: The first half of the scene is set in Laurence's cell and follows the Shakespeare's dialogue between Friar Laurence, Romeo and Juliet. However, in the play, this part ends with them leaving the cell. Zeffirelli went further. The second part of the scene is set in the centre of cathedral. Even though the director did not show the wedding, he showed young couple kneeling alongside in front of Friar Laurence "only seconds before their fate is sealed" (Lehmann 2010: 155), which made the scene more dramatic. With the picture of Romeo and Juliet kneeling in cathedral, the movie proceeds to "Intermission".

Act 3, Scene 1: Act 3 in the movie starts with Mercutio making fool of himself. It should be mentioned that Shakespeare created Mercutio as very clever, temperamental and humorous character. Zeffirelli managed to transfer these character traits to his concept of Mercutio, especially in this part, just a few minutes before his death.

As proposed by Lehmann, Zeffirelli plays up Mercutio's effeminacy, showing him cooling in the drinking fountain, where he also wrings out his

laundry (Lehmann 2010: 156). It is accompanied by the playful dialogue with Tybalt.

After Romeo showing up, the swordfight between Mercutio and Tybalt starts. And this swordfight cannot be described as nothing less than epic. As seen through the eyes of the audience it is playful, fun, full of laughter and there is even a handshake between opponents. It almost seems like a friendly fight, which is strengthened by the regret and shock shown in Tybalt's face once he sees blood on his sword.

In contrast of this fight, the swordfight of Tybalt and Romeo is driven by anger, hatred and desire for revenge. But yet again, instant regret and shock in the eyes of Romeo can be seen once he realizes that he has killed his opponent. That is even enforced by him four times repeating "I am Fortune's fool!" (Shakespeare 2016: 100). Zeffirelli then leaves out a conversation between Benvolio and the Prince and the movie proceeds to the Nurse and Juliet crying about events.

Act 4, Scene 4: The scene in which Capulets find out that Juliet is "dead" starts with the picture of Capulets' mansion while Nurse is screaming "My lord! My lord! She's dead! Juliet is dead!" (Zeffirelli, 1968)

Juliet's parents are shown staring at Juliet's "dead" body on her bed, but their utterances are left out. Only one talking is the Narrator who says originally Capulet's verses: "Oh lamentable day! Death lies on her like an untimely frost. Upon the sweetest flower of all the field." (Shakespeare 2016: 154)

Then Zeffirelli decides to change the setting from Juliet's room to the cemetery. In the effort to make scene more dramatic, he shows Juliet's body in the coffin while the chorus is singing in the background.

Even though atmosphere in the movie is more dramatic than atmosphere in the book, Zeffirelli did not leave out comedic element. In the

book it is conversation between Peter and musicians, in the movie it is the Friar Laurence looking at the Juliet's body in the coffin with the furtive smile, knowing that his plan is working.

Meanwhile, Romeo's man Balthasar is hiding in the bushes watching the funeral. When Juliet's body is put to the vault, scene progresses to the picture of Balthasar riding a horse, passing the Friar John who was supposed to bring Romeo a letter from Friar Laurence.

Act 5, Scene 1: Movie scene in which Romeo finds out that Juliet is dead is very short compared to the book. Balthasar's explanation of the events he saw is followed by Romeo saying only: "Then I defy you, stars." (Shakespeare 2016: 162) and instantly posting to the tomb. Romeo's plan of suicide was completely omitted, Courtney Lehmann even says that "In cutting Romeo's trip to the apothecary, the director leaves the audience wondering how Romeo obtained the poison that serves as the font of his suicide." (Lehmann 2010: 163)

Act 5, Scene 3: First thing to be noticed in the comparison of last scene is that Zeffirelli decided to completely leave out Paris. Romeo proceeds to the tomb unimpeded by anyone and instead of swordfight that would end by the death of Paris, he goes straight to the Juliet's body and starts talk to her.

Zeffirelli keeps part of Romeo's monologue when he gets distracted by the dead body of Tybalt and reconcile with him saying "Forgive me, cousin." (Shakespeare 2016: 174) It seems natural that Zeffirelli wanted to keep this part as a sequel to the emotional fight which was immediately regretted by Romeo, to strengthen the dramatic atmosphere. However, Lehmann proposes the real reason of this reconciliation as "This intervening scene serves as an emotional transition for Romeo, who

returns to gaze at Juliet's body, now sobbing like the child that he has always already been." (Lehmann 2010: 163) After returning to the Juliet's body, he utters his last verses and drinks the poison.

Scene proceeds the same way as in the book. Friar Laurence is entering the scene the moment Juliet wakes up. He's trying to persuade her to leave the tomb with him but after seeing Romeo's dead body on the floor, Juliet refuses to leave. Friar Laurence leaves, repeatedly shouting: "I dare no longer stay!". (Shakespeare 2016: 178) This is the last time he can be seen in the movie what makes his character and his intentions questionable, compared to the book where he appears again explaining events to the Prince.

Juliet, left alone upon the dead body of her lover, utters her final verses and with the noises of incoming watches in the background, she stabs herself and expires on Romeo's chest.

End of the movie is set on the same square as the beginning. Families of Capulets and Montagues walk alongside carrying dead bodies of Romeo and Juliet. They stop in front of the Prince, who has the last speech, ending with line "All are punished." (Shakespeare 2016: 186) Meanwhile camera once again shows dead bodies of young lovers, Narrator utters concluding lines.

As the credits roll, Capulets and Montagues walk toward audience out of the cinematic frame making different friendly gesture- nodding, shaking hand, hugging.

6 William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann

6.1 Characteristic of the movie

The movie *Romeo + Juliet* was filmed in the year 1996 by the director Baz Luhrmann. It is one of the most experimental movie adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, what is a reason why there was more controversy concerning this movie. Linda Hutcheon even notes that "It does seem to be more or less acceptable to adapt *Romeo and Juliet* into a respected high art of form, like an opera or ballet, but not to make it into a movie, especially an updated one like Baz Luhrmann's (1996) *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*." (Hutcheon 2006: 3).

The movie is a postmodern version of Shakespeare's play. It keeps the dialogues from the play, however, other elements of the play (for example, setting, costumes, properties) are modernised. This modernisation creates an impression that the movie was intended for younger generation, especially teenagers.

A postmodern atmosphere is conveyed, among others, through the setting. It is set in Verona Beach in modern times. So, in the end, the only similarity with the original tragedy is the word Verona in the name of the location. Lehmann describes this setting as "the pastiche visual nightmare known as Verona Beach- itself a curious hybrid of Shakespeare's Veronese setting, LA's Venice Beach, and the film's on-location shots of Mexico City, along with the coastal city of Vera Cruz." (Lehmann 2010: 171) Through the whole movie it can be observed how Luhrmann also changed the settings of the particular scenes.

In terms of cast members, unlike Zeffirelli's, Luhrmann's priority was not to find actors with the age similar to the age of the characters in the play. Instead, he selected the rising stars Leonardo DiCaprio (Romeo) and

Claire Danes (Juliet). This choice of cast members was probably influenced by the budget of \$14.5 million, thanks to which he could afford to cast already known movie stars.³ For comparison, the budget of Franco Zeffirelli's movie adaptation was only \$800 000 (Lehmann 2010: 140).

In Luhrmann's movie adaptation, costumes play an important role. From the first scene it can be observed that their task is to distinguish Montagues and Capulets and highlight their differences. The Montagues can be seen in loose shirts, bright colours and a very beachy style of clothes, while the Capulets prefer a gangster cow-boy style and the combination of black and red. Lehmann also points out the cultural differences between these two families. While the Capulets were mostly Latin-Americans, the Montagues miss the ethnic diversity with the only exception of Mercutio. (Lehmann 2010: 171)

Another significant element in this movie are camera techniques used by the director. Baz Luhrmann often uses zooms, extreme close ups, cuts, montages and lightning cuts. These techniques help to create action and dramatical atmosphere in the most of the key scenes. Lehmann mentions that "This highly texturised, frenetic mise-en-scene is the trademark, or, in keeping with the name of Luhrmann's production company, the Bazmark of his cinematic language." (Lehmann 2010: 186)

6.2 Similarities and differences in the key scenes

Act 1, Scene 1: Baz Luhrmann's movie starts with the Prologue. As well as in Zeffirelli's movie, Chorus is omitted; instead of it, almost the whole Prologue is uttered by the redactor of TV News, ending with: "Is now

³ Baz Luhrmann marks Romeo + Juliet 20th anniversary with behind-the-scenes-secrets. *Australian Breaking News Headlines & World News Online* [online]. © [cit. 28.04.2019]. Available at : <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/movies/baz-luhrmann-marks-romeo--juliet-20th-anniversary-with-behindthescenes-secrets-20161107-gsjlbn.html>

the two hours' traffic of our stage." (Shakespeare 2016: 12). This scene is followed by the headline: "In fair Verona" and the camera shows the setting of the movie - city with two giant skyscrapers, one belonging to Montagues and the other one belonging to Capulets. There are also images of a police helicopter and a police car.

Then the Narrator speaks. He repeats the first half of the Prologue, accompanied with the images of newspaper headlines, a dead body and once again the police car and the helicopter, which thereby brings action element to the movie.

Luhrmann then presents the main characters of the movie - pictures of their faces accompanied by their names and short descriptions of their roles in the story. The reason why he chose this way of introduction of minor characters could be, as well as in Zeffirelli's movie, to prevent audience from being confused in the first scene of movie.

Interestingly enough, Luhrmann also decided to give first names to Romeo's and Juliet's parents. In the play, their names are not known, they are referred to just as Montague and Lady Montague, and Capulet and Lady Capulet.

In the first scene, the different setting can already be observed. Instead of a square, a clash between Montagues and Capulets takes place at the gas station.

Luhrmann kept the majority of the dialogues from the Shakespeare's play only with small changes. He also managed to include parts of dialogues mentioning swords, even though characters in this movie use guns. First time Benvolio pulls out his weapon, camera shows the sign on the gun saying: "Sword 9mm Series S." Similar thing can be observed a few minutes later, when camera shows Montague's gun with the sign "Longsword".

The clash ends with the explosion of the gas station. Afterwards the Prince - Chief of Police speaks to the Montagues and Capulets, first from the police helicopter and then in his office at Police Department.

The scene proceeds with a dialogue between Montague, Lady Montague and Benvolio, who are heading to the beach in their car. On the beach, Romeo can be seen for the first time. Luhrmann shows him as a romantic character, sitting on the beach, writing to his diary. Yet, at the same time he also shows his rebellious nature through smoking cigarettes. The dialogue between Benvolio and Romeo is shorter than original, however, in contrast to Zeffirelli's version, Luhrmann keeps the part where Romeo mentions his unrequited love to Rosaline.

Act 1, Scene 5: As well as in Shakespeare's play, this scene is set in Capulet's house. However, it surprisingly starts with Romeo saying: "Thy drugs are quick" (Shakespeare 2016: 176), which is in fact his line from the act 5, scene 3, after he drinks the poison. Romeo saying this line just a few moments before he meets Juliet for the first time seems symbolical and probably refers to his inevitably sad fate.

Lovers see each other for the first time through the fish tank, whereas the song What is love is heard in the background. Lehmann even mentions that this is "a scene that is the most technically brilliant, affectively engaging, and seemingly original sequence in entire film." (Lehmann 2010: 196) However, before they can talk to each other, Paris comes and asks Juliet to dance. Their first dialogue starts after Juliet's dance with Paris. It is loyal to the original. Difference is once more in the setting, as their first kiss takes place in the elevator.

Act 2, Scenes 1,2: The balcony scene in Luhrmann's version starts with the Romeo climbing the wall to the Juliet's window. Capulets' house

looks modern and expensive probably in order to emphasize their wealth. Walls are covered with vines and there is a big swimming pool in the backyard which plays an important role in this scene.

In contrast to the original, Juliet, does not show up in the window or on the balcony, but she goes straight to the backyard. After Romeo speaks to her, she shrinks and they both fall to the pool, where the majority of the scene takes place. Balcony scene set in the pool seems symbolical since their first meeting was also connected with water (aquarium). Courtney Lehmann also proposes that the water element was significant for this movie, mentioning the graduation of it: “from establishing shots of Romeo and Juliet through the domestic waters of bath tubs and sinks, to their courtship by way of an aquarium and finally, to Luhrmann’s brilliant inversion of the balcony-as-swimming pool- the more we realise that what these images conjure is not escape but enclosure.” (Lehmann 2010: 196)

Luhrmann managed to create this scene believably passionate, using several interruptions- hiding from security cameras, kinsman and his dog, and finally Nurse looking for Juliet. Every time a couple was interrupted, they refused to leave each other until the repeated commands of Nurse made Juliet go back to her room.

Unlike in the play, when Juliet comes back to the balcony, she gives Romeo a necklace with the cross pendant as a symbolical confirmation of the vows that they have exchanged.

Act 2, Scene 6: Compared to the original, the wedding scene in Luhrmann’s movie is shorter. The scene starts with Juliet walking down the aisle of cathedral. She silently exchanges looks with Romeo before they stand up in front of Friar Laurence. Almost all dialogues are omitted. Luhrmann kept only the Friar Laurence’s soliloquy in which he says:

“These violent delights have violent ends, and in their triumph die like fire and powder, which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey is loathsome in his own deliciousness. Therefore love moderately.” (Shakespeare 2016: 90) The scene ends with camera showing a young couple’s wedding kiss.

Act 3, Scene 1: The movie proceeds to the fight between Mercutio and Tybalt. Instead of square, it is again set on the beach.

Baz Luhrmann as well as Shakespeare managed to portray Mercutio as an unforgettable character, even though his approach was slightly different than the approach of William Shakespeare. During the movie, it seems that Mercutio is more feminine, what is visible especially at the Capulets’ ball where Mercutio is masked as a drag queen. Interestingly, Zeffirelli also portrayed Mercutio as a somewhat feminine, even though Shakespeare probably never meant to this character to be perceived this way. So, it can be claimed that a certain trend can be observed in both movie adaptations when portraying Mercutio.

The scene proceeds in a similar way as in the play. When Romeo comes, he refuses to fight with Tybalt, he even offers him his gun as a proof of his good intentions. However, Tybalt starts to beat him and that is when Mercutio intervenes in order to defend his friend. For a while it seems that Mercutio is to win the fight but then Tybalt stabs him with the piece of glass.

Dramatic atmosphere during Mercutio’s death is strengthened by the setting. He stands at the stage of ruined theatre in the middle of beach, repeatedly screaming “A plague o’ both your houses!” (Shakespeare 2016: 100) This setting can be perceived as a reminder of the fact that the movie is based on the play.

Lehmann proposes that a meteorological disturbance plays an important role in this scene (Lehmann 2010: 197). In this case, it is a storm that starts right after Mercutio is stabbed and continues during the fight of

Romeo and Tybalt. The end of the scene is particularly dramatic. After killing Tybalt, Romeo stands in the middle of the storm, looking up to the sky, rain drops and blood streaming down his face and he screams "O, I am fortune's fool!" (Shakespeare 2016, 100)

Act 4, Scene 4: The scene after Juliet's fake death from the play is almost completely left out. In the beginning of the scene in the movie, camera shows a dead body of Juliet in her bed. The Capulets and the Nurse are not present in the scene, instead of that, the Friar Laurence is shown inspecting Juliet's body and confirming that she is dead.

The scene proceeds in the cathedral where the funeral takes place. Luhrmann shows mournful faces of Juliet's parents and movie then continues with the picture of Balthasar standing in the door, watching the ceremony. Friar Laurence notices him and for a while it seems he wants to tell him something but Balthasar leaves before he manages to do so. Camera for the last time shows the concerned face of Friar Laurence and then Act 5, Scene 1 follows.

Act 5, Scene 1: The original setting in Mantua is again changed and modernised compared to the original. Romeo sits in front of his caravan in the middle of desert when Balthasar comes to deliver the news.

The scene is shortened, the most of dialogues are left out. The most climactic moment of the scene is probably when Romeo kneels down, the tears streaming down his face, screaming "Juliet!" up to the sky. After he takes his gun, he heads right to the Verona Beach, missing the messenger with the letter from Friar Laurence.

As Romeo comes to the Verona Beach, more action is obtained in the scene. Luhrmann shows his great work with camera: scenes cut from police helicopter to Friar Laurence calling the mail company about the letter, and back to the helicopter and police cars looking for Romeo.

In contrast to Zeffirelli, Baz Luhrmann decided to keep the scene in which Romeo is buying a poison from the Apothecary (in this case it is, in fact, a drug dealer).

Act 5, Scene 3: From the beginning of the scene, a few major changes can be observed. As well as in Zeffirelli's movie, Baz Luhrmann decided to leave out a fight scene with Paris. But Paris is not the only character Luhrmann left out from this scene. Balthasar and Friar Laurence are also omitted, so the whole scene places emphasis on the key protagonists.

When Romeo walks into the cathedral, Luhrmann offers the audience an image of big hall full of neon-blue crosses and candles. Juliet lays in her coffin in the white dress. Luhrmann keeps a part of Romeo's monologue, but the whole scene is significantly shorter than original.

Another major change is that Juliet wakes up when Romeo is still alive. It gives the audience a hope, that she could stop this unnecessary tragedy and save Romeo. However, when she realizes that Romeo is drinking a poison, it is too late.

Juliet then utters a part of her monologue and shoots herself with the Romeo's gun. Here Luhrmann again works with cuts. Camera transfers from the image of lovers' dead bodies back to their underwater kiss during the balcony scene.

In the end of the movie, Luhrmann does not create any magnificent scene, which can be seen, for instance, in Zeffirelli's movie. The director instead offers the audience an image of ambulance loading up the dead bodies, which is, however, very intense and speaks for itself. Montagues and Capulets are present but they are not given the word. It is Prince who speaks, ending his monologue with the sentence: "All are punished." (Shakespeare 2016: 186)

The scene then cuts back to the TV News redactor who was present at the beginning of the movie. She utters the last lines of the play originally assigned to the Prince. As the camera zooms out from her, the credits start to roll. Courtney Lehmann summarizes the end of the movie as: “Yet Luhrmann has delivered the end he promised: to make a movie the way Shakespeare might have if he had been a film-maker.” (Lehmann 2010: 205)

7 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyse two movie adaptations of William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. The theoretical part of the thesis concentrates on the theory and history of movie adaptations, life and work of William Shakespeare and it introduces the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* and the history of the adaptations of this play. The last chapter of the theoretical part is dedicated to the proposition of key scenes which are then used in the practical part. For this purpose, the key scenes proposed by The Royal Shakespeare Company were used.

The practical part of the thesis analyses two movie adaptations. This analysis shows some similarities and differences that can be found in the movie adaptation by Franco Zeffirelli and the movie adaptation by Baz Luhrmann.

Concerning the similarities between these two movies, the most obvious one is the script. Both directors decided to use the verses from the original play, with some omissions and small changes, and kept the original Shakespeare's language. The plot of both movies is also almost identical, faithful to the original, with several small changes.

Looking at the characters in these two movies, both directors followed certain stereotypes. The most significant similarity is probably Mercutio. As proposed in the previous chapter, Baz Luhrmann and Franco Zeffirelli both presented the personality of Mercutio similarly. They decided to highlight the feminine side of this character even though in the original play he was not represented this way. They both managed to make him a strong and unforgettable character, as well as Shakespeare did. Concerning other characters, there are many other similarities. For instance, they both managed to picture Juliet as an innocent and naïve young girl and the Nurse as somewhat silly and crazy woman. Another

significant similarity was that they both decided to leave out Paris from the last scene.

Concerning the differences between these two movies, the most evident one is setting. Whereas Zeffirelli stayed faithful to the original setting in Renaissance Italy, Luhrmann decided to experiment and set the movie at Verona Beach in modern times. The similar case is the usage of props. Zeffirelli stayed faithful to the original play using the swords, horses and historical costumes whilst Luhrmann modernised this aspect and used guns, modern cars, helicopters, etc. Other minor changes concern, for instance, the fact that Zeffirelli left out Romeo's love struggles with Rosaline whilst Luhrmann kept the part of his monologue in which he talks about his broken heart.

Regarding the plot, the most differences can be found in the last scenes of these two movie adaptations. In Zeffirelli's movie, Romeo has never bought a poison which served him as a suicide tool and he went straight to Juliet's tomb. Luhrmann kept the scene with the Apothecary, picturing him as a drug dealer. In the comb, Luhrmann decided to devote the whole set time to the young couple. He omitted the scenes with Balthasar, Tybalt's dead body and Friar Laurence has never shown up to save Juliet. On the contrary, Zeffirelli kept the scene with Friar Laurence and the scene in which Romeo speaks to the dead Tybalt.

Luhrmann also experimented with the death scene of the young couple. Juliet woke up when Romeo was still alive which created a more tensed and despaired atmosphere of this scene. Luhrmann, in this case, followed the original play and Juliet woke up from her sleep when Romeo was already dead.

The last change can be observed at the end of the movies. Zeffirelli made the end of the movie very pretentious, concentrating on the reconciliation of the two families. In Luhrmann's movie, this was not a case, he did not show any kind of reconciliation of the Montagues and the

Capulets and left their conflicts unresolved. In the end, both movies leave audience with completely different emotions. While Zeffirelli's reconciliation feels somewhat heart-warming and it shows that something good can result from such a tragedy, Luhrmann leaves his audience with unfulfilled hopes and the end of the movie evokes a feeling that the death of two young people was worthless.

A great difference is also an overall atmosphere of these two movies. The atmosphere in Zeffirelli's movie adaptation is more similar to the original play, romantic and tragic with occasional comedic elements. Watching Luhrmann's adaptation feels more like watching an action movie with a tragic ending.

The majority of the differences between these two movies comes from the fact that they were filmed almost three decades apart and the directors aimed at the different target audience. However, both directors managed to create iconic Shakespearean adaptations.

8 Resumé

Tato práce je věnována porovnání dvou filmových adaptací tragédie *Romeo a Julie* od Williama Shakespeara. Pro tyto účely byly vybrány filmy *Romeo and Juliet* od Franca Zeffirelliho (1968) a *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* od Baz Luhrmanna (1996). Teoretická část práce je zaměřena na teorii adaptací, historii filmových adaptací a životopis Williama Shakespeara. V téhle části se nachází také shrnutí hry *Romeo a Julie* a jsou vybrány klíčové scény, které slouží jako základ pro praktickou část práce. Praktická část se zabývá porovnáváním klíčových scén ve hře a ve filmových adaptacích. V závěru práce jsou shrnuty podobnosti a odlišnosti těchto dvou filmů.

9 Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to compare two movie adaptations of the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. For this purpose, two movies were chosen: *Romeo and Juliet* by Franco Zeffirelli (1968) and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann (1996). The theoretical part concentrates on the theory of adaptations, history of movie adaptations and the biography of William Shakespeare. The summary of the play *Romeo and Juliet* and the selected key scenes, which serves as a basis for the practical part of the thesis, can also be found here. The aim of the practical part is to compare the selected key scenes in the play and in the movie adaptations. In the conclusion of thesis, similarities and distinctions between these two movies are summarised.

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Movies :

Romeo and Juliet [film]. Directed by Franco Zeffirelli. Great Britain/Italy, 1968.

William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet [film]. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. USA, 1996.

10 Appendices

10.1 The main characters in pictures

Juliet (1968)



http://filmuforia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/RomeoJuliet_KEYIMAGE3-copy2.jpg

Juliet (1996)



https://www.eyeforfilm.co.uk/images/newsite/juliet_600.jpg

Romeo (1968)



<http://www.oscarchamps.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/1968-Romeo-and-Juliet-01.jpg>

Romeo (1996)



<https://evaszwarc.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/27651550.png?w=786&h=324&zoom=2>

Mercutio (1968)



<http://images5.fanpop.com/image/photos/28100000/Mercutio-R-J-1968-Film-1968-romeo-and-juliet-by-franco-zeffirelli-28120886-500-375.jpg>

Mercutio (1996)



https://romeoandjuliethbmg.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/3/1/20310245/1768765_orig.jpg

Friar Laurence (1968)



<http://www.oscarchamps.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/1968-Romeo-and-Juliet-08.jpg>

Friar Laurence (1996)



<https://talkingwithromeo.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/2/1/20212553/251413.jpg?342>

Nurse (1968)



<http://mssockettsenglishcourses.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/6/5/16657478/526944145.jpg>

Nurse (1996)



<http://cdn-media-ie.pearltrees.com/73/34/1a/73341a9aa6af64f2659dbbc92b89bc6c-l.jpg>

Tybalt (1968)



<http://images5.fanpop.com/image/photos/28100000/Tybalt-R-J-1968-Film-1968-romeo-and-juliet-by-franco-zeffirelli-28126716-500-375.jpg>

Tybalt (1996)



<https://assets.sutori.com/user-uploads/image/e81add0b-da23-4d98-abdb-cc5944f99990/d0b3250106e136616ce3dc78149b6088.jpeg>