

CHAPTER 3

*The Anguish of Youth in Film Adaptations of Romeo and Juliet**Delilah Bermudez Brataas*

In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, we are first introduced to Juliet in an exchange between Capulet and Paris. She remains unnamed as they negotiate her betrothal through language of youth and age. Capulet names himself and Paris as 'men so old as we' while Juliet is 'my child' and described as one so young she has 'not seen the change of fourteen years' (1.2.3–9). Paris then groups this 13-year-old with those 'younger than she' who 'are happy mothers made' (1.2.12). Between Paris's 'happy mothers' and Capulet's 'hopeful lady of my earth' (1.2.15), we hear only that this 'maid' must be 'made' into something, given we know nothing of her *except* her age. So far in the play, we have heard a prologue of ancient grudges, parental rage and dead children, have witnessed youths brawling and their chastisement by a weary, old Prince, and witnessed Romeo's lovesick brooding. Through these alternating scenes of age and youth, the play sets in motion the objective declared explicitly in the Prologue of old violence resolved only through the death of youth. Shakespeare rarely mentioned characters' ages and yet Juliet's youth is mentioned twice before we meet her, here in the exchange between Capulet and Paris, and later in a dialogue between Lady Capulet and the Nurse, who mention her age no less than four times in Act 1 scene 3. In Shakespeare's two main sources (Bandello's 1554 *Giuletta e Romeo* and Brooke's 1562 *Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet*), Juliet is 18 and 16. Moreover, the notion that women were mothers so young is untrue. There were exceptions, but the average marriage age in England amongst wealthy families was 25 for women and 27 for men; and even in Italy, the average was 20.¹ Juliet's youth would have been as surprising for its original audience as it remains for us. For Shakespeare, this was a deliberate detail: we must see her as not only young, but *too* young.

¹ Rachel Prusko details Shakespeare's 'startling departure' from his source material and social expectations in 'Youth and privacy in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Early Theatre* 19.1 (2016), 118.

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Widely recognized as the archetypal love story, *Romeo and Juliet* is arguably Shakespeare's most familiar play and has inspired many film adaptations. Despite its violence, it is also the Shakespearean play most consistently associated with youth culture. In its early film adaptations, it was not a tragic teen love story. Seasoned actors portrayed the lovers, as would have been the expectation for major film releases. The play inspired at least six silent films and, in 1916, was adapted into two full-length productions: one Juliet was 31, the other 25, and both Romeos were in their early 30s. The first major sound adaptation (by George Cukor in 1936) starred Norma Shearer at 34 and Leslie Howard at 43, while 54-year-old John Barrymore played Mercutio. Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* successfully established the visual expectations for Shakespearean adaptations to come. In his study of the influence of Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* on film genre, R. S. White writes that Cukor cast 'star quality actors' who, even at the time, 'were considered too old for the roles'.² He writes:

The film was made for audiences over thirty, the generation with enough money to go to the cinema during the Depression, and they would no doubt have been comforted to feel that age did not wither them nor custom stale their infinite variety since they were not precluded from identifying with youthful passion. But still, the fact that reviewers were critical demonstrated that Shakespeare's play turns on contrasts between the young characters and the older, the Friar and Nurse as much as the Montague and Capulet parents.³

Casting privileged audience age rather than authenticity and, as Allison Kellar argues, Shearer was widely considered 'enchanted' and 'timeless', both qualities that contributed to her playing Juliet. Far more concerning to the studios was the play's unruly passions leading to rebellion, sex, murder and suicide, which could have led to complaints over decency. MGM strove to 'mask these moral issues by casting older actors' and thereby 'ridding the lovers of unbridled sexual impulses, and downplaying [their] violent deaths' as it was hoped this would render the film 'both safe for younger audiences and sophisticated enough for culturally cultivated spectators'.⁴

² R. S. White, *Shakespeare's Cinema of Love: A Study in Genre and Influence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 186.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A. Kellar, 'The actor's aging body: Norma Shearer as MGM's Juliet', *Literature/Film Quarterly* 47.4 (2019), https://lfq.salisbury.edu/_issues/47_4/the_actors_aging_body_norma_shearer_as_mgms_juliet.html (accessed 16 January 2022).

Older actors can certainly portray teenagers, but the visual effect of adults in tragic circumstances differs from witnessing youths falling in love and dying. We expect that maturity will temper unruly passions, but anguished youths evoke a different response. Only after Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* would film adaptations consciously capitalize on youth to successfully adapt the tragedy on film. The consequence was an enduring connection of this play to youth and youth culture, emerging directly from the emotional effect the image of anguished youths generates. Zeffirelli's film was the first full-length *Romeo and Juliet* to use teenaged actors. Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting were 16 and 17. More importantly, they looked and acted as such. Consequently, teachers increasingly paired the play and film as it was considered a more accessible adaptation. Thereafter, young people took ownership of the play through the film, and it remains one of the most widely taught in secondary schools. Even younger children often first meet Shakespeare through this play. If a story line calls for a school play, for instance, it is almost always the balcony scene, referenced in countless forms across popular culture, in children's television and film, whether animated or live action, and across digital formats. So familiar is this reference that it is regularly parodied across children's media, including Disney/Pixar's *Toy Story 3* (dir. Lee Unkrich, 2010), which concludes with the toys performing the balcony scene. In ever more creative ways, the play's brutality is minimized or dismissed so that younger audiences can access the play's broad cultural capital. One intriguing example is J. Adams and A. Oliver's *Romeo & Juliet: A Counting Primer* (2011), a board book that teaches counting with snippets of the play's language. Void of violence, the book ensures that even babies recognize the play. From this early familiarity, children can grow into the play when, in adolescence, they may read the play and see the film to share in the teen anguish.

Zeffirelli's film was not aimed exclusively at young audiences as Cukor's was to adults, yet it inspired the casting of young actors in film adaptations, most notably with Baz Luhrmann's immensely popular *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and more recently with the 2013 *Romeo & Juliet* directed by Carlo Carlei and written and produced by Julian Fellowes (of *Downton Abbey* fame).⁵ Both films demonstrate a clear inheritance from Zeffirelli's film, and both were marketed to contemporary youth audiences. Casting Leonardo

⁵ The film's negative reviews worsened when, defending his total revision of Shakespeare's language, Fellowes declared that most people would be incapable of understanding the original: 'To see the original in its absolutely unchanged form, you require a kind of Shakespearean scholarship and you need to understand the language and analyse it and so on [. . .] there are plenty of perfectly intelligent people out there who have not been trained in Shakespeare's language choices.' M. Dargis, 'Oh, Hey,

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DiCaprio and Claire Danes as the stars, Luhrmann's modern setting celebrated contemporary youth culture through music and costuming coupled with a pastiche of stylized details corresponding to Shakespeare's text. Though dramatically different in style and execution, Luhrmann's film succeeded for similar reasons to Zeffirelli's and had a comparable cultural influence. The Fellowes *Romeo & Juliet*, for all that it consciously strove to reboot Zeffirelli's film with its young actors, Italian setting and sumptuous costuming, was critically, commercially and popularly unsuccessful. Because Fellowes' film failed to effectively connect youth and anguish, it failed in conveying the *Romeo and Juliet* enmeshed in youth culture that granted the two earlier films such success. The persistent association of the play to youth culture, I propose, has more to do with the affect generated by witnessing the anguish of youth, rather than casting young actors alone.

To understand anguish in these films, we must consider how it is defined and experienced. Arising ambiguously between unimaginable pain and knowable tragedy, anguish inhabits our common imagination. Whether we have experienced it or not, we know it when we see it. In the critical literature, anguish is equally ambiguous: simultaneously identifiable yet undefinable and, moreover, unspeakable. Associated with suffering, fear, passion, agony, pain, torment and despair, anguish is an extreme emotion that etymologically referred to the pain of strangling or choking,⁶ and thereby being at a loss for words, or 'having a lump in one's throat' – quite literally, unspeakable.⁷ Meanwhile, 'youth' similarly defines a liminal moment between childhood and adulthood and is associated with brashness, hastiness, uncertainty, inexperience, immaturity, rebellion and passion. Both terms are ambiguous yet overlap at the point of passion, are recognizable yet difficult to define. Early affect theorist Silvan Tomkins categorized anguish as one of nine innate affects, grouped under 'Distress-Anguish'. Yet even this rigid category suggests ambiguity in that it describes a response to excessive, inescapable levels of stimulation – the reaction for when it is 'all too much'.⁸ Perhaps it is more of an 'ugly' feeling (like disgust, paranoia, anxiety, passive aggression, depression and melancholy) which Sianne Ngai identifies as affects that provoke

Romeo, What's Up?', *The New York Times*, 11 October 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/movies/romeo-juliet-adapted-by-julian-fellowes.html> (accessed 16 January 2022).

⁶ Etymologically, 'anguish' is from Middle English *angwisse* and Old French *angoisse*, which come from the Latin *angustia* (narrowness) and *angere* (to press together), and the Greek *anghós* (to press tight, to strangle).

⁷ C. Soler, *Lacanian Affects: The Function of Affect in Lacan's Work*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6.

⁸ E. K. Sedgwick and A. Frank, *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 109–10.

critical thought when their emergence reveals an unexpectedly narrow-minded or uncomplicated part of ourselves.⁹ Or perhaps it is closer to what Lauren Berlant has identified as cruel optimism – impossible attachment to a problematic object the realization of which is either the impossibility of ‘sheer fantasy’ or too-possible toxicity.¹⁰

Anguish is as troublesome to define as it is to translate, appearing as both ‘*Angst*’ and ‘anxiety’ in equal measure. It proves slippery to follow in theory as well. Despite its negative associations, there is a positive aspect to anguish that stems from a purging, a defence against the unassailable or a shield against surprise. In contemporary usage, to be ‘affected’ means to be influenced by something, but what someone says or does to affect us can differ, much like a touch can be a caress or abuse. Colette Soler’s work is one of the few that considers anguish and affect specifically, tracing it in psychoanalytic theory from Freud to Lacan and its implications for what she terms the ‘enigmatic affects’: anguish and love. Soler begins by outlining Freud’s construction of *affekt*, which he used to ‘designate a state that is pleasant or unpleasant along the pleasure-unpleasure axis’ that is ‘linked to the manifestation of drives’ as it ambiguously applies *both* ‘to the body and to the subject’.¹¹ Soler then considers Lacan’s year-long seminar *L’Angoisse*¹² which defines the three essential characteristics of anguish: it obscures the threat, is experienced, and the subject cannot describe its nature, only its imminence.¹³ Felt in this imminence, anguish is always ‘almost’; for once you arrive, the threat is known. Freud and Lacan both approached anguish as an affect and an effect, but Freud also considered anguish a warning because it allows for preparation and creates a filter, or shield, to ward off dread. While Freud seated *Angst* in castration and its homologues, Lacan theorized that anguish allows us to close in on the object, making it, as Soler argues, ‘an exceptional affect’.¹⁴ Or, as Lacan writes, anguish is the only affect that ‘does not lie’ for it refers not to the signifier that leads us astray owing to its substitutions, but to its effect of subtracting something from the real.¹⁵ To define the undefinable with yet another metaphor, it is

⁹ S. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 1–38.

¹⁰ L. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 24.

¹¹ Soler, *Lacanian Affects*, 1.

¹² Lacan’s 1962–3 *Seminar X*, entitled *L’Angoisse*, is translated as ‘Anxiety’ in English, even in its most current translation. J.-A. Miller, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014). It may be that the affect Lacan discussed was closer to Freud’s use of *Angst*, but Lacan’s original does not use *anxiété*, or even *angst* in French, which is, indeed, *angoisse*. This troublesome definition (and translation) illustrates not only the term’s ambiguity, but how our negotiation of ‘anxiety’ is more comfortable than ‘anguish’.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18–19. ¹⁴ *Ibid.* ¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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the point at which the signifier ‘throws in the towel’.¹⁶ Gleaning from Soler’s study, I read these films through the aspect of anguish connected to defining the moment when subjects are faced with the unspeakable or the ungraspable, which demands certainty. Or, as Lacan writes, ‘what is at stake for the subject is to avoid what in anguish is sustained by a terrible certainty’ and that ‘to act is to tear certainty away from anguish’.¹⁷

For Shakespeare, anguish was equally ambiguous. It was related to melancholy and characterized through spleen, associated with adulthood, not youth, in classical humourism. Those ruled by spleen are constructed as brash and impulsive; they react with unruly emotion ‘in the face of which parley proves impossible’, that is, when words fail, as Nigel Wood explains in his reading of spleen in Shakespeare’s comedies.¹⁸ In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, spleen ‘gestures towards the very limits of human comprehension’, associated with both ‘the jaws of darkness’ and with a revelation of ‘heaven and earth’, a vision that proves untenable and even unbearable through which ‘the strength of emotion is registered’ despite the cause.¹⁹ Wood demonstrates how spleen was consistently metaphorized as lightning, an association that proves ‘particularly self-conscious’ in *Romeo and Juliet*.²⁰ When Benvolio considers the chain of events that leads to Mercutio’s death, he attributes it to Tybalt’s ‘unruly spleen’, which leads to a scene wherein ‘they go like lightning’, a threat Juliet introduces in Act 2 scene 2, fearing Romeo’s affection would prove ‘too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,/ Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be/ Ere one can say “It lightens”’ (2.2.118–20). Thus, spleen leads to the rush of emotion before action. The moment when enlightenment, or reality, is imminent:

This rush of emotion before action is an ingredient of the spleen and is part of the significantly punning *adnominatio* on light and vision true of both *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. And yet enlightenment – in its primary sense – is not promised by Shakespeare’s use of the term. A fit of the spleen exceeds exact description; in that it, anatomically, might aid a balanced constitution by draining off diseased impulses and humours, it is a corporeal safety valve, yet it also, figuratively, signifies a concentration of the excessive emotions (the atypical yet also impulsively natural), a threat to such balance.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷ V. Voruz, and B. Wolf (eds.), *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 172.

¹⁸ N. Wood, ‘Spleen in Shakespeare’s comedies’, in R. Meek and E. Sullivan (eds.), *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2015), 109.

¹⁹ Ibid. ²⁰ Ibid., 110 ²¹ Ibid., 110–11.

Spleen, too, is ambiguous, indicating anger as easily as amusement, but is always in keeping with a moment of unfolding, or action in the face of understanding. Youth is also a moment of unfolding; childhood leads to adulthood, just as ignorance leads to understanding. The moment alone recalls anguish, but youths in anguish amplify the affect, particularly on film. Romeo and Juliet are doubly anguished in that they embody youthfulness, even as society yearns for them to embody, in text and culture, 'star-crossed lovers' (Prologue, 6). Steven Shaviro has identified film and video as 'machines for generating affect' and notes that a critical aspect of film is its indissoluble link to emotion or feeling.²² Early film theorist Béla Balázs attributed this to the durational close-ups as the means by which film conveys affect: the close shot, for Balázs, 'is the "lyrical essence of the entire drama"', a technical device that locates the film image not within the linear time of narrative or epic, but in the temporality of affect and the dream'.²³ Film theory, supplemented by psychoanalytical work on affect, suggests that anguish in the mind affects the body of the spectator viewing the films through such 'intensified embodiment'.²⁴

Zeffirelli's film allowed us to witness teenagers in their embodied, youthful anguish, and later films followed. Much has been written about the influence of Zeffirelli's film, and of its speaking to the youth of the 1960s. The actors were cast as much for their newness as for their youthfulness, and the lack of acting experience comes across as impulsivity and awkwardness, which adds more to their performance than it detracts. They act how we expect teenagers to act. Luhrmann's adaptation follows suit in that much of Shakespeare's language remains within the contemporary setting, music, costuming and interpretation. A commercial and critical success, Luhrmann's film catapulted the careers of its young actors. Both were familiar to youth audiences, but the film's success brought both to the forefront of stardom. In Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's films, youth is conveyed through mannerisms and positioning, and through their often clumsy and frenetic interactions. Even in the most dramatic moments, their reactions emphasize their immaturity, and how adult characters interact with them only magnifies this. In one of Zeffirelli's scenes, the Nurse meets with Romeo to arrange the marriage and she pulls him down into her lap, cradling him like a baby. Later, when waiting at the church for their wedding, Romeo's behaviour with Juliet demonstrates this as much as

²² S. Shaviro. *Post-Cinematic Affect* (Winchester, UK: O-Books, 2010), 3.

²³ E. Carter (ed.) *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), xxix.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

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Friar Lawrence's treatment of them. Romeo stands twisting his hat as he waits, fidgeting with it like a toy until the Friar smacks his face repeatedly to demand his attention. When Juliet arrives, they run full speed towards each other, then kiss frantically with little regard to place or company. The Friar tries to stand between them but, undeterred, they reach around him to kiss. The scene seems more like a game of keep-away than a meeting of lovers preparing to wed. When they finally kneel before the altar, the two giggle and nudge each other like children at a school bench while the Friar attends to the ceremony. The effect is more playfulness than desire or solemnity.

The intensity and consistency of the close-ups, particularly extreme close-ups, make Zeffirelli's film almost constantly intimate. Their first meeting is shot in close-ups, their faces framed with fragments of party-goers as they catch glimpses of, and move progressively towards, each other. They appear individually in turn until they sneak around a large stone pillar. Romeo draws her hand to him and, in an extreme close-up of her eyes, we see her close them slowly to listen, and thus share the moment she falls in love. The scene suggests uncertainty and playfulness at once, a private space constructed out of words and touch that generates unity despite the crowd, and intimacy through close-ups that progress towards visual unity. So critical was this scene to setting this tone that Luhrmann's film closely mimics it. In his film, the lovers first see each other through a fish tank, then fleetingly through the crowd. Juliet keeps an eye out for Romeo until he surprises her by taking her hand from the other side of a similar stone pillar. Juliet is both amused and intrigued, and the moment ends in a close-up of the lovers visually united. The two then run away, playing a game not of keep-away but of hide-and-seek as Lady Capulet and Paris search for her. Luhrmann consciously followed much of the scenic structure and tone of Zeffirelli's film, yet Luhrmann's was answering to the youth of its generation as seamlessly as Zeffirelli's answered to its own.

The same scene in the Fellowes film mirrors Zeffirelli in setting and style, but the elements that generated youthful playfulness and resulted in intimacy in the earlier films are absent. Hailee Steinfeld and Douglas Booth are just as young – 16 and 21 – and mostly unknown, but are highly polished, rigidly choreographed in their mannerisms and positioning, thus less awkward teenagers than elegant models. Their first meeting is a choreographed dance with little playfulness, and the visual unity that might generate intimacy is diffused through the consistent framing of each actor individually. Their shared sonnet waits until they walk into a side room where they are alone in fact rather than through the tenuous anguish of privacy carved hastily from

the crowd. The shared sonnet alternates between shots of each actor from over the shoulder of the other, only fleetingly capturing both at once, and then only in a long or half shot. They recite the sonnet standing perfectly still, without sneaking around, while the intimacy of the close-ups is lost utterly to a half-lit hallway with marble floors and ornate statuary. Constant long shots emphasize the setting and costumes so that the actors blend in as beautiful artworks: still, posed, framed by candlelight, evoking perfection in symmetry and coherence with setting.

The wedding scene, which should authorize their unity, is where the *Fellowes* film definitively divides the lovers, endowing them with an unassailable maturity that contributes to keeping the viewer at a distance. The entire ceremony is performed in Latin, and the camera alternates between the characters individually and long shots of the Friar between them. There is no single close-up of the two alone, no shared glance, or exuberance over the weightiness of their marriage. The rituality and formality of the ceremony allows for a beautiful, perfectly symmetrical scene that made use of the church and altar, but fails to convey connection, or even joy, between the lovers. Luhrmann's film did not follow the Zeffirelli in the ways the *Fellowes* hoped to with its location and costuming, yet it succeeds because of a similar evocation of intimacy and playfulness. We enter a modern church heralded by gospel music with the first image a close-up of a young boy singing. Romeo waits at the altar in a slightly overlarge blue suit, and Juliet walks up the aisle alone, struggling to maintain her composure and avoid smiling. Dressed in a short, sleeveless dress, she has her hair swept up, with loose wisps framing her face. This is not the perfection in hair and costume of *Fellowes*, nor the desperation and playful spontaneity of Zeffirelli. We move with the lovers as they arrive at the altar, pause, gaze at each other, turn and then walk together away from the viewer. The Friar speaks fragments from 2.6 in this ceremony where 'violent delights have violent ends' (2.6.9) and, with these words, the two are held in the frame, with the Friar between them, until *they* pull together, hiding him from the shot, leaving us with an extreme close-up of their kiss. The overall effect is of young people play-acting a wedding. In contrast to *Fellowes*, Luhrmann's wedding scene is also constantly asymmetrical – something always draws the eye away, either the Nurse, dressed in red in the background as Juliet walks down the aisle, or the altar shown at an angle, or blurred. This is testament to the film's aesthetic of fragmented uncertainty, yet such details intensify an unfinished, and thus youthful, effect.

In the case of the play's most iconic scene, Zeffirelli revelled in the beauty of the balcony scene while Luhrmann handed it over to two kids tripping over each other and falling into a pool. Yet between these playful

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moments, Shakespeare's language pairs with the immanent intensity of anguished anticipation. We see a similar paralleling in the wedding night scenes where cloudy white bedsheets envelop the lovers, either strategically hiding their nudity, or used playfully until the lark sings to end their joy. Both films include brief nudity framed by billowing sheets, and two awkward Romeos struggling to get dressed as two laughing Juliets playfully pull their Romeos back into bed. Though different in style and setting, both capture passion paired with the anguish of imminent separation. Luhrmann's version is still more poignant as Juliet's room is the quintessential young girl's room: bright yellow walls festooned with stickers and dolls. Still more so because Romeo's departure is heralded by the Nurse bursting in, sending him crashing to the floor as he trips over his underwear and leaves out the window, half-dressed – a scene familiar to teen movies. In Fellowes's film, the wedding night is nearly static; there is no desperation, passionate embraces, nudity or humour. The wholly revised script not only abbreviates the moment dramatically but modernizes the dialogue to its detriment because even the language is not left to convey their desperation and intensity. Booth's sharp features, which lend themselves to the role of leading man, are the focus of the wedding night scene, while Steinfeld's features seem soft in contrast, frustrating the visual connection between the two lovers, which never materializes in dialogue. Nearly wordless, their actions are less spontaneous than designed for aesthetic affect: Romeo loosens Juliet's hair, and it tumbles down her back. From the same distance, Juliet removes Romeo's shirt, and the shot lingers not on her face, nor his, but on her hands resting on his sculpted chest. They appear either in a full shot or filtered through lace before the camera pans upward slowly to a painting of the heavens above her bed leaving their desire wholly off screen. When this Nurse walks in, Juliet is helping him dress rather than resisting his leaving. A scene so filled with the anguish of imminent separation in which Juliet fears that she will never see Romeo again is weakened further when they run outside, turning the intimate final goodbye, and Juliet's moment of foreboding, into a public moment of artistic beauty. Shot in the gardens of Villa Farnese in Caprarola, Italy, the two are nearly lost among the gardens, marble staircases, and fountains (Figure 1).

This becomes more jarring in the scene where passion must relinquish utterly to anguish. The tomb scene demonstrates the most concrete moment of anguish in the play, yet we must recall that anguish is imminence; it is knowing something is coming and being unable to give it voice. I would argue that Shakespeare's play gives us nothing but anguish by reminding us



Figure 1: Parting after the wedding night in Fellowes's 2013 *Romeo & Juliet*

constantly in language, and in the sense of urgency of their actions, that the lovers' youth is central. Throughout the play, the anguish of youth is expressed through imminence beginning with the Prologue, where we hear that the play will end in their inevitable deaths. But it continues: the lovers first seeing each other and eagerly waiting to meet as they seek each other at the party; the shared sonnet of the first meeting they hope will lead to a next time alone; the balcony scene that promises marriage; the marriage that promises sex, and the departure when Juliet sees Romeo 'as one dead in the bottom of a tomb' (3.5.56). All invoke the potential of anguish.

Of the three filmed tomb scenes, only Zeffirelli follows Shakespeare in that Romeo falls dead *before* Juliet awakens. After drinking the poison, he trembles, reaches for her hand and stutters 'thus with a kiss I die' (5.3.120). Shot almost entirely in extreme close-ups, his face is writhing in anguish and pain. We watch Romeo dying, then watch Friar Lawrence find Romeo dead, and then watch Juliet find him dead. This pacing extends the anguish so that we witness Romeo's death again and again. It also extends the experience of anguish through what we know is coming in Juliet's awakening. The moment she sees Romeo, her face denotes a surprising range of emotions. Moving around another stone pillar, she tilts her head slightly in an expression of youthful curiosity and refuses to leave, despite the trumpets suggesting their imminent discovery. In Zeffirelli's film, the truly anguished decision is hers alone. She sits on the floor, cradles Romeo's head and despairs, realizing his lips are still warm. Her wild hair covers his face, and she kisses him in a panic that recalls the wedding day scene. Accepting the happy dagger with a resolve that contrasts with Romeo's abject misery, the final shot lingers on their faces, splayed awkwardly, but visually united to the end.

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Luhrmann's tomb scene masterfully combines scenic design, close-ups, positioning and textual revision to highlight the anguish between the lovers and emphasize their youth. A grief-stricken Romeo has driven madly through Verona Beach and now shoots his way into the church. At one point, he wipes away sloppy tears and a runny nose with the back of his hand – a surprisingly childlike gesture for so heady a moment right before the critical decision that creates a *shared* moment of anguish between them. He crawls up to Juliet and drinks the poison. With precise timing, scenic shifting and fragmented extreme close-ups, the shot brings us in close to witness the moment when anguish appears in Romeo's eyes one second too late: Juliet's hand reaches up to Romeo, and he panics. Like his hand-wiping, his reaction in this moment is childlike, expressing both surprise and dread in an instant. He chokes and spits, raging against the realization of the truth and his face reddens, defining the unspeakable anguish that performs the word's original meaning. This is not the first time the lovers have been granted a final moment, but here it is wordless and anguished, unlike David Garrick's famous sixty-five-line discussion between the lovers before their death.²⁵ On awakening, Juliet cries out in a hopeless, choking sob that echoes across the empty church. Reciting no lines (original or added), she shoots herself. The gunshot's echo lingers as her cry did, and her isolation intensifies the anguish. We long to mitigate the crippling anguish of this moment through revision and adaptation, but Luhrmann wisely does not give into it completely. He grants us only the moment that has already passed, and thereby the anguish is sustained by two lovers whose youth justifies their impulsivity.

How did granting this extratextual moment in Luhrmann's film work so well to capture and extend the anguish of youth, but fail in Fellowes's? In his film, Romeo lies next to Juliet as well, then sits up and drinks. The camera pulls back into a symmetrical shot that makes use of the vanishing point of columns in the tomb. He drinks the poison, realizes Juliet is awake, then calmly speaks her name, kisses her and dies. There is no panic, no impulsive overreaction and, oddly, no sorrow. He is accepting, revealing nothing of his poisoning with either words or actions at being a moment too late. The viewer witnesses Juliet's awakening with an extreme close-up of her eyes before she discovers Romeo, who then dies quietly. Always moving individually has kept them distant throughout the film and, here, as she rises, they kiss in the shadows of a half shot. Like the shots that alternated between

²⁵ G. Woods, *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25.

their faces earlier, here they alternate positions moving away from each other. The Friar returns, and then the knowledge is taken from Juliet as he must explain what has happened, pulling the poison bottle from her hands, which turns the moment into authority over youth, rather than the anguish of youth. We leave the lovers as the camera pulls back to a perfectly balanced long shot. The ceiling mimics the heavens with stars and attendant cherubs, framed by candelabras, and Juliet cradling Romeo's body. This final image surprises in that it closely evokes the Pietà (Figure 2). There is a brief close-up of the dagger, then her face, but she does not fall; she slumps slightly but remains sitting up in a bloodless, peaceful death. When the Friar returns, he finds them perfectly posed with the light through the window casting a glory over them. Here is the anguish of authority – of the father and church – not youth. More importantly, it suggests peaceful acceptance transforming Juliet into the epitome of dutiful sacrifice as anguished youth becomes beatific Madonna. By endowing Juliet with divine solemnity and Romeo with stoic acceptance, they each perform religious obeisance evoking the peace that awaits after death rather than the anguish and imminence of their unspeakable reality.

Because it failed at youth, the moment failed at anguish. The Pietà, one of the most recognizable images of the Renaissance, captures lamentation and resignation with the assurance of peace, but it has never suggested anguish. Mary is stoic and peaceful, and never panicked. This final image, combined with the film's persistent association with statuary and painted heavens, leaves the viewer with only a static image of the lovers. We cannot ache for the loss of youth when we are asked to celebrate their unified ascension. After all, the Pietà invokes duty, or the very antithesis of anguish



Figure 2: Final tomb scene in Fellowes's 2013 *Romeo & Juliet*

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and youth. Perhaps this suggestion influenced Zeffirelli when he rejected the iconic Pietà in his later film with Olivia Hussey, whom he cast ten years later as Mary in *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977). There, Hussey's final Pietà, screaming in sorrow in the rain at the foot of the cross, captures maternal anguish, embodied in the later film as readily as youthful anguish is in *Romeo & Juliet*.

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