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Real Love Leaves No Survivors: Reassessing Love, *Liebestod*, and Nihilistic Love in Luhrman's *Romeo+Juliet*

Par Kwasu D. Tembo

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Résumé

Romeo et Juliette a déjà fait l'objet de nombreuses adaptations cinématographiques. Considéré dans sa globalité, le corpus témoigne de l'existence d'une multitude de moyens narratifs et esthétiques qui se sont appuyés sur la source shakespearienne afin d'en rendre l'histoire et les thèmes toujours aussi pertinents et attractifs aujourd'hui. Les adaptations de la pièce sont aussi nombreuses qu'elles sont diverses. [3] Tandis que l'amour interdit représente l'un des aspects de la nature sacrificielle de l'amour, c'est-à-dire ce qu'il en coûte sur les plans personnel, politique et culturel, ces adaptations escamotent la façon dont Shakespeare explore le déséquilibre radical que produit l'amour, les catastrophes qui en résultent et le coût *total* qu'il exige. Dans ce sens, cette étude s'intéresse à théoriser l'idée du coût *total* de l'amour tel que Shakespeare le présente : une volonté d'amour réel est aussi une volonté de mort. En se fondant sur l'adaptation de la pièce *Romeo+Juliet* (1996), l'auteur cherche à faire

émerger cette vision de l'amour que partage Baz Luhrmann, cinéaste et réalisateur aux choix singuliers.

Mots-Clés

Baz Luhrmann, Liebestod, Derrida, Žižek, mort, Romeo+Juliet, amour.

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Texte intégral

Introduction: "In Fair Verona Where We Lay Our Scene"

Critical attitudes toward Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* (1996) [4] are latently hostile at most, unnerved at least, typically drawing on the same language to describe the film's hyperkinesis, bricolage, and so-called "audacious" experimentation as being "un-Shakespearean". [5] I agree with Jim Welsh and Courtney Lehmann who contend that critics have erroneously "been quick to dismiss Luhrmann's

film as ‘postmodern tomfoolery’”, lamenting “losses in the name of Shakespearean textuality and Elizabethan history” thus overlooking the numerous aesthetic and hermeneutic achievements of Luhrmann's adaptation. [6] As a result, the critical reception of the film tends to rely too heavily on a narrow focus on the adaptation's aesthetic experimentalism at the expense of more productive engagements with Luhrmann's adaptation of key concepts of the play itself, most central of which is love. [7] As a result, this critical focus on the issues and debates surrounding the adaptation’s fidelity to an original tends to dismiss just how faithfully and nuanced the film engages with some of the play's most basic insights into the *nature* of love and its relationship with death. Instead, scholarly attention heretofore is consistently directed towards the manner in which Lurhmann achieves a sustained sense of intensity by employing a cinematographic style marked by brevity (particularly radical smash and jump cuts), sumptuous colour, detailed design, intense religious music superimposed with and also alongside popular music. Critics claim that combined, these features are aesthetically and technically reminiscent of the music video, an appellation typically made with both veiled and unveiled chagrin. [8] Formally, Luhrmann's techniques elicit a range of contradictory responses to the turbulent and protean aestheticization of Shakespeare's narrative. This is not to say that Luhrmann introduces, for example, humour where there was none in the source text. Instead, whether intended or not, his hypercinematic aesthetic approach highlights and exacerbates these latent features perhaps even to the point of surreality and/or absurdity. This point is picked up by Antony Johae who notes that the film has been disparaged as a broadly unfaithful adaptation whose failings are predicated on its formal aesthetics, these being typically regarded as an abject example of postmodern excess. [9] However, I contend that included in these aesthetic excesses, highly kinetic instability, speed, motion, and fractured time inherent in the film’s editing, music, and performances, is also an aesthetic representation of the very excessiveness of not only of youth, rivalry, and vendetta, but more fundamentally, the misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms of real love itself.

Across the critical corpus of the film, Luhrmann's proclivity for hyperreal freneticism and intertextual pastiche are constantly put under erasure. The *New York Times* Janet Maslin writes that “Baz Luhrmann [...] invents a whole new vocabulary [...] [that] calls for pink hair, screaming billboards, tabloid television stories, [and] music-video editing.” [10] Similarly, Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* remarks that “the film reworks Shakespeare in a frenzy of jump cuts that makes most rock videos look like MTV on Midol.” [11] This latently negative sentiment is expressed by traditional Shakespearean scholars as well. For example, Samuel Crowl states that Luhrmann’s film’s “young stars, coupled with its relentless, in-your-face MTV visual style and soundtrack, made its treatment of Shakespeare's tale immediately and excitingly available to its audience.” [12] Another aspect of the film, though much maligned, but one that does much work in transposing Shakespeare into the 90s, is its soundtrack. With tracks like Garbage's “Crush”, Gavin Friday's “Angle”, Des'ree's “I'm Kissing You”, The Cardigan's “Lovefool”, One Inch Punch's “Pretty Piece of Flesh”, Quindon Tarver's “Everybody's Free (To Feel Good)”, and Radiohead's melancholic “Talk Show Host”, the film's music signifies youth in full bloom, replete with anger, humour, vitality, and mistakes. Not all scholars agree. For example, Douglas Brode notes that “some [of the adaptation's] sequences play like extended MTV rock videos [or] Hip-hop music played loudly and incessantly.” [13] There are other scholars however who take the analysis of the film along more productive lines of inquiry, offering more varied and critically diverse reactions to the film. [14]

While scholarship on *William Shakespeare’s Romeo+Juliet* is dominated by adaptation analysis, little to no attention is paid to the ways in which the auteur frames the relationship between love and death in the film. In response to this critical gap, the purpose of this essay is to illustrate that the link between love and death is at once inextricable and essential to the play, as well as the most aesthetically resonant aspects of Luhrmann's adaptation. In so doing, this paper seeks to elaborate on Nicholas Radel's suggestion that through his adaptation, “Luhrmann participates in a tradition of adaptations that calls into question those sentimental notions

about the value of love and human connection in overcoming social boundaries that seem to be fundamental to the reception *of Romeo and Juliet* since at least the 18th century." [15] Following on from the excursus on prevailing critical attitudes to Luhrmann's adaptation detailed above, this chapter will move on to discuss the theme of love-death or *Liebestod* in the play. This section will mainly offer a theorization of love that rejects the received notion that love is in many ways anti-death, that is, a salubrious, redemptive, and restorative force. Finally, this paper will explore how the theme of love-death manifests as the central theme of the play by offering close reading of a selection of scenes in Luhrmann's adaptation.

"Two Star Cross'd Lover Take Their Life": On Shakespeare, Luhrmann, Romeo and Juliet

Romeo (played by Leonardo DiCaprio in Luhrmann's adaptation) and Juliet (played by Claire Danes) are part of a genealogy of teenaged characters appearing across Shakespeare's œuvre. Along with Prince Hal of the second tetralogy, Anne Page of *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* Miranda of *The Tempest,* Marina of *Pericles,* and Perdita of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare offers explorations of youth in relation to authority, instruction, fate, and emotion. In these examples, Shakespeare offers new ways of thinking about youth, showing it as self-determined and, as Rachel Prusko rightly notes, "engaging in self-definition outside the usual narratives established in conduct literature and morality plays." [16] Rachel Prusko takes the concepts of youth and privacy as most important in *Romeo and Juliet* with the claim that the play's most incisive achievement is its ability to render realistically the interior worlds – replete with the wild fluxes of emotion and self-identity – of its youths. "Shakespeare", states Rachel Prusko, "raises the unsettling possibility of a private adolescent self, a particular kind of subjectivity likely yet unexplored in early modern England; in so doing he

exploits his culture's growing unease with the idea of inner, hidden selves and insinuates unstable ideas of youth into a culture already worried about secret subjectivities." [17] In these interstitial zones, the "guarded interiority of these young characters [establishes] pockets of private space in which they constitute themselves as subjects", a trace of which is the peculiarity of their language as lovers. [18] I argue that beneath the interiority of a shared language is a far more radical substrate operating at the core of the play, namely, a latent understanding and acceptance that real love is, at its most fundamental, a will to die.

How are we to understand not only the nature of love itself in the play, but Luhrmann's aesthetic and narrative handling of the phenomena in his adaptation? Is the audience to view their budding, albeit extremely intense, love cynically, fatalistically, or nostalgically? Is the audience to view the rebellious authenticity of the lovers' will toward one another as pragmatically impossible, doomed to tragedy and mishap, or as a quaint, even pastoral, reminiscence of how we *think* we *used* to or are *supposed* to love? A helpful place to start seeking an answer is to first recognize the deceptively simple fact that love is a phenomenon reified or embodied by lovers. Starting with Romeo, James Loehlin states that "Luhrmann conceived Romeo in terms of the teen film archetype" quoting the director as suggesting that "in a way, [Romeo] was the original rebel without a cause, the first James Dean. He is someone who is a young rebel in love with the idea of love itself." [19] It is here where I agree most with Loehlin's assessment of the underlying approach to love itself in Luhrmann's adaptation: "Luhrmann's film distances itself from the teen film tradition by virtue of the qualities that mark it as a postmodern production: an aggressively fragmented aesthetic, a highly self-conscious, ironic intertextuality and a cynical fatalism tinged with nostalgia." [20] What is of chief interest to this chapter's exploration of the nature of love and its relation with death pertains to the subtle, perhaps even unconscious, gesture James Loehlin makes through his reference to cynicism and fatalism. It is an important move which I argue necessarily brings the phenomena of love and death into close orbit with one another. James

Loehlin further argues that many of Luhrmann's adaptive decisions allow a greater focus on the various issues and debates concerning love in the play:

> [T]he parodic comedy [interspersed throughout the film] frees the young actors from expectations of grand and lyrical passion. Having invoked and discarded the traditional trappings of the famous love duet, Luhrmann can film an appealing scene about two wide-eyed kids in a swimming-pool. Whispering and kissing in a tight close-up, Danes and DiCaprio are convincingly love-struck, and the awkwardness and danger of their situation excuse the low-key approach to the poetry. They communicate their desire not with their words but with their eyes which appear huge and shining in the surreal light from the pool. [21]

For me, the latent suggestion here, particularly on the point of love and its relationship with danger, is the notion that Luhrmann's adaptive decisions regarding meter, elocution, accent, stress and all manner of other expected formalities in his rendition paradoxically offer more of the *substance* of the play with less of its *material*. In this regard, I agree with James Loehlin in suggesting that in streamlining certain aspects of the play, Luhrmann's leads are able to offer more direct performances that more greatly embody not only the joy, pain, confusion, and rebelliousness of young love, but its deathly conviction.

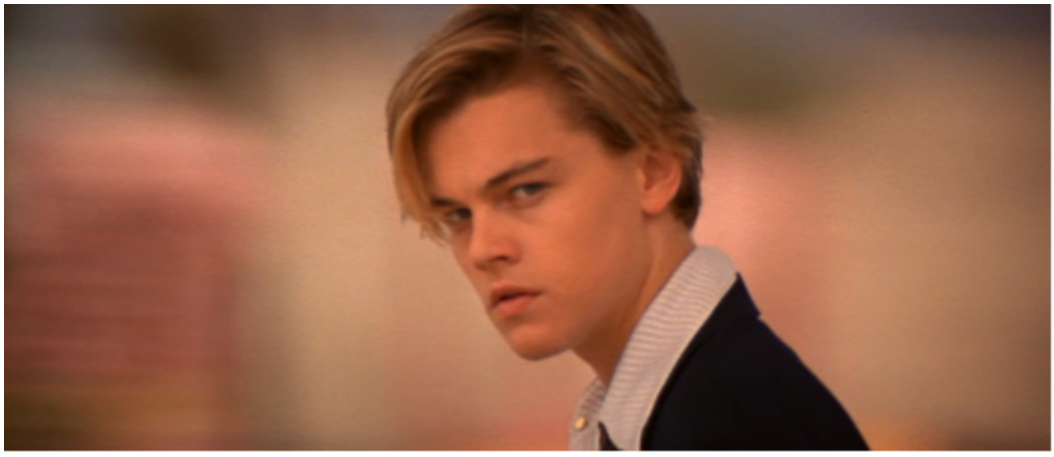
The importance of the couple's psycho-emotional interiority is shared by Paul Kottman who notes that while "at odds with parents and community, Romeo and Juliet seek to inhabit spaces –physical, psychological, and linguistic– outside the world they know: they try to articulate a private teenaged subjectivity." [22] As the narrative consistently places the two lovers in tension with death, concealing them in private spaces in which they (or sometimes the Nurse or the Friar) inhabit alone, this space also necessarily facilitates the couple's shared will to die. Under the aegis of their love, Romeo and Juliet internalize both the joy and melancholy of their love. They do not resolve to execute any and all who stand in the way thereof or seek out a decisive escape from Verona and the stalemate of its socio-politically and culturally governing inter-familial conflicts. Instead,

their own annihilation over and above anyone else in the play is taken as the only meaningful escape from their troubles. In this way, the theme of death is central. As Kottman notes:

> [M]oving toward self-realization, the young characters define themselves as lovers. In their union, Romeo and Juliet surpass a simple rebellion against parents and social mores, undertaking a process of becoming in which they rely on one another. Indeed, the play is full of moments where just such a self-recognition is made possible, moments where the young characters, 'bescreened in night' (2.1.93), 'untalked of and unseen' (3.2.5-7), try to make sense of who they are becoming. Private spaces in *Romeo* are disruptive not due to their sometimes domestic, feminized quality (after all, Juliet's private scenes with her mother do nothing to challenge the masculinist imperative that drives Verona), but in the sense that they disorder the stable subjectivity the play otherwise attributes to its young characters. [23]

In view of Kottman's insights, I contend that Romeo and Juliet's love should be understood as a "struggle [to their respective deaths] for freedom and self-realization." [24] Luhrmann interestingly emphasizes youthful interiority through omission, restructuring, and overlaying. Consider Romeo's monologue from 1.1 in which Romeo offers all the declensions of love and hate formulated as a seemingly inexhaustible list of opposites brought together through metaphor:

> Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
> O anything of nothing first create!
> O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
> Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
> Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
>
> Still-waking sleep that is not what it is!
> This love feel I, that feel no love in this. (1.1.181-187) [25]



The Introduction of Romeo

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Luhrmann edits this entire passage in such a way that presents it as a soliloquy in the form of a diary entry read in the interiority of Romeo's mind which the audience hears while Romeo enters into frame in slow motion and looks directly into the lens. The effect is stark. In reframing the delivery of these lines, Luhrmann turns their latent meaning into the chief content of Romeo's internal space, the substance of the interiority of his thoughts and feelings. His melancholic isolation, away from light in his chamber in which Romeo makes an artificial night is shown to be an effect of love's uncertainty, its oscillation between redemption and damnation (1.1.140-141;145).

The Inundation of Real Love

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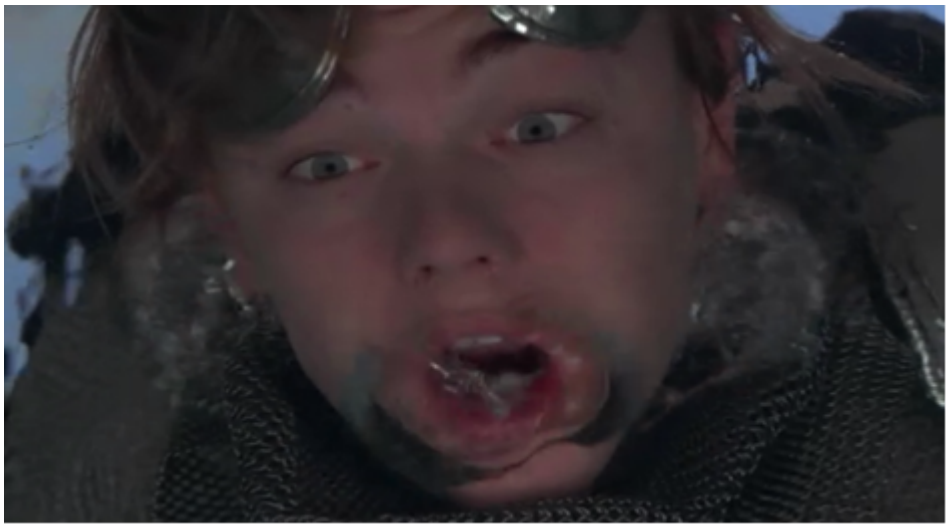
Another space that symbolizes the link between intimacy and death that Luhrmann highlights in his adaption is the space of the swimming pool beneath Juliet's balcony. Numerous scholars have commented on the role, significance, and symbolism of water in Luhrmann's adaptation. One of two such examples comes from Elise Walker who suggests that the water imagery emphasizes “the idealism of [Romeo and Juliet's] relationship existing within a chaotic, corrupt, and frightening context”, whereas Phillipa Hawker suggests that the swimming-pool scene captures a more “elemental quality. Water envelops and protects the pair, it provides a kind of refuge for them, a (literally) fluid insulating layer between them and the world.” [26]



Romeo Seeks Sobriety but Finds Further Inundation in Love

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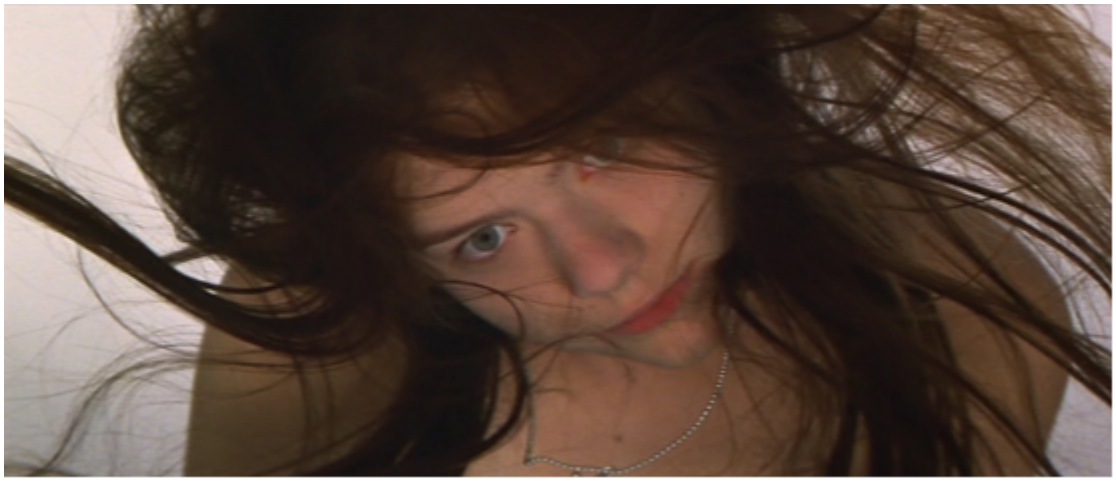

Juliet Seeks Escape in Water

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Real Love is Water

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While I find merit and insight in these interpretations of water, I propose an alternative interpretation that rests on the question of the nature of love in the film. Like Antony Johae, I do not regard the shots in which water appears – Romeo submerging his face in a basin full of water at the Capulet's ball in an attempt to sober up, Juliet doing the same to drown out the incessant nagging of Lady Capulet, or the lovers seeing each other for the first time through the distorting frame of an enormous aquarium – as a romantic symbol “foreshadowing a love that is deep'”, but rather as “a filmic trope presaging ultimate dissolution.” [27] In this way, my reading

resonates with both Johae's and Lehmann's, the latter of which notes that "as the presence of water steadily increases in Luhrmann's film [...] the more we realize that what these images share is not only escape but also *enclosure.*" [28] As such, "love expressed in or through water, while it seems to offer the possibility of escape from the world, in reality leads to a drowning in it." [29]

After avoiding detection from the Capulet guards, the couple falls into the pool. Lurhmann frames the underwater shot from eye-level, in medium close-up. The profile shot of the submerged lovers kissing, in conjunction with the languid score, captures the couple's fluid movements which are rendered in slow motion. The effect here is paradoxical in that on the one hand, the viewer is made all the more aware of the couples need for air, their need to separate, and the practical danger of their continued union. On the other hand, the seeming magic of their love, its deep insularity, impels the viewer to wish for it to go on uninterrupted *ad infinitum.* [30] In this way, while the scene registers the pseudo-mystical *suspension* of love – be it considered a suspension from reason, pain, worry, and/or loneliness – it also portrays love as an inundation. The suggestion here, in other words, is that falling in love is tantamount to drowning. Loehlin similarly picks up on this symbolic paradox in terms of love representing water by noting that:

> [while] Luhrmann's use of water helps remove the lovers from the noisy and frenetic world of Verona Beach, sheltering their story in a silent element that seems outside of time [,] Luhrmann's aquatic insulation of the lovers leans toward sentimentality, but it is actually part of the film's fatalism. Romeo and Juliet's love literally has no place in this world." [31]

Ostensibly, James Loehlin is referring to the contraband nature of their love, being forbidden by the patriarchs of both their great Houses. However, I suggest that Loehlin's assessment of the *nature* of their love here is ultimately too vague and too readily relies on undefined albeit unspokenly accepted ideas concerning secret love. In contrast to Loehlin, I argue that the prohibition against Romeo and Juliet's love is secondary to its own self-destructive nature. What Luhrmann's use of water as a framing

device in this scene shows is, indeed, the suspension, the sequestration, the insulation, and escapism of the lovers. However, it also importantly shows that the lovers are inundated, overwhelmed, and indeed about to drown in their love. In a tremendously subtle and seemingly antithetical way, Luhrmann reframes the Romantic Hollywood image of a passionate underwater kiss as a symbol of secret and reckless love into one that simultaneously intimates the danger and claustrophobia of passionate love. Here, the lovers do not share their lives as symbolized by the breath that passes between them through a submerged kiss. In a deluge of love as total as Romeo and Juliet's, there can be no reserve. It consumes its own breath until it kills both lovers who die breathless in one another's arms. In the last instance, Luhrmann's underwater scene latently registers the idea that Romeo and Juliet's love in one willing to pursue itself at the risk of its own death.

The theme of the inextricability of love and death highlighted in the metaphorical opposites Romeo enumerates is counterbalanced by Friar Lawrence's rumination on the paradoxes of nature itself in 2.3 when he states:

> The Earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;
> What is her burying grave, that is her womb;
> And from her womb children of divers kind
> We sucking on her natural bosom find,
> Many for many virtues excellent,
> None but for some, and yet all different.
> O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
> In plants, herbs, stones, and their *true* qualities.
> For naught so vile that on the Earth doth live
> But to the Earth some special good doth give;
> Nor aught so good but, strained from that fair use,
> Revolts form *true* birth, *stumbling* on abuse.
> Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
> And vice sometimes by action dignified.

> Within the infant rind of this weak flower
> Poison hath residence and medicine power. (2.3.9-24; emphasis mine).

In this meditation on the clash of opposites, the underlying theme of love-death/death-love concatenates the medicinal and the poisonous, love and death, as not being one superior to the other, but rather one and the same, and therefore inextricable from one another. Here, my views regarding the association between love and death in the play "does not differ significantly from what Shakespeare, through the voice of Romeo, may be saying about the drug-like characteristics of love" which "Lurhmann has reinforced [...] semiotically by having Romeo take a *purple heart*, thus signifying a liaison between love and drug." [32] In fact, Antony Johae goes on to draw together the issues and debates concerning love-as-drug and death-as-overdose noting that:

> [I]n both, the effect of a drug and the affect of love are subject to deformation [...] and in the larger plan of the movie, this is precisely what happens to Romeo. He goes to the Capulets' party stoned on ecstasy ('preserving sweet'), falls 'madly' in love, and ultimately commits suicide by taking a deadly poison ('choking gall'), which in a drug-taking culture could be construed as an overdose. [33]

The sense of confusion and entrapment brought about by being caught between the antipodes of the absolutely desirable (love) and the absolute end of desire (death) also appears in Juliet's meditations and observations of her situation and fate. In 1.5, Juliet declares that she "must love a loathed enemy" (1.5.155), one of numerous instances in the play where the delineation between love and hate is radically indeterminate. Through Danes's delivery of this line, its underlying observation registers simultaneously as a statement of resignation, as well as an aspiration to self-determination. In the above quote is contained the latent question whether or not love itself is the loathed enemy; or, moreover, is it that love *requires* a loathed enemy to *be in principium*? Luhrmann spends much of his aesthetic, particularly visual and editorial vocabulary, establishing and emphasizing this indeterminacy. For example, he not only cuts Capulet's

(Paul Sorvino) admonition of Tybalt (John Leguizamo) for seeking satisfaction against Romeo for gate-crashing their revelry. He then reorders much of the action at the Capulet ball, specifically Tybalt's "this intrusion shall, now seeming sweet, convert to bitt'rest gall" (1.5.102-103) aside. Instead of coming *before* Romeo and Juliet meet, Tybalt's lines come *after* Juliet's "loathed enemy" monologue, each set of lines presented as visually and thematically similar in their portentousness. Juliet's lines are uttered on the heights of her balcony, symbolizing the elevated psycho-emotional state brought about by the paradoxical sensation of falling (a phrase which always-also contains connotations of stumbling/failing) in love. Danes plays the scene in a way that suggests that Juliet simultaneously acquiesces to the sensation of falling in love while also not allowing said affect to fully cloud her reason. In this early stage of their relationship, she is still circumspect of the dangers of her feelings, and the presence of Romeo, a Montague, in her life. Here, Juliet is indeed aware of the potential for failure love produces. Tybalt, moreover, is keenly aware of the same. However, in Leguizamo's jaw-clenched delivery of the lines, hidden alone near a large iron gate enclosing a tall hedge smoking a cigarette, Luhrmann's emphasizes the fact that for Tybalt, inter-family love produces nothing but an opportunity for death.

Juliet's Wings Ruffle in the Winds of Love

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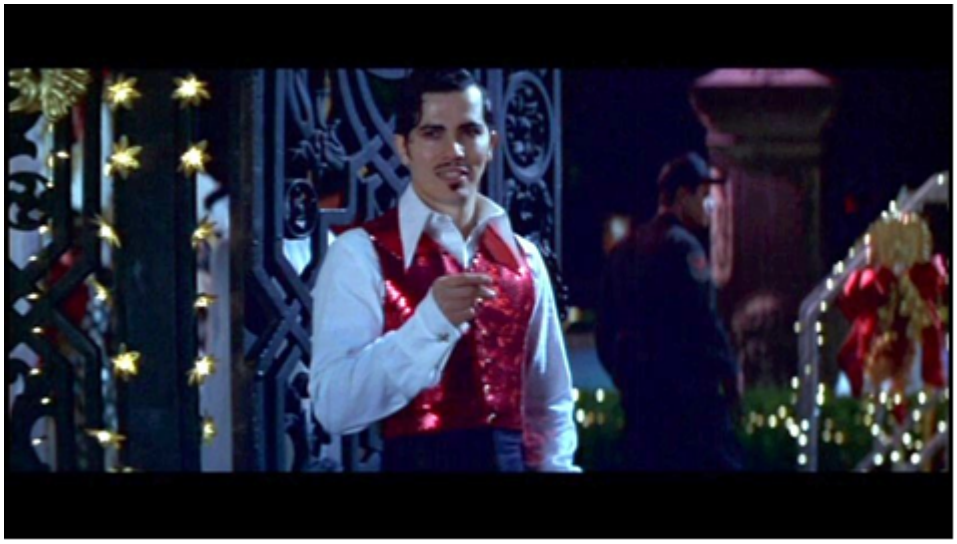

Love, for Tybalt, is as Bitt'rest Gall

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The same concatenation of love and death is rife in Romeo's lines. For example, "but though love me, let them find me here. My life were better ended by their hate than death prorogued, wanting of thy love" (2.2.81-83). The sentiment behind this and numerous other fundamentally extreme professions or indeed profusions of love suggest that love can only be truly found in death, or that there can be no true love without death. There are other notable examples of this thematic merger of love and death shared by the couple. "O God, I have an ill-divining soul!/ Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low, as one dead in the bottom of a tomb", laments Juliet to which Romeo responds "And trust me, love, in my eye so do you./ Dry sorrow drinks our blood" (3.5.54-56; 58-59). With its heavy and saturnine foreshadowing, this moribund exchange between the lovers casts a pall over their first farewell at the end of the scene. Similarly portending an ill fate is Lady Capulet's (played by Diane Venora) declaration in the same act and scene when she states "I would the fool were married to her grave" (3.5.145). [34] Juliet, in turn, evokes a similar image in the same act and scene where she argues with Lady Capulet regarding her betrothal to Paris (played by Paul Rudd). Her tone is scathing when she states "make the bridal bed in that dim monument where Tybalt lies" (3.5.213). The remit of this paper does not allow an exhaustive catalogue of such instances of the

merger of love and death in the play. However, the sheer number would suggest that love-death is a central conceit of the narrative.

Love-in-Death: Liebestod in *Romeo and Juliet*

It is common to find that many scholars and readers more broadly consider love in *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* as a phenomenon that represents transgression; the ultimate rebellion against the socio-political and cultural antagonisms of Verona predicated on familial loyalties. In this sense, love is construed as a will to life outside of the circuitous violence that pervades all interactions in Verona. However, love is precisely a will to death in the play. Not a passive acquiescence to death, but an active pursuit of death. Here, love and death are inextricable in Shakespeare's handling of the mercurial albeit devastating power of love. In short, I suggest that what humanists would hold to be love's redemptive power is a gross oversimplification of a more radical connotation that recurs constantly in the play; namely, the real power of love is death.

While the theme of love-death's literary significance in the Western cannon has been analysed in depth, its significance in the play, and in Luhrmann's adaptation more specifically is often taken as given and therefore for granted. [35] *Liebestod*, a German word meaning 'love-death', originally refers to a piece played during the tragic-romantic finale of Richard Wagner's 1859 opera *Tristan und Isolde*. Like the denouement of Romeo and Juliet's lives at the apotheosis of their love, Wagner's piece frames the climax of the opera which sees Isolde (Wagner's Juliet) sing a lamentation over Tristan's (Wagner's Romeo) corpse. Used literarily, however, *Liebestod* typically refers to the dramatic theme of eroticized death, whereby 'love death' defines two lovers who consummate their love in or after death. In either usage, love is depicted not only as fundamentally tragic, but fundamentally inextricable from death. Examples of pairs marked by

Liebestod in Western literature and film include but are not limited to Pyramus and Thisbe in Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* (8 AD), Romeo and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Bonnie and Clyde in Arthur Penn's eponymous novel (1967), Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist in Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), Oliver Barrett and Jenny Cavilleri in Arthur Hiller's *Love Story* (1970), and Satine and Christian in Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001).

Julie Sanders argues that Wagner's treatment of the Tristan and Isolde myth has embedded itself into Western cultural consciousness, becoming an archetypal construct, image, or shorthand for tragic love. [36] However, Jill Levenson provides an etymological insight into the term *Liebestod* and, more importantly for the purposes of this analysis, the centrality of the paradoxical amalgam of love and death therein:

> [A]lthough the meaning of this term shifts – love-in-death, death-in-love, love's death – it refers to a specific narrative format and psychological event. By linking passion with death the *Liebestod* myth sets the limits of desire at the highly charged point where lovers feel that they have transcended ordinary human experience, driven to union which means dissolution of self, a permanent metamorphosis. [37]

Important to note here is that Jill Levenson draws attention to the inherent paradoxes of love, or depending on one's own view and experiences, the impossibility of love, which to me are central to Shakespeare's framing of the narrative *in toto*.

Some scholars have far more specific physical parameters required for the embodiment of *Liebestod* to hold true. For example, according to Ellis Dye, "for a love-death to count as a *Liebestod* [...] two lovers must die at the same time and in each other's arms, as do [among others] Romeo and Juliet [...] Love and death must coincide and, ideally, be seen as identical." [38] In this sense, "*Liebestod* is an example of the paradox of unity in duality, one and double, often referred to as a *coincidentia oppositorum.*" [39] The ambiguities inherent to the dramatic function of

Liebestod as love-in-death, necessarily draw out a question Molly Mahood raises:

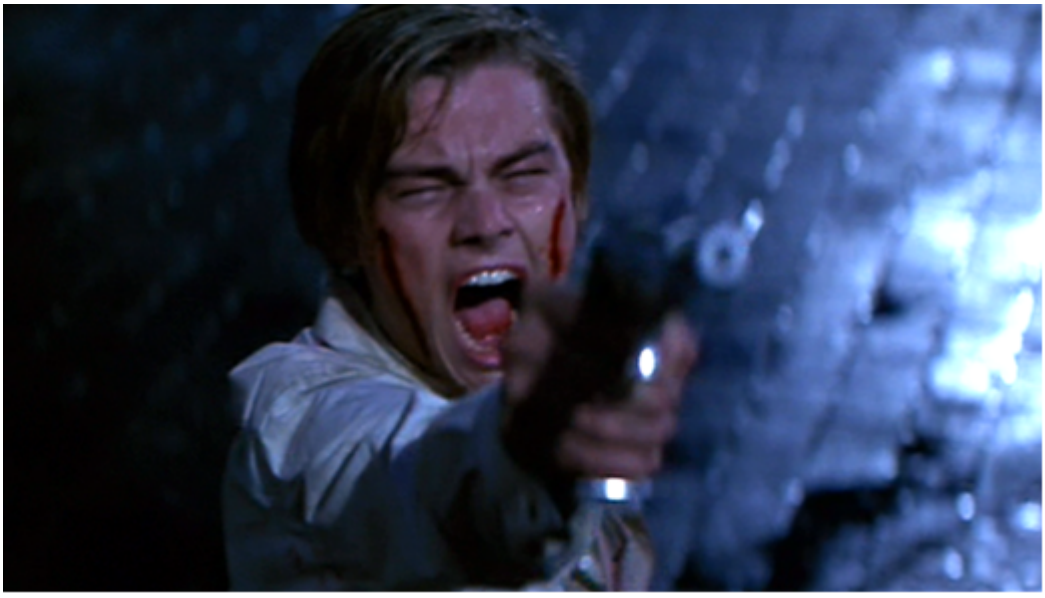
> [I]s [*Liebestod*'s] ending frustration or fulfilment? Does Death choose the lovers, or do they elect to die? This question emerges from the language of the play itself and thus differs from the conventional superimposed problem: is *Romeo and Juliet* a tragedy of Character or of Fate? [40]

I argue that one comes nearer defining the play's experience by stressing the *Liebestod* of the ending and suggesting that "the love of Romeo and Juliet is the tragic passion that seeks its own destruction." [41] For me, the situation is far more radical in that while M. Mahood latently refers to and sees *Liebestod* as a dialectic, uncertain of its activity or passivity, I see its paradoxical synthesis as being an always-already present aspect of real love's simultaneous emptiness and fullness. Throughout the play, it is clear that there cannot be any love for the lovers without their death.

How is this aestheticization of *Liebestod*, that is the intensity of the idea and practice of loving-to-death, realized in Luhrmann's adaptation? Luhrmann effectively uses late 90s Southern California rave, catholic 'cholo' (Capulets), and punk cultures (Montagues) as well as subcultures to introduce an ardent sense of intensity, opposition, tension, antagonism, in every shot. From the racial antagonisms between the Anglo-Saxon Montagues and the Mexican Capulets, to the sexual tensions between the dis-oriented Mercutio (Harold Perrineau) and the overt heteronormativity of Romeo, Luhrmann sets up the young lover's relationship as fraught within the context of neo-Verona. It requires ingenuity, secrecy, and assistance (from the Friar and the Nurse) to come to fruition. From Romeo's rash temper in murdering Tybalt in vengeance for Mercutio in 3.1, to stealing into the Capulet compound at night in 2.2, to the simple albeit effective scene in which Romeo falls after taking council with Friar Lawrence in 2.4, Luhrmann draws out the raw emotion, beauty, impatience, and tragedy of young love through DiCaprio and Danes's respective performances.

Longing, Death, and the Intensity of Real Love

Crédits : 20th Century Fox



Death Follows Love

Crédits : 20th Century Fox

Everything about their love is framed as extremely kinetic – infused with an ever-present volatility, danger, excrescence, rage, and power that always-

already threatens to spill over. In contrast, all the slow moments in the film, for example, when Romeo realizes Juliet is a Capulet, set against Armstrong's deeply evocative score, are moments laden with ill portents and contrast, which is also captured in lines such as Juliet's declaration that "my only love sprung from my only hate!" upon discovering Romeo is a Montague at the Capulet ball (1.5.5-152). Earlier in the action, Romeo portends "some consequence yet hanging in the stars" that will lead to "some vile forfeit of untimely death" (1.4.114-115,118). Luhrmann frames this foreshadowing dramatically. DiCaprio speaks his lines, gaze turned upward to the night whose darkness is punctuated by the bright but brief bursts of colour from fireworks as if to suggest that neither the fates, the stars, nor the moon to which he shall refer to in the next Act can be relied upon to offer a clear path through the inconstant turbulence of love, nor can they stave off the encroachment of death-in-love. In Luhrmann's adaptation, this irreconcilable disjunct is precisely the dilemma Juliet is keenly aware of following the Capulet ball (Romeo only shows a brief, albeit devastating recognition of this disjunct during the same scene). While Juliet is whisked away by the Nurse who recognizes the danger in Juliet's burgeoning infatuation with the young Montague, Luhrmann highlights the weight of the realization of who each individual is in this moment, using slow motion and Armstrong's sombre strings arrangements to register the latent tragedy of their first meeting. Romeo declares "Is she a Capulet?" (1.4.140).

My assessment of love-in-death in *William Shakespeare's Rome + Juliet* can be read as a reaction against descriptions of *Liebestod* offered by critics such as Harry Levin who describes *Liebestod* as follows:

> [T]he *leitmotif* of the *Liebestod*, the myth of the tryst in the tomb. This attraction of ultimate opposites – which is succinctly implicit in the Elizabethan ambiguity of the verb *to die* – is generalized when the Friar rhymes 'womb' with 'tomb', and particularized when Romeo hails the latter place as 'thou womb of death.'" [42]

I contend that the myth, leitmotif, or concept of *Liebestod* as described by Levin is too Romantic to register the immediacy and seeming inescapability of what it describes. This is why I think the marginal or substrate term functioning latently to *Liebestod* is necrophilia. While the latter term contains the prefix (*Liebe*) of the former in its own suffix (-*philia*), I am not here referring to Romeo and Juliet as necrophiliacs in a literal sense of sexual intercourse with or attraction to/excitation towards or by corpses. Instead, referring to their love as necrophilic in essence gestures to the immediacy, psychological and emotional flux, and inescapability of libidinal forces acting upon them, as well as the permanence, surety, and inviolability of death they seek in and for their love.

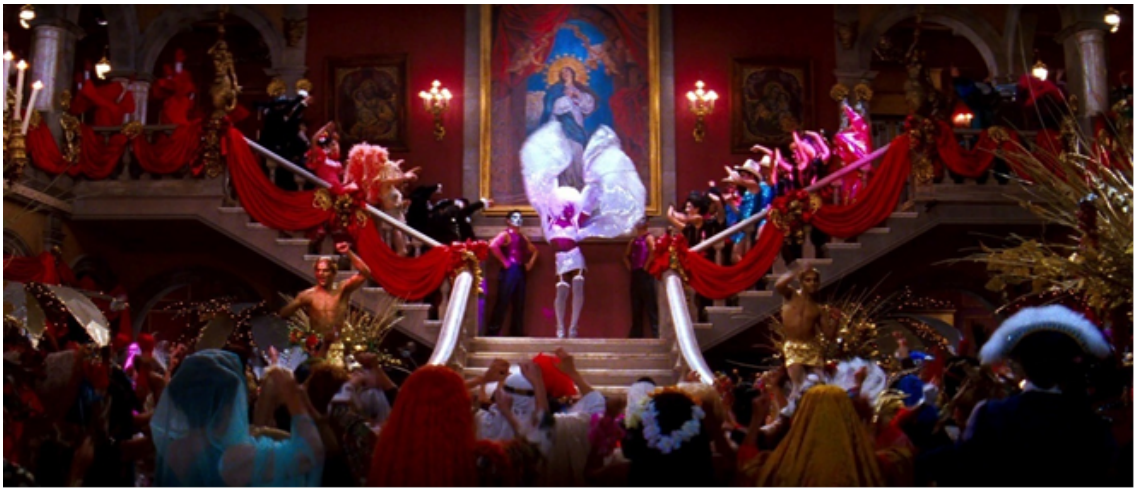
Luhrmann draws attention to this by highlighting the intensity of the lead actors' performances, as well as through interesting formal properties like the nature of props used. For example, in (4.1), Juliet places a small pistol to her temple, a modernization of her traditional dagger which more starkly registers the intensity and violence of what she intends to do, declaring to the Friar "be not so long to speak./ I long to die" (4.1.67). On the surface of it, Juliet longs to die because of her separation from Romeo. The implication here being that the only solution to the unbearable pain she feels due to her separation from Romeo can only be found in death. However, there is a latent equivocation to be made, I argue, between the longing for love and a longing for death. In pursuing their love, both Romeo and Juliet seek simultaneously complementary and incompatible ideals, namely permanence and release. Therefore, the discussion of poison and latently love when Romeo asks the Apothecary (M. Emmet Walsh) for a tincture for suicide in (5.1) mirrors the Friar's earlier ruminations on the enervating and terminal paradoxes of nature. While I have suggested that the Friar symbolically describes love as a paradox of being the cure to its own poison, the Apothecary is far more direct when he states "if you had the strength of twenty men, it would dispatch you straight", which may also symbolically refer to the all-conquering power of love *as* death (5.1.82-83).

If *Liebestod* describes a *modality* of love, what theoretical *model* for love could be effectively brought to bear in describing the nature of love as well

as its relationship to death in the play and Luhrmann's adaptation thereof? According to noted French deconstructionist thinker Jacques Derrida:

> [T]he difference between the who and the what at the heart of love, separates the heart. It is often said that love is the movement of the heart. Does my heart move because I love someone who is an absolute singularity, or because I love the way that someone is? That is to say, the history of love, the heart of love, is divided between the who and the what. [43]

Like Derrida, albeit more succinctly, Žižek's deconstructive critique of axiomatic love takes an antithetical stance toward the assumption that love is a salubrious force. According to Žižek, love is the most radical expression of cosmic imbalance. Here, the phrase "love is the most radical expression of cosmic imbalance" can be seen as an extremely polemical rendering of Derrida's own insights into the latent economic imbalance that emerges in the exchanges of love. "Love for me", states Žižek, "is an extremely violent act. Love is not 'I love you' [...] It means I pick out something [and here again] it's this structure of imbalance. Even if this something is just a small detail – a fragile individual, a person – I say 'I love you more than anything else.' In this quite formal sense, love is evil." [44] Emergent from both thinkers' above views is the suggestion that love is always divided. The latent holism ascribed to love as a restorative force that instantiates a reliable and redemptive sense of wholeness comprised of the commitment of two willing partners is, according to Derrida, actually predicated on a disjunct between the who of a person and the what of a person.



The Exorbitances of the Capulet Ball

Crédits : 20th Century Fox

These questions raised by Derrida and Žižek manifest in the scene in which Romeo attends the Capulets' ball. Luhrmann frames this scene as an exclusive upscale costumed soiree replete with drugs, popular artists (Des'ree), and Dionysian debauchery. As Oscar Wilde said, "man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth." [45] Luhrmann uses this device to allow the interiors of characters to manifest externally in their choice of costume: Tybalt a devil, Juliet an angel, Romeo the knight errant, Paris the astronaut destined for socio-political heights, Lady Capulet as an Egyptian queen, the decadent albeit troubled matriarch, and Mercutio the superstar drag queen (a hint here at readings that Mercutio has homoerotic feelings for Romeo that extend beyond camaraderie and friendship). Through the decadence and opulence of the Capulet ball, Luhrmann does well to depict a world of inter-family vendetta, wealth, prohibition, and desire as the bedrock upon which Romeo and Juliet's love emerges. More importantly, Luhrmann raises the question of the difference between who one is and what one is in this scene

Juliet takes this speculation into the 'who' and 'what' of a person much further. During her balcony scene, the diction of her soliloquy betrays an attempt to theorize, in practical terms, the praxiological difference between who and what Romeo is contra who and what *she* is. Consider the following excerpt:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet
[…]
'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague?
It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face.
O, be some other name Belonging to a man.
What's in a name?
That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.
Romeo, doff thy name,
And, for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself." (1.2. 36-39 and 41-53.)

In view of Derrida's insights, Romeo and Juliet's early courtship is, as is the courtship experience of many couples, good or ill, an attempt to grapple with and establish similar determinations and delineations between who and what. Juliet questions what/who Romeo is contra what/who he *appears* to be. Only from this position of circumspection can she begin speculating as to who/what he *shall become to her*. Latent to such inquisitions into the nature and identity of one's lover is, in the last instance, a search for guarantee, certainty, inviolability – a foundation of assuredness that one truly knows her/his intended. This comes across most clearly in an interestingly taught exchange under Juliet's balcony. During the scene, Romeo declares his love saying "Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow", to which Juliet, interrupting him, counters with:

> “O, swear not by the moon,
> Th'inconstant moon, that monthly changes in her circled orb,
> Lest that thy love prove likewise variable” (2.2.112; 114-116)

Here, Juliet is put off by Romeo's over-lofty entreaties, as well the fear that Romeo's love may be “too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, too like the lightning, which doth cease to be ere one can say ‘it lightens’” (2.2.125-127). Instead, Juliet seeks something far more constant than metaphor, than the phasing attention and interests of mortal love, symbolized by the transiting moon. In essence, the latent question Juliet makes Romeo consider here is how to prove one’s love but to die for and in it? In the last instance, Juliet wants their love to be constant. Yet what is more constant than death? For Juliet, in view of the antagonism circumscribing their love, marriage is the only reliable surety for love because marriage is, in the last instance, a vow to death.

This seemingly commonsensical supposition stands at odds with the typical Western notion of love as mysterious; a status it continues to hold even in our ostensibly radical late capitalist age of identarian and socio-political plurality, diffusion, and indeterminacy. Interestingly, it would seem that the appraisal of love as a mysterious force is completely in keeping with the critical and philosophical *Zeitgeist* of our time, influenced by radical French post-structuralist thought exemplified by figures like Derrida and his contemporaries. The only difference here would be the liberation of love from ecclesiastical prescriptions whereby love is no longer seen as particularly holy. However, what we could call this amorous apostasy does not annul the broader cultural appeals of love. While seemingly based on freedom, especially from singular or lifelong commitments, I argue that what has happened in contemporary Western love is nothing but a substitution. The mystery of love once subtended by the mystery of God as an ameliorative and moralizing purification of love has been replaced by a new confluence of socio-political and cultural forces namely capitalist consumerism, nihilism, and pluralism. I contend that such a reading of love is inherent to Luhrmann’s adaptation in that latent to the auteur’s modernization of all aesthetic elements of the film includes a

modernization of its central theme, namely love-in-death. In a Verona dominated by warring tycoons and magnates instead of feuding aristocrats, Luhrmann suggests that in the circuitous hyperreality of late capitalism, there is no salve for Being, neither by love itself, nor any amorous love imbued with the seeming permanence and meaning of death.

Despite post-modern cynicism, love still holds sway. We in the West, for example, still practice Valentine's Day knowing fully well the latently commercial undercurrents that drive it. We still flood cinemas to watch romantic comedies and dramatic love stories regardless of how (un)inventive the production's attempt at either renewing the very same tropes of love to which it refers and upon which its success depends, or to attempt to radically obfuscate them altogether. In short, we still love, we still seek it out and, if unable to find it in our day-to-day experience, we gesture to, consume, and/or appropriate aesthetic representations of it. Ironically, this is precisely the problem of love to which Derrida gestures to above: love as a thing-in-itself versus love-as-representation/performance. It would appear that the two aspects of love form an irresolvable dialectic and yet we typically need this antagonism to understand that we are in love *in principium*. For example, one might feel that they are in love but in order to feel that they are with some relative degree of certainty, they require their intended to perform, that is represent, love through a series of socio-cultural acts, both embodied and symbolic, from vocalizing declarations of amorous intent to kissing. Beneath the performance of love, a collection of socio-cultural acts and signs that can be read as love in lieu of a definitive universally accepted description thereof, is, at its most fundamental, a search for *knowledge.*

As such, Juliet's questioning of Romeo, as well as her admonitions of his purple, vaulted, and platitudinous metaphors, in short, his typical performance of love, seek to discover two things: first, the truth of him, his Being, his 'who' and 'what', so to speak. Second, Juliet seeks to discover a deeper predicate, one she feels is *convincing* enough to stand as surety against the shortcomings of his unoriginal performance of love. This philosophical approach taken up by Juliet should bespeak her intelligence.

In view of the impossibility of the concept of 'I love thee', Juliet cycles through the possibilities of both the potentials of loving who Romeo is as well as the *ways* Romeo is. To this end she makes a litany of his characteristics (his beauty, his name, their families' vendettas, his lust and so forth). Despite the intelligence of her approach, it appears that Juliet is trying to do two incompatible things at the same time: simultaneously appreciating the specific characteristics of the *way* Romeo is, but also *limit* the way he is by binding him in covenant. Here, the term 'bind' has numerous negative connotations and yet, in the context of the two lovers' situation, is paradoxically the key to Romeo and Juliet's truest liberation. That is to say, Romeo and Juliet believe that the truest way to escape the violent antagonism of Verona that binds their love and its potential is through their own superior binding to one another, and the force governing this binding is the insuperable power of death.

Conclusion: "And Thus With A Kiss, I Die"

Loehlin holds that:

> [T]he grim conclusion of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* signals a fatalistic acceptance of the triumph of the postmodern world of Verona Beach. There is no refuge for the lovers, even in romantic death. Their idyll is interrupted, reduced, commodified, turned into televised spectacle […]. [46]

I would rather suggest that Luhrmann's conclusion touches on the fundamental nature of real love that Shakespeare captures through the play: real love leaves no survivors.

For those who subscribe to what I have sketched above to be a humanist love, that is restorative, and possibly redemptive and/or ameliorative, there is another more distasteful attribute to the sort of love Juliet is seeking.

There is a latent economic model underlying her pursuit of certainties and guarantees in and of Romeo's love. In essence, Juliet states that if I should follow you in love, against the wishes, edicts, and culture of our city, families, and friends, I expect first that I should do so for a good reason, and also that I receive the same in kind; that inherent to our exchange of vows is a mutual acceptance of the hazards that follow them. I argue that the pressure and expectations of what we could call the Derridean economics of love are immense because like all economic systems known heretofore, there seemingly will always-already be amorous advantage, disadvantage, surplus, profit, loss, supply and demand and, worst of all, the ever-present threat of what we could call an amorous crash. While the words 'I love thee', as seen etched into the couple's wedding bands in Luhrmann's adaptation, can be interpreted in wildly variable ways from individual to individual, it is the latently economic nature of the demand for *equal* love that seems the most destined for disappointment and betrayal. While the idea that the beloved will, in time, reveal her or himself as wanting when compared to the ultimately conflictive and unrealistic weights and measures of their partner's expectations and promises, Romeo and Juliet seemingly bypass this problem with a single shared expectation symbolically represented by the covenant of marriage; that is, that they will love each other to and beyond death. However, while marriage superficially offers what each lover believes to be a redemptive potential for legitimately unifying the feuding families in terms of morals and law, I argue that Juliet's appeal to marriage is based on the notion and expectation the marriage is symbolic of loving-to-death. Played off by Wagner's piece, it is no surprise that the most beautiful and resonant sequence/shot of Luhrmann's adaptation should be of the two dead lovers.

The Beauty of Love-Death

Crédits : 20th Century Fox

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Notes

[1] See for instance Romeo Bosetti's short form comedy *Roméo se fait bandit* (1909) set in Paris; Kamal Selim's *Shuhaddaa el gharam* (1942) resetting of the play in contemporary Egypt; Jiri Weiss's *Romeo, Julia a tma* (1960) which reframes the prohibitive injunctions circumscribing the young couple's love in sociopolitically and culturally charged milieu of Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia. More recent examples include Kelly Asbury's *Gnomeo & Juliet* (2011) which imagines the couple as gnomes in antagonist gardens; and Jonathan Levine's *Warm Bodies* (2013), which imagines the complexity of the young couple's union as one between the living and the undead. In most of these and other adaptations, setting and period are altered or updated in order to explore the theme of factionalism and the concept of forbidden love haunting the couple.

[2] Zeffirelli's counterculture retelling is not only considered the definitive adaptation of the play on account of its visually arresting aesthetic, but also because of its nuanced portrayal of the elusive earnestness of young romance. In contrast, Luhrmann's high octane most-modern revisionist take can be said to achieve both its successes and failures, depending on one's view, by electing the complete opposite approach to the source material.

[3] Voir par exemple la comédie courte de Romeo Bosetti, *Roméo se fait bandit* (1909), qui situe l'action à Paris ; celle de Kamal Selim*, Shuhaddaa el gharam* (1942), qui se déroule, quant à elle, dans l'Egypte contemporaine. Voir également *Romeo, Julia a tma* (traduit en français *Roméo, Juliette et les Ténèbres*) réalisé par Jiri Weiss (1960), *Gnomeo & Juliet* par Kelly Asbury (2011), *Warm Bodies* de Jonathan Levine (2013) où l'arrière-plan est, dans la plupart des cas, modifié et transposé afin d'explorer le thème du factionnalisme et le concept d'amour interdit qui hante le couple central.

[4] Baz Luhrmann, *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*, Los Angeles, California, 20th Century Fox, 1996.

[5] See Jim Welsh, “Postmodern Shakespeare: Strictly *Romeo*,” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 25, 1997, p. 152-153; Peter Travers, “Just Two Kids in Love,” *Rolling Stone*, 14 November 1996, p. 123-124; Welton Jones, “Triumph of tragic love ensures long life of 'Romeo',” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 12 April 1998, p. E1 and E9.

[6] Jim Welsh, “Postmodern”, *art. cit.,* p. 152; Courtney Lehmann, “Strictly Shakespeare? Dead Letters, Ghostly Fathers, and the Cultural Pathology of Authorship in Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol 52, n°2, 2001, p. 191.

[7] Courtney Lehmann, “Strictly Shakespeare? ...”, *art. cit.,* p. 191.

[8] Jody Berland, “Sound, Image, and Social Space: Music Video and Media Reconstruction”, in Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, & Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Sound and Vision: the Music Video Reader*, London & New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 39.

[9] Antony Johae, “'Thy drugs are quick': Postmodern Dissolution in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet*”, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 44, n°2, 2016, p. 106.

[10] Janet Maslin, "Soft! What Light? It's Flash, Romeo", *New York Times*, 1996, 1 November. URL, accessed 23 December 2012.

[11] Peter Travers, “Just Two Kids in Love”, *Rolling Stone*, 1996, 14 November, p. 123-125.

[12] Samuel Crowl, *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era*, Athens (Ohio), Ohio University Press, 2003, p. 119.

[13] Douglas Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 56. Also see Will Straw, "Popular Music and Postmodernism in the 1980s”, in *Sound and*

Vision: The Music Video Reader, Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), London & New York, Routledge, 1988, p. 3-25; E. A. Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture*. New York, Methuen, 1987; John Fiske, “MTV: Post-Structural Post-Modern." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 10, n°1, 1986, p. 74-79.

[14] See Christopher Baker, “The Persistence of the Sacred in Baz Luhrmann's Romeo+Juliet*”, Journal of Religion & Film*, vol. 11, n°2, 2016, URL; Elsie Walker, “Pop Goes the Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet.*” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, n°2, 2000, p. 132-139.

[15] Nicholas F. Radel, “The Ethiop's Ear: Race, Sexuality, and Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet”, *Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, vol. 28, 2009, p. 20.

[16] Rachel Prusko, “Youth and Privacy in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Early Theatre*, vol. 19, n°1, 2016, p. 114.

[17] Rachel Prusko, *art. cit.,* p. 113.

[18] *Id.*

[19] James Loehlin, “‘These Violent Delights Have Violent Ends’: Baz Luhrmann's Millennial Shakespeare”, in Ramona Wray and Peter Holland (eds.), *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle*, New York, Macmillan, 2000, p. 123.

[20] *Id.*

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[22] Paul Kottman, “Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 63, n°1, 2012, p. 119.

[23] Paul Kottman, “Defying the Stars”, *art. cit.,* p. 122.

[24] *Id.*

[25] All quotations will be taken from this edition: William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d., accessed 11 November 2018. URL.

[26] Philippa Hawker, “DiCaprio, DiCaprio, Wherefore art thou, DiCaprio”, *Meanjin*, vol. 56, n°1, 1997, p. 134; Elise Walker, “Pop Goes the Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*”, *Literature Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, n°2, 2000, p. 132-139.

[27] Antony Johae, *art. cit.,* p. 111; Crystal Downing, “Misshapen Chaos of Well-Seeming Form: Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet*”, *Literature Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, n°2, 2000, p. 128.

[28] Courtney Lehmann, *art. cit.*, p. 213.

[29] Antony Johae, *art. cit.*, p. 113.

[30] Eliza Claudia Filimon, “The Camera Eye on the Edge of the 'Balcony Scene'”, *Philologia*, vol. 21, 2016, p. 115.

[31] James Loehlin, *art. cit.*, p. 128.

[32] Antony Johae, *art. cit.*, p. 107.

[33] *Id.*

[34] In certain editions, this cue is delivered by Lord Capulet.

[35] See Rudolph Binion, *Love Beyond Death: The Anatomy of Myth in the Arts*, New York, New York University Press, 1993; Lawrence Kramer, *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997; Gershon Legman, *Love and Death*, New York, Breaking Point, 1949; Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983.

[36] See Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings*, Cambridge, Wiley, 2007.

[37] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Jill L. Levenson (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 2-3.

[38] Ellis Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe: 'One and Double'*", Rochester NY, Camden House, 2004, p. 6-7.

[39] *Ibid.,* p. 8.

[40] Molly M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, in *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays,* John F. Andrews (ed.), London, Routledge, 1993, p. 56.

[41] *Id.*

[42] Harry Levin, "Form and Formality in *Romeo and Juliet*", in John F. Andrews (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 46.

[43] Derrida continues this line of thought, tying the problem of so-called true love to the central problems of philosophy, stating: "The question of Being, to return to philosophy – because the first question of philosophy is: What is it "to Be?" What is Being? The question of Being is itself always already divided between who and what. Is 'Being' someone or something? I speak of abstractly, but I think that whoever starts to love, is in love, or stops loving, is caught between this division of the who and the what. One wants to be true to someone − singularly, irreplaceably − and one perceives that this someone isn't x or y. They didn't have the qualities, properties, the images, that I thought I'd loved. So, fidelity is threatened by the difference between the who and the what." Jacques Derrida, "Jacques Derrida on Love and Being" [video], retrieved January 12, 2019, URL.

[44] Slavoj Žižek, "Love is Evil" [video], retrieved January 12, 2019, URL.

[45] Oscar Wilde, *Intentions; The Decay of Lying; Pen, Pencil, and Poison; The Critic as Artist; The Truth of Masks*, New York, The De Vinne Press, 1905,

p. 85.

[46] James Loehlin, *art. cit.*, p. 130.

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Quelques mots à propos de : Kwasu D. Tembo

Kwasu David Tembo is a PhD graduate from the University of Edinburgh's Language, Literatures, and Cultures Department. His research interests include comics studies, literary theory and criticism, philosophy, particularly the so-called "prophets of extremity" – Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida. He has published on Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige*, in *The Cinema of Christopher Nolan: Imagining the Impossible*, ed. Jacqueline Furby and Stuart Joy (Columbia UP, 2015), and on Superman, in ...

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