Juliet - a role in four movies

Abstract
Over a period of sixty years, between 1936 and 1996, there were numerous filmed versions of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, but four in particular were made for and obtained a worldwide commercial release. George Cukor’s lavish production of 1936 with Norma Shearer as Juliet was the first feature length, big budget, ‘talkie’ of Shakespeare’s play to be made by a major studio and aimed at the cinema going public. Shearer remains, to this day, the only actress of the modern age who was a major film star when cast in the role of Juliet. In direct contrast to this, Renato Castellani’s Anglo Italian neo-realist, retrospective 1954 adaptation featured an unknown Susan Shentall, who had never acted before filming and, on completion of the film, retired and never acted again. Franco Zeffirrelli’s sweeping 1968 production with Olivia Hussey as Juliet was a worldwide commercial success and is still revered by many as being the authoritative film experience of the play. Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 version, with Claire Danes playing opposite Leonardo DiCaprio, was initially decried as an affront to Shakespeare’s masterpiece and the director was accused of sacrificing the text for a highly stylised and bombastic shallow content. It is only recently that this film has been viewed by critics and academics alike in a more sympathetic and positive manner. These films, taken individually, present to us a particular performance of the ‘Juliet’ of Shakespeare’s text; but in addition to this they allow us a comparative study of the portrayals of Juliet as a celluloid reflection of the idealised woman shaped by the progressive demands of the contemporary phallocentric society in the western world. Patricia White examined this reflection theory in Feminism and Film and, in turn, referred to the studies of Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen in the early 1970s, and quoted them on the basis that film ‘reflects social reality, that depictions of women in film mirror how society treats women, that these depictions are distortions of how women “really are” and what they “really want” ‘(White 118). The theory explores the supposition that women are repeatedly and systematically portrayed in a catalogue of images that compels the viewer to see and accept them in a typology of roles which, according to White, reinforces the phallocentric ideology of women as an array of ‘virgins, vamps, victims, suffering mothers, child women and sex kittens’(White 118). A question that therefore arises and which is central to this thesis is how, specifically, has Juliet been portrayed in film? Has the Juliet of the screen been nothing more than an object of visual stimulation, an object of the scopophilic gaze and male sexual fantasy? If this is the case, how does this vary in each of the filmed versions listed? We must also consider how Juliet exists in relation to other characters in the play beyond her direct involvement with Romeo. Juliet’s role is pivotal within the play even though she does not have the most lines. She has a direct influence on Mercutio and his relationship to Romeo, even though Juliet and Mercutio fail to exchange a single line of dialogue in the entire play. Juliet’s relationship with Romeo is altered dramatically in the
aftermath of Mercutio’s death. Juliet’s life is also influenced by her relationships with others such as the Nurse and Friar Laurence, each of whom will abandon her at some point in the play. How are these relationships played and interpreted in each of the films in question? One cannot write extensively of Juliet if one limits oneself to writing exclusively of her. Each of these characters and how they are portrayed needs also to be examined. So too must the directors, all male, be examined in some detail. How much do they alter the Juliet of Shakespeare’s text and for what purpose?

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Script error. Juliet Rose Landau (born March 30, 1965) is an American actress, director, producer and ballerina best known for her role as Drusilla on Buffy the Vampire Slayer and its spinoff show Angel, the latter appearance earning her a Saturn Award nomination. She is also known for co-starring as Loretta King in Tim Burton’s Ed Wood. Landau was born in Los Angeles to actor parents Martin Landau and Barbara Bain. Her older sister is film producer Susan Landau Finch, and the sisters spent their time in “Romeo and Juliet” Shakespeare uses the contemporary superstitious beliefs and plays on them using the main characters Romeo and Juliet. For the duration of the Elizabethan era, people rested on their beliefs on God, superstition and fate to get through their everyday lives. They contemplated the fact that the world, in general, had had a stability of both good and evil. In a comparable manner, Romeo and Juliet are witness to seeing fate as having a significant amount of control over many of the key events of the whole play. I will now discuss the role that Fate plays whilst referring to the following scenes: prologue, Act 1 scene 4, Act 1 scene 5 and finally, Act 5 scene 3. Do you need to write an essay on The role that Fate plays in “Romeo and Juliet”? We can help! get started.