

Eva Rösslerová, **William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on Screen**

BA thesis

Opponent's Report

The BA thesis sets out 'to closely examine specific themes across three film adaptations of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, namely *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Franco Zeffirelli, *Romeo + Juliet* directed by Baz Luhrmann and *Romeo & Juliet* directed by Carlo Carlei and written by Julian Fellowes' ('Introduction', p. 9), thus covering the last 48 years of adaptation history on the silver screen. The thesis is divided into chapters and subchapters, states its premises and method, such as they are, works its way through the material using relevant secondary sources and concludes with a critical summary of the three chosen films, thus meeting the formal requirements of its academic genre.

The strength of Rösslerová's thesis is mainly in its ambition to provide a keen analysis of three big-screen adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* in an enthusiastic and personalised manner, taking cues from relevant secondary sources, but not primarily steeping its reading in literary criticism pertaining to the original text itself. The thesis provides some interesting observations and goes into a great deal of detail at times. The drawbacks of the thesis are largely centred around the weakness of argument, based as it is on the insufficiently justified choice of three themes: 'quasi-parental relationships' (why not simply parenthood?), 'death' and the 'final reconciliation'. It might have been more pertinent to focus on one of these to keep the argument in line throughout the thesis and devote more time to the discussion of the ways in which these on-screen adaptations recast and reimagine the play, focusing on the formal innovations of the modern cinematic medium in these three examples.

Formally, there are some minor problems throughout, from negligent errata such as 'It was not until the seventies and Franco Zeffirelli's productions *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet* that Shakespeare was brought to mass cinema audiences successfully' (p.10), [while both adaptations are dated in the late sixties], the omission of *West Side Story* history as a globally successful musical before its on-screen adaptation, to the somewhat irregular organisation of subchapters and perhaps too descriptive an approach to the adaptations, which in the end takes some space of critical discussion in a thesis that is twice the length required.

I have a question for the candidate to respond to during her viva voce examination, on a point that might have been raised by the thesis:

1) What is the effect of Shakespeare's English in Luhrmann's 1990s Venice Beach setting?

To conclude, I am happy to recommend the thesis for defence and propose a preliminary grade of ‘very good’ (velmi dobře).

5 September 2016

Mirka Horová, PhD