# Romeo And Juliet: Comparison Of Shakespeare's Script And Zeffirelli’s Version

Emerging into popularity during the 6th century, theatre culture became one of the most desired forms of entertainment. Many well-known play script writers rose into fame throughout this period. These writers include Henrik Isben, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (Molière) and William Shakesphere. William’s poetic scripts featured many literary techniques such as iambic pentameter, a well-known type of metric line which was used in traditional English poetry and verse drama. Shakespeare’s script writing was not recognised until the late 18th century. A large majority of his work are still well-known and admired in today's culture, his scripts feature as a main focus of many english literary studies. Typically, Hamlet, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet are thoroughly studied and his techniques are still used today. Although these plays are dated, they are often brought to life through plays, parodies and movies. This essay focuses on Shakespeare's original script of Romeo and Juliet in comparison against Franco Zeffirelli’s 1968 version of Romeo and Juliet.

Shakespeare's plays are widely admired for placing emphasis on drama which highlight the characters emotions. Drama is heavily incorporated throughout Romeo and Juliet in both the scripts and films. The chosen scene from Romeo and Juliet, which holds arguably the most drama and tension is Act 5, Scene 3 which is commonly known as the ‘death scene’.

The original scripted version of this scene describes in detailed verses of how Romeo and Juliet come to die. The scene begins with Paris and Page entering the Capulet family tomb. Paris visits Juliet who he, like Romeo, is in love with. He mourns both Juliet and Tybalt's death and tension arises once he encounters Romeo in the tomb. Seeing Romeo sparks anger within Paris and insists, for Justice to be served, Romeo should die. A brawl arises between Paris and Romeo which results in Paris’s death. Romeo then approaches Juliet's resting body. This scene is dramatised by highlighting the fact that Romeo had lost his one true love and will forever mourn her death. “ Ah, dear Juliet, why are you still so beautiful? Shall i believe that the phantom Death is passionate and that the thin, hateful monster keeps you here in the dark to be his mistress?” (Act 5, scene 3, page 287). This passage essentially refers to Romeo not only mourning the death of the love of his life, but also accepting his defeat to death itself. This shows weakness in Romeo's character, which is the perfect build up for his soon-to-be death. Romeo dramatically drinks the small bottle of poison and kisses Juliet for the last time and instantaneously dies. His death is shortly followed by Friar lawrence entering the Capulet family tomb and finding his dead body. Like Shakespeare's work, Juliet wakes up from her slumber during an ironic time due to Romeo dying a few short minutes earlier. This irony enhances the dramatic effects of this scene for the audience to come to realise that Juliet is alive. The death of Juliet however, is arguably more dramatic than Romeo’s. Juliet forcefully stabs herself with Romeo's dagger (another slightly ironic occurrence). They both lay in the Capulet family tomb, dead but together peacefully at last.

This scene portrayed by Franco Zeferlli, shares some slight differences in comparison to the original scripted version. Romeo enters the Capulet family tomb alone, he does not encounter any other people whilst mourning Juliet’s death and does not engage in any type of violent brawl. This slight but impactful difference allows the audience to focus on Romeo and Juliet

rather than the hatred between the two families once again. This also enhances the overall depressing mood of the scene. Romeo then notices Tybalt's dead body for himself, unveiling his plan to end his life. ‘What more favor can I do to thee, than with that hand that cut thy youth entwain, to sun the heist.’ Romeo is seen admiring Juliet's beauty for the last time, thus creating a more dramatic and heartfelt scene once displayed visually. Like the original script, Romeo kisses Juliet's lips for the last time. Dramatic pain is portrayed as he then drinks the poison and dies next to Juliet's tomb. Friar Lawrence is seen at her bedside once Juliet awakes from her slumber. The Capulet guards are close by and Friar struggles to keep Juliet from seeing her love dead on the floor. But alas, she notices him. Juliet, now distraught with pain, refuses to leave and Friar then disappears, leaving Romeo and Juliet alone again. It becomes clear that Juliet doesn't want to live in a world with Romeo gone. Coincidently, she finds Romeo’s dagger and with that, prepares for a brief and sudden death as she stabs herself in the chest. The image of the couple lying together peacefully, signifies the possibility of civilness between the two families. Although the unfortunate circumstance, Romeo and Juliet finally reunite and can be together indefinitely.

Overall, Franco Zeferelli’s version of Romeo and Juliet share many similarities in comparison to the original Shakespeare script. The themes of the film were kept very much alike. An example of this is the language used throughout the entire film and movie. This was ensured by using majority of Shakespeare's original lines in the scripted version and all speech was spoken in Old English. Whilst it is not known what costumes Shakesphere intended the characters in Romeo and Juliet to wear from the script alone, clothes from the century this play was written in, were worn to give an accurate feel throughout the entire film. Shakesphere’s work was highly descriptive in a way that the reader could imagine every scene in their head from just scripts alone. However, Zeferelli used music to enhance the emotion that was portrayed in every scene. This is especially true for the death scene as the slow, depressing sound changes the whole mood and allows the audience to feel deep sadness for the couple and their unfortunate deaths.

To conclude, both Shakespeare's original and Franco Zeferelli’s versions display many similarities and share only slight differences. This essentially means that Zeferelli’s take on Romeo and Juliet was highly effective in portraying Shakespeare's original script accurately. Franco Zeferelli, critically used Shakesphere’s play and simply brought the story to life.