

Luhrmann's Movie Version of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

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All hopeless romantics get dreamy-eyed and sigh whenever the balcony scene from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet comes up in conversation. Juliet stands on her balcony, innocently murmuring about her meeting with Romeo while the very subject of her musings eagerly climbs the garden wall and trellis leading up to the object of his love, [Juliet](#). Anyone viewing Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet will be sadly disappointed at first to see that the movie doesn't follow the traditional [balcony](#) scene. Instead the clandestine meeting and swearing of mutual love takes place in a swimming pool at the Capulet's mansion. For all that the setting differs, Romeo + Juliet does use traditional Shakespearean themes and ideas even if they appear in a somewhat untraditional fashion.

Luhrmann doesn't want to turn his audience off to his new interpretation so he employs comedy to distract the audience from their preconceptions. Luhrmann does use the balcony, but in a comedic way that makes an easy transition for the audience from the conventional balcony to Romeo and Juliet swimming in a pool. Romeo acts like a

monumental klutz after ascending the Capulet's garden wall. While looking up to see Juliet's window, he trips the surveillance lights, knocks over a few things, and generally makes a racket. This is not the lithe and graceful Romeo the audience usually thinks of as seen in Zefferelli's version. After climbing the trellis to the balcony, Romeo and the audience expect to see beautiful Juliet through her bedroom curtains at the top of the trellis, but both Romeo and the audience are caught off guard when instead of beautiful Juliet, the plain-faced Nurse appears and almost causes Romeo to f...

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...I is omitted because Luhrmann wants to keep the "intense, impatient, threatening, explosive" feeling Goldman states Romeo and Juliet has on stage.

Changing a balcony to a swimming pool seems an awkward echo to a classic play. With a little bit of comedy and brilliant usage of symbolism, Luhrmann makes it work. In no way are the themes or intent of the balcony scene in [Shakespeare's](#) Romeo and Juliet lost. The audience still sees the passionate love between Romeo and Juliet. Due to all the differences updating the play for his film, Luhrmann was smart to change the balcony scene. The traditional scene would have seemed inconsistent with the rest of the film. Despite the omissions of text and change of staging, the audience is still in for a powerful and moving scene.

Works Cited:

Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. New York: Washington Square Press, 1995.

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