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## KÖNIGS ERLÄUTERUNGEN

Band 55

William Shakespeare, **ROMEO AND JULIET**

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## PRÜFUNGSAUFGABEN MIT MUSTERLÖSUNGEN

In Ergänzung zu den Aufgaben im Buch (Kapitel 6) finden Sie hier zwei weitere Aufgaben mit Musterlösungen. Die Zahl der Sternchen bezeichnet das Anforderungsniveau der jeweiligen Aufgabe.

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### Aufgabe 5 \*

Examine the way Romeo talks to and about Juliet in II, 2, II. 2–25 (= the beginning of the so-called “balcony scene”) by looking at the images and other literary devices he applies to her. (analysis)

#### Model answer:

In this scene Romeo expresses how much he admires, desires and loves Juliet. Prior to this scene Romeo and Juliet have fallen in love at first sight at a masked ball at the Capulet’s mansion. Now Romeo has secretly come into the garden of Juliet’s house to be close to her. He can see Juliet “above” (l. 2 stage directions, probably at a window<sup>1</sup>) and praises her beauty, while she is not aware of his presence.

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LIGHT METAPHOR

Right at the beginning, Romeo likens Juliet to “light” (*metaphor* l. 2) shining through the window above him. He asks what light it is and gives the answer himself (*hypophora*<sup>2</sup>): The light “is the East, and Juliet is the sun!” (l. 3, another *metaphor* and *exclamation*). This sun and light metaphor emphasizes the radiance and warmth that Romeo expects Juliet to possess and her impact on him. Romeo dotes on Juliet like the earth needs the sun to exist and like human beings depend on the sun.

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JULIET AS THE SUN

Romeo *addresses* the sun (representing Juliet; *personification*, l. 4) directly, in spite of the fact that he is aware that Juliet does not hear him, telling her (*imperative*) to rise and destroy the jealous moon (also *personification*), who is “sick and pale” (l. 5) from extreme sadness because Juliet is much prettier than her (“moon” is female here; competition between two women). The fact that Romeo applies the word “kill” with its connotation for violence (l. 14) here, can be seen as a result of his passion (maybe triggered by an abundance of testosterone – male sexual hormone, also responsible for aggression). Otherwise, the word *choice* focuses on “light”, almost too much (abundance of references to light, e.g. “light” l. 2, “sun” ll. 3/4, “stars” l. 15, “twinkle” l. 17, “brightness” l. 19, “daylight” l. 20 and “bright” l. 21). Then again, this is what young love is like, and there are enough references to “darkness” later in the play.

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PRAISING AND ADMIRING JULIET

Next, Romeo urges Juliet (again *imperative*; l. 7 “Be not...”) not to work for the moon anymore because the moon envies Juliet (her clothes are already “sick and green”, l. 8 – *repetition* of the word “sick” l. 5, Juliet should throw them away: “Cast it off.” l. 9, *imperative*).

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STAR-EYE IMAGE

Romeo goes on praising and admiring Juliet with an *anaphora* (“It is ... it is ...” l. 10), *emphatic* “O”s (l. 10f.), *repetition* (“she” l. 11f.) and an *exclamation* (l. 11), intensifying his feelings for her, especially his longing to be recognised by her. He describes what she does and asks two questions, in between revealing his insecurity and excitement. He says that Juliet speaks without saying anything and that she communicates with her eye. He, thus, resolves to respond to Juliet’s eye-conversation only to realize that she is not interacting with him. Consequently, Romeo reprimands himself (“I am too bold.” l. 14).

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GLOVE ON JULIET’S HAND

No, Juliet is not of this world for Romeo, but is involved in business with heavenly stars. Romeo employs a poetic/dreamlike and intelligent *image* here that is built up like a puzzle: Two of the most beautiful stars in heaven have to go away for a while. They ask Juliet’s eyes to twinkle in the sky for them until they return. What would happen, Romeo asks, if the stars and Juliet’s eyes exchanged roles (The stars would be in Juliet’s head, and Juliet’s eyes would be in the sky)? The answer (again *hypophora*) is a disarming, charming *comparison*: Juliet’s cheeks would be so much brighter than the stars in place of her eyes (*hyperbole*), so that the stars would feel inferior to Juliet, like a lamp feels inferior to daylight (*simile* ll. 19/2). It seems impossible that anything can be brighter than the stars, yet Juliet’s eyes are, by far. Likewise (*climax*), Juliet’s eyes in heaven would shine so brilliantly that birds would start singing, believing that it was already daytime. Hence, Juliet’s beauty in this image becomes so vivid that everyone can imagine its splendor. The star-eye image has so much potential that one could make a film (or something similar) of it.

Finally, Romeo observes Juliet’s cheek, which is leaning on her hand (*exclamation*, l. 23). How closely and affectionately Juliet is being observed! Romeo expresses the wish to be a glove on Juliet’s hand (another

1 according to the “bad quarto”(Q1, see chapter 3.1)

2 hypophora: figure of speech, in which a speaker poses a question and then answers it

*image*) in order to be able to touch her cheek (another *exclamation*). Who would not want to be loved like that?

To put it in a nutshell, Romeo's fascination for Juliet in the beginning of Act I, scene 2 is expressed through an abundance of *images*, especially *metaphors* with words related to "light", as well as other literary devices like *anaphora*, *comparison* or *personification* and *imperatives* or *exclamations*. Romeo wants Juliet completely, also physically, as indicated by his reference to "vestal livery" (l. 8, clothes of a female priest who has to be a virgin – that Juliet should throw off) and him wanting to touch her (glove image). This inclusion of the physical aspect is a stark contrast to Romeo's detached, unsubstantial earlier love for Rosaline. The fact that Romeo observes his Juliet with such close attention and strong admiration as well as affection is thrilling, moving and even erotic. The excitement of young, passionate love can be felt by the reader or the audience.

### Aufgabe 6 \*\*\*

**Compare Act II, scene 2, ll. 1–49 (=until when Romeo reveals himself to Juliet) with the corresponding film scene from Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo+Juliet". (evaluation)**

#### Model answer:

William Shakespeare's original text and Baz Luhrmann's film "Romeo+Juliet" have much in common in Act II, scene 2, but there are also considerable differences. After all, the text is more than 400 years old. Yet, it is amazing how topical it still is, as the film's success proves.

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ARCHAIC FLAIR  
TO THE MODERN  
ROMANCE

One major difference between film and text is that the text is set in Verona, Italy, about 400 years ago, whereas the film is set on Verona Beach, USA, in the 21st century. Luhrmann's modern setting, however, includes "old" props and scenery, such as the historic (or at least made to look old?) mansion Juliet lives in, with archways, stairs and rails and a garden with classical statues (for example, a flute player sometimes visible behind or next to the lovers) or a stone shell-like alcove. Signs of modern times, on the other hand, are the electric light chain decorating the house, a photoelectric beam which Romeo triggers off upon entering the scene, that illuminates part of the garden, guards wearing modern uniforms, who observe the Capulet property via TV surveillance monitors, and, most obviously, the big, rounded swimming pool dominating most of the garden shots. The fact that the young lovers still wear parts of their costumes from the masked ball (Juliet the angel's dress and Romeo the knight's armor) add an archaic flair to the modern romance. All in all, it is remarkable how well old and new blend together concerning the setting.

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STRONG AND  
MAGICAL  
LANGUAGE

The blend is equally harmonious between Shakespeare's language and Luhrmann's production. Words in our (visual) time are not as prominent as they probably used to be in Shakespeare's days, but they are still strong and magical in the film. The original text has been altered very little in this scene, although the text is relatively long, Shakespeare's English is fairly difficult to understand for a modern audience, and a film usually has to make extensive text cuts to match the short time frame. Luhrmann, however, only omits lines 12–25 (from "Yet she says nothing", l. 12 to "That I might touch that cheek!", l. 25, leaving out the stars-Juliet's eyes-comparison as well as the glove image mentioned in the task before: none wears gloves in summer, and the star-story is too long and complicated for the film). He also changes the sequence of the text a little. For instance, he pulls "Ay me!" (l. 26) forward to let Romeo respond to these words of Juliet.

Furthermore, there are no words for a while after Romeo's revelation with "I take thee at thy word" (l. 49) and the splash the two lovers produce on falling into the swimming pool. Instead, the viewer sees under water shots and bubbles and eventually the resurfacing of the wet lovers before they start conversing directly with each other.

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LUHRMANN ADDS  
A BIT OF COMEDY

Another difference between text and film is that Luhrmann adds a bit of comedy to the scene. When Romeo speaks the first part of his soliloquy ("But soft ... off." ll. 2–9), he looks at a lighted window, addressing his Juliet behind it. The audience can see close ups of the window with its drawn curtains, alternating with shots of Romeo climbing up some plant lattice/trellis to the window. Tension is created. Suddenly, not Juliet but the Nurse appears at the particular window peeking out angrily. Romeo turns away, shaking his head a little in disgust, before he detects Juliet, who appears in the lighted gateway below.

Luhrmann uses other film means to create tension in the scene or to entertain the audience. He, for example, makes quick cuts between some shots. The frequency can sometimes compete with music video clips. The surprise of the moment Romeo reveals himself to Juliet, for example, is extremely intensified by the rapid cuts of the shots (one is a close up of Juliet's slipping foot) and especially by the climax of the two lovers falling into the swimming pool. Transferring much of Act II, scene 2, into the water is not only extremely innovative but apparently also matches the taste of a young audience. The secrecy of the lovers' meeting is enhanced by short shots of a guard sitting in his office, observing the scene via TV screen and reacting to noises by the pool.

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FIELD SIZE AND  
CAMERA POSITION

Of course, Luhrmann also utilizes field size and camera position for his cause. Close ups like those mentioned earlier, or some of Romeo's face, e.g. his slightly parted, sensuous lips, closed or fearful eyes, were not possible in Shakespeare's days. They help the audience believe that they can actually see Romeo's feelings, and it helps them to identify with the characters and their situation or feel empathy.

Finally, a film always interprets characters more than a text does. Juliet, for instance, appears self-confident in the scene while Romeo is a bit clumsy, which is not explicitly noticeable in the text. When, for instance, he stands pressed against the lattice, arms raised from the elbows, eyes fearfully turned to the side, he looks very young and inexperienced, like a victim about to surrender, while Juliet sometimes looks challengingly or boldly directly into the camera.

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SOUND AND MUSIC

Last but not least, sound and music add to the film's effect, like Romeo's audible breathing while waiting in ambush heightens the tension.

In conclusion, as can be seen from this scene, Luhrmann's "Romeo+Juliet" is an exciting and entertaining film for a modern audience. Although it is a piece of art on its own, it is unmistakably Shakespeare, and the film probably owes much of its success to the words, ideas and the plot of the famous old playwright.