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► **To cite this version:**

Sarah Hatchuel, Ronan Ludot Vlasak. Romeo and Juliet in the Japanese anime Candy Candy: the Balcony Scene between Tradition and Subversion. Cambridge University Press. Shakespeare on Screen: Romeo and Juliet, 2023. hal-04434737

HAL Id: hal-04434737

<https://hal.science/hal-04434737>

Submitted on 2 Feb 2024

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Romeo and Juliet in the Japanese anime *Candy Candy: the Balcony Scene between Tradition and Subversion*

Sarah Hatchuel and Ronan Ludot-Vlasak

In *Shakespeare on Screen: Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Sarah Hatchuel, Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, Victoria Bladen, Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Candy Candy, a Japanese nine-volume *manga* created by Yumiko Igarashi and Kyoko Mizuki, was adapted into a children's *anime* television series comprising 115 26-minute episodes, which were originally broadcast between 1976 and 1979 and were released in many countries outside Japan (Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, the United States). Despite the international distribution of this Japanese animated series, the whiteness and western-ness of all the characters are paradoxically emphasized. This is mainly due to the context of production and distribution: in the mid-seventies, Toei animation studio, which produced the series, was striving to boost exportation by telling stories taking place outside Japan or by adding references to mainstream Hollywood films already known by an international audience.¹ Ripe with allusions to such films as *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *The Way We Were* (Sydney Pollack, 1973), various American westerns and Shakespearean adaptations released at the end of the 1960s or at the beginning of the 1970s, *Candy Candy*'s narrative follows a young American orphan girl from childhood to adulthood at the start of the twentieth century. Candy is adopted by a wealthy family whose members are often cruel and harsh to her, but after her first love, Anthony, dies in a riding accident, Candy is sent to a strict London boarding school and falls for Terrence Grandchester, the illegitimate son of an English lord and an American Broadway actress. Terrence soon leaves for the United States where he begins a brilliant career as a Shakespearean actor.

The Shakespearean intertext is informed by a tension between two contrasted temporalities. On the one hand, it is associated with the heritage of the past and the aristocratic lineage, but, on the other hand, it opens up the possibility for the character of choosing his destiny and of freeing himself from social diktats.² Reflecting this ideological and transatlantic tension, the *anime* oscillates between the representation of an 'authentically' British Shakespeare³ and a Shakespeare filtered through American popular culture.⁴ Whereas hardly any screen adaptations of Shakespeare were released at the time, *Candy Candy* gave an opportunity to a whole generation of children born in the 1970s to discover the playwright's works through scenes taken from *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The first Shakespearean words in the series are uttered when Terry plays Young Siward in *Macbeth* just before the outbreak of the First World War (episode 73). The choice of this extract testifies to the American taste at the start of the twentieth century for Shakespearean plays raising the question of despotic power. The scene is preceded by a view of the Statue of Liberty, which reflects the appropriation of the Shakespearean idiom through an American

¹ See J.-E. Pieri, 'Goldorak occidentalisé?' in S. Hatchuel and M. Pruvost-Delaspre (eds.), *Goldorak : l'aventure continue* (Tours: Presses François Rabelais, 2018), 139–56.

² For a more extensive study of the relationship between *Candy* and Shakespeare's plays, see S. Hatchuel and R. Ludot-Vlasak, 'Shakespeare dans *Candy* : mais est-ce vraiment pour les enfants?', *Actes du congrès de la Société Française Shakespeare* (April 2016), <https://shakespeare.revues.org/3632>.

³ As D. M. Lanier reminds us, popular culture can associate Shakespeare with a certain Britishness to provide a cultural and artistic veneer to a production: 'quality craftsmanship, gravitas, trustworthiness, Britishness, antiquity, cultural sophistication, intellectuality, and artiness', *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 112.

⁴ On the Americanization (and decentring) of Shakespeare by popular culture, see R. Burt, *Unspeakable ShaXXXespeares: Queer Theory and American Kiddie Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) and D. Albanese, *Extramural Shakespeare* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

prism, and is followed by a sequence in which the threats of military conflicts are highlighted. As the First World War breaks out in Europe, the American actors and technicians wonder about the consequences they will have to face. The theatre, in its economy as well as in its artistic choices, is here shown in relation to world events. The series makes it clear to children that stage performances do not take place outside society. A few months later, Terry is cast as the King of France in *King Lear* (episode 79). While trying to attend the performance, Candy learns that she will not be able to enter the theatre because she does not belong to high society and, Cordelia-like, has been rejected by her rich adopted family. The theatre is seen as a closed, socially exclusive world. After wandering in the backstage area, Candy eventually finds a seat in the upper gallery where she can catch a glimpse of Terry's performance.

While the scenes of *Macbeth* echo the political and military context of a story set before and during the First World War, and while *King Lear* makes it possible to evoke the family and social tensions of the narrative, *Romeo and Juliet* – especially through the balcony scene – provides a narrative scheme for the romantic relationships between the characters. The whole story of *Candy Candy* is actually a distorting mirror and an echo chamber where the play's star-crossed lovers are diffracted (Yumiko Igarashi actually adapted *Romeo and Juliet* as a *manga* in 2013).

As in Shakespeare's play, bad timing is a diegetic device that is central to the dynamics of the plot. The missive that is sent by Friar Lawrence to Romeo but never reaches its addressee finds its counterpart in the letters that Candy sends to Terry but which Suzanne Marlowe – who is also in love with the young actor – intercepts. Like Romeo, who discovers Juliet's lifeless but still warm body, Candy runs to the place where she thinks she will see Terry again only to find the 'still warm' cup of tea he has just left (episode 58). Teenage sexuality is also suggested in veiled terms, for instance when Terry imagines what his life with Candy might have been like: 'If I were a few years older, I would have taken her. And we'd have lived together, alone, free from others' (episode 79). Yet love is never consummated. The whole show is thus built around a romantic *and* narrative frustration.

This chapter explores the aesthetic, narrative and ideological stakes of the balcony scene in *Candy Candy*. Oscillating between an eminently traditional representation and a questioning of social and aesthetic conventions, the scene punctuates the narrative progression and is the object of a double repetition: while several episodes show the actors' auditions and then their preparation before the premiere, the characters of Terry and Candy ceaselessly replay the balcony scene, which constitutes a structuring motif of the *anime*. It also becomes the locus where gender identities are shaped and troubled, but also where theatre and life unfold in a game of mirrors. Candy and Terry's love story actually never goes beyond the phase of the balcony scene, a sequence that they keep repeating in endless variations that call for decoding.

Shakespeare and *Candy*, between Americanness and Britishness

The representations of Shakespeare in *Candy* are first filtered through a process of hybridisation involving various Shakespearean films as well as American works of popular culture. In episode 91, the poster for *Romeo and Juliet* is seen near that of a western entitled *A Gunman No More. Blazing Western Action*. The title is a direct reference to the *Rawhide Kid* comic book volume, *A Gunman No More*, published by Marvel Comics in 1978. The subtitle of this series where superheroes and cowboys rub shoulders – *Blazing Western Action As You Like It* – actually pairs one of the most firmly rooted American myths in the collective imagination, the Far West, with one of Shakespeare's most famous comedies. The poster for the same show is shown again in episode 96, just before that of *Romeo and Juliet* appears on screen, this time with an American restaurant in between. As it coalesces the playwright's work and a genre 'show[ing] the construction of a cultural national identity centred on men

and in the face of an indigenous ethnic order',⁵ the *anime* challenges the transmission of the Shakespearean legacy as a purely Eurocentric process, but the Transatlantic hybridization of British and American cultures also unveils the racial – and gendered – aspects of exclusion that inform the cultural politics of *Candy Candy*. While these posters already show an Americanized Shakespeare that is an integral part of popular culture, another one uncannily evokes the costumes and poses of the 1968 film *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Franco Zeffirelli only a few years before the manga (Figure 9). Despite their racial exclusiveness, these cinematic allusions also disturb the diegetic temporality of the series, which is set in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and blur the lines between scholarly and popular culture.

Figure 9: The *Romeo and Juliet* poster in *Candy*, inspired by Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), screenshot from *Candy Candy*, episode 93

The balcony scene is first played on the stage of a New York theatre when Terry auditions for the role of the young Montague (episode 87): the actor is dressed as a minstrel and places himself at the foot of a high stone balcony within a garden. This scene characterizes Terry as a romantic and melancholy lover, but it also serves a proleptic function as it suggests that his passion for Candy will not lead to a happy ending. Furthermore, this traditional representation (Figure 10) bears the mark of the play's nineteenth-century productions and of troubadour painting – whether or not they depict Shakespeare's play. The works of Francesco Hayez come to mind, for instance *The Last Kiss of Romeo and Juliet* painted in 1823 or *The Kiss* in 1861. It is also reminiscent of the balcony scene in Zeffirelli's 1968 film, which is itself indebted to the nineteenth-century romantic tradition, which has contributed to produce rather bland versions of the play, smoothing out issues of violence and sexuality.

Figure 10: Terry auditioning for the role of Romeo, screenshot from *Candy Candy*, episode 87

While Terrence is auditioning for the part of Romeo, Candy is sitting for her examination to become a nurse. This concomitance of the two events underlines that the actor's social mission is just as essential as that of a nurse. It also foregrounds Candy's agency as a woman who acts upon the world and makes her own choices. The balcony scene is not simply shown as such, but is framed by a discourse on selection emphasizing the actors' expectations, their stage fright in front of the jury, their fear of forgetting their lines, and the director's unwelcomed decisions to have one actor audition with another. Through the balcony scene, the *anime* allows children to discover the whole production process and shows them how a casting works. During the audition, the balcony scene is first performed by one pair of actors and then by another, which constructs stage work as a process in motion, depending on interpretative choices.

Although the balcony scene has, to this day, often been chosen to audition an acting duo, one should not forget that the lovers in Shakespeare's play are not completely alone. The amorous dialogue is repeatedly disrupted by the intervention of a third character – the Nurse – who does not appear on stage, but who is heard repeatedly calling for Juliet to come to bed. In *Candy*, the balcony audition scene also calls upon a third figure who, this time, introduces a triangulation of the gaze: in the auditorium, Eleanor Baker, Terry's mother, exchanges her status as a famous American actress for that of an incognito spectator attending her son's audition. Her presence in the margins of the balcony scene is not surprising, but was prefigured in episodes 43 and 44, in which Candy and Terry are in Scotland for the summer:

⁵ R. Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 35.

not only was Eleanor Baker on the balcony of her son's Scottish mansion when Candy first saw her through binoculars, but Terry also reveals to Candy that he discovered Shakespeare through his mother's annotated edition of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Episodes 43 and 44 emphasize the ways in which a work of cultural value may be passed on from one generation to another and show how such a process might take a transatlantic turn, Shakespeare's plays being transmitted to Terrence by his American mother. Furthermore, this performance of the balcony scene foregrounds the romantic quality of the plot of *Candy Candy* (two lovers whose passion is jeopardized by external forces). Ultimately, by highlighting the triangulation of relationships in the *anime*, the mother's gaze underlines the *mise-en-abyme* of the show. Prophetically, during the auditions, Terry is already playing with the actress who will replace Suzanne Marlowe after the terrible accident that will prevent her from impersonating Juliet.

While the balcony scene seems to be played in a very classical way, following the nineteenth-century romantic tradition, it is complemented by pseudo balcony scenes where this very tradition is challenged in three different ways. Duets may become trios; gender codes, according to which the woman is supposed to wait at her window for the man to come and free her, are put to the test; and finally, the danger of the balcony's height is literalized.

From a duet to a trio

When it obliquely resurfaces in *Candy Candy*, the balcony scene sometimes features three instead of two characters. The *anime* first transforms the tragic couple of Romeo and Juliet into a doomed trio – Candy and Terrence, who love each other, and Suzanne Marlowe, an actress who is in love with Terrence. As soon as Suzanne Marlowe learns that she has been cast as Juliet and that Terry will play Romeo, she happily imagines that she will be able to live out her love on and off stage (Figure 11). However, the series counters the traditional Shakespearean 'mirror film' in which the behind-the-scenes plots are supposed to mirror what is performed on stage (as in *Kiss Me Kate* by George Sidney, 1953, or *Shakespeare in Love* by John Madden, 1998).⁶ Terry wanted the role of Romeo not to seduce Suzanne, his stage partner, but to have a reason to invite Candy to New York and make her proud of him. Even though Terry decides to marry Suzanne after her accident, he and Candy are still presented as the 'real' Romeo and Juliet, the lovers that fate is trying to separate (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Suzanne imagines herself as Juliet on and off stage, screenshot from *Candy Candy*, episode 87

Figure 12: Candy and Terry, the real Romeo and Juliet in the *anime*, screenshots from *Candy Candy*, episode 99

This liberty taken by the show in relation to traditional mirror films becomes explicit in episodes 91 and 92. In an empty theatre, Terry is rehearsing the balcony scene. Unhappy with his performance, he pauses to think not about the girl who will be on stage with him, but the one who will be in the audience watching him: 'I'll have to carry my voice so that Candy feels that I'm talking to her'. Suzanne then joins Terry on stage, begs him not to invite Candy to the premiere and admits that she loves him. At the very moment of this declaration of love by the one who is to play the role of Juliet, Terry thinks of his passionate and eternal love for another Juliet – Candy. In other terms, there seems to be one Juliet too many. Instead of having one Juliet supersede the other one, the Romeo-and-Juliet plot is doomed to return

⁶ K. S. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 219.

endlessly to the balcony scene. If it thus avoids the fatal ending of Shakespeare's tragedy, it nonetheless takes a melodramatic turn and veers into a tale of hardships and resilience.

Unlike Suzanne, Candy has not chosen to become an actress and is not the one to play Juliet; nevertheless she already donned the young Capulet's costume a few years earlier at the May Festival, when Terry had invited her to dance. Terry mentions this moment in a letter he sends to Candy inviting her to join him in New York to see him perform: he expresses his desire to 'see the little Juliet of the St. Paul College again' (episode 96). The writers of the show seem to be aware of the codes of mirror films which they transgress. It is no coincidence that Candy, on seeing the *Romeo and Juliet* poster at Terry's house, imagines herself replacing the actress's name with her own in order to be, as she says, 'Juliet – at least on the poster' (episode 97) so that love in the play and love in real life might perfectly match, an undertaking which is not without raising gender issues.

Avatars in variations on gender

Through these variations of *Romeo and Juliet*, which are never stabilized into theatrical duets, gendered constructs manifest themselves in an ambivalent game where identities sometimes seem confused or fluctuating. Yet any form of transgression is only temporary. Candy frequently challenges traditional gender codes: she climbs trees, refuses to obey orders and is not afraid to fight with boys. At the May Festival at St. Paul's College, she is confined and is therefore not allowed to attend the masquerade ball. Her great-uncle William André who has adopted her, sends her a parcel in which she discovers two disguises, a Juliet dress and a Romeo costume. Candy wonders if 'it's for a boy or a girl' and has to choose her gender. She first decides to disguise herself as Romeo. This subversion of norms is immediately followed by a transgression of space: Candy escapes from her cell through the window, thus impersonating a Juliet who refuses to be confined to the place that is supposed to be hers. She goes to the ball where, dressed as Romeo, she waltzes with her friend Annie (Figure 13). Candy then leaves the venue to put on her Juliet costume. After changing behind a thicket, she discovers Terry, who is also dressed as Romeo, perched in a tree: it is the man who finds himself 'on the balcony' (Figure 14), but it is Terry who invites her to dance a waltz, far from the eyes of the other pupils. Candy's subversion of gendered behaviours and performativity are therefore short-lived: the faultlines that appear in this episode between sex, gender and desire are resolved at the end of the episode and rendered 'intelligible', to use Judith Butler's terminology, each character finally choosing the gendered role that corresponds to his or her sex.⁷ Far from 'restor[ing] a figure of a choosing subject' who 'decides *on* its gender', gender performance is disconnected from the individual's identity and evacuates the ways in which gender produces subjects 'through a ritualized repetition'.⁸ The episode thus reduces gender bending to a simple disguise, a carnivalesque practice that temporarily disrupts an identity in which gender is an extension of biological sex. Put differently, because the transgression of gendered norms merely boils down to a theatrical game, it ultimately naturalizes heteronormative patterns and thwarts the possibility for the character of renegotiating the articulation between gender and sex.

Figure 13: Candy, disguised as Romeo, waltzes with her friend Annie, screenshots from *Candy Candy*, episode 41

⁷ J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 23.

⁸ J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Abingdon and London: Routledge, 2011), ix, x.

Figure 14: Terry, at the ‘balcony’, reverses gender roles, screenshot from *Candy Candy*, episode 41

The balcony scene, the multiple avatars of which are disseminated throughout the episodes, constitutes a recurring motif and exemplifies these transitory forms of gender reversal. In the first three echoes of the scene, Candy plays the role of Romeo. In episode 38, she manages to enter Terry’s room at St Paul’s College by jumping onto his balcony from the branch of a tree (Figure 15). During the summer spent in Scotland (episode 43), she waits for Terry under the young man’s window. Another oblique variation of the balcony motif is also to be found at the end of episode 80, when Candy runs after the train from which Terry, clinging to the platform – the shape of which recalls that of a balcony – catches a brief glimpse of her.

Figure 15: Candy in front of Terry’s balcony at Saint Paul’s College, screenshot from *Candy Candy*, episode 38

However, situations are reversed when Terry, who has invited Candy to New York for the premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, thinks about his love for the young girl under the windows of the hotel where she is staying (episode 98) and delivers the balcony tirade. If the balcony scene motif, as it is diffracted in the *anime*, suggests a possible subversion of gendered norms, such a possibility is evacuated in this last echo, which reassigns to the two characters a cis-gendered Shakespearean role that allows the re-establishment of a heteronormative coherence between sex, gender and desire. However, the scene is played out with a disjointed timing and thus reactivates a structuring motif of Shakespeare’s play: Candy stands at the window before Terry arrives and the latter then languishes under her windows when Candy is in bed (illustration 19). The diffraction of the balcony motif throughout the *anime*, as well as the multiple setbacks that prevent Candy and Terry from following in the footsteps of their Shakespearean doubles, make the balcony scene the point on which the two characters’ love story constantly stumbles. In fact, the scene never fully takes place, although it is replayed over and over again in a game of variations in which the plot fails to move forward, frozen in a fantasy that evacuates the play’s most destructive energies – in particular the deadly violence of Juliet’s desire for Romeo. It is significant that Candy, who attends the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* as a spectator (episode 98), leaves the performance at the interval, turning it into an aborted show that reflects the impossible relationship between the two characters.

Diffracting the danger and actualizing the nightmare

The avatars of the balcony scene in *Candy* are haunted by various forms of danger, be it the extreme high and low angle shots in episodes 43 and 98 or the possible fall from the tree in episode 38 and from the train in episode 80 (in the following episode, an unnamed injured man is admitted to the hospital where Candy works and everything suggests that it is indeed Terry who has fallen from the train). These effects of threatening verticality echo Juliet’s intuition in the second balcony scene, ‘Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,/ As one dead in the bottom of a tomb’ (3.5.55–6). This link between the Shakespearean scene and physical danger first materializes when a spotlight that comes loose during a rehearsal of the ball scene (where Romeo meets Juliet) suddenly falls onto the stage. Suzanne steps in to prevent Terry from being hit, and her leg is crushed. This terrible accident upsets the play’s temporality since the prospect of death bursts into the narrative as early as the two characters’ first meeting. Ironically, Suzanne loses the role because of a spotlight, a ‘star’ to which the young

Capulet is so often compared in the play. Both Terry and Suzanne become ‘spotlight-crossed lovers’ of sorts.

This reminder of a deadly verticality is particularly visible in episode 99. After the accident that has crippled her, Suzanne knows that she will not be able to return to the stage and does not want to be a burden for Terry. To that end, she attempts to jump off the roof of the hospital where she is staying. This highly melodramatic moment simultaneously refers to two scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*. First of all, Suzanne’s despair is reminiscent of the young Capulet’s suicide: at the same moment, Terry and Karen Kliss are performing the final scene of the two lovers on the stage of the New York theatre, and Suzanne, who is about to jump, imagines herself playing the role of Juliet, who stabs herself when she discovers Romeo’s lifeless body. This ultimate fantasy gives the illusion that the deaths of the two lovers are resynchronized, but once again, there is one Juliet too many. Furthermore, the high-angle shots of Suzanne as she is ready to jump are a distorted and deadly vision of the balcony scene, which is no longer the promise of a passionate love affair where Romeo seeks to join his beloved on the upper floor of the house, but the foreshadowing of a fatal fall that Romeo cannot stop because he is absent. This prospect is nevertheless avoided by Candy’s intervention, who convinces Suzanne not to take her own life. The fact that *Candy*’s main love story keeps stumbling on the balcony scene is a narrative device that not only sets the identification of the two characters with Romeo and Juliet in an asexual fantasy, but also prevents Candy and Terry from suffering the same fate as the Verona lovers.

If the *anime* suggests the possibility of challenging the most traditional forms of the balcony scene, these reconfigurations are only momentary and their subversive potential is eventually contained. Although the scene is never fully acted and never fully materializes, it runs through the *anime* in a game of variations where the redistribution of roles and the instability of positions ends with a return to order. This repeated resurgence of the second act eventually opposes the kind of theatre dreamt by Terry in episode 44. The young man sees it as ‘a world in miniature, a universe full of wonders and eternal dreams’, a field of possibilities where ‘on stage one plays a thousand characters, [where] one can be a prince, or a beggar, a poet or a peasant’. The *anime*’s diegetic logic ends up contradicting this vision, as all the central characters of the plot are constantly brought back to the same roles and the same scene. The two protagonists are never allowed to reinvent themselves in a narrative that limits the American dream to professional achievement only.

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