

What's in a Balcony
Scene?
A Study on
Shakespeare's
Romeo and Juliet
and its Adaptations

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Edited by

Luminita Frentiu

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FOREWORD

What's in a balcony scene? This is the question! At least this is the overarching question that has driven the endeavour presented in this book. It is as blatant as it is intertextual. A myriad of other questions inherently spring from such a question, one revealing another in a Russian doll like movement. A most common-sensical, if not the most obvious, question is "Who wants to know?" or worded differently "Who needs yet another book on the too much and too often used and abused Shakespeare's most popular play?" And about a fake balcony at that! And here is another question: "Are there any new, or at least fresh, angles to look at it?" If you are reading this book it means that there are still people (researchers, students or just Shakespeare lovers) who are interested in yet another book on Shakespeare. And I, as editor, as well as the contributors, could only hope that such new angles have been provided and that the reading of this book will be able to produce satisfactory experiences.

Certainly there are researchers who still think that Shakespeare and his stories are never ending stories and that *Romeo and Juliet* is bound to be, by far, such a story. A story of a love supreme is forever young. And there is no better time to revisit the star of all writing stars than the commemorating years of his earthly existence. At least this has surfaced during the annual international Shakespeare Conference organised by the International Shakespeare Centre, together with the Romanian Cultural Institute in London where a number of papers were dedicated to *Romeo and Juliet*, amongst them one particularly focusing on the balcony scene, partly lending its name to this volume. This and the inspiring discussions during the conference sparked the idea of producing a volume dedicated to the balcony scene.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the balcony scene remains probably the most famous scene in the English literature in spite of the fact that Shakespeare never mentioned any balcony in his *Romeo and Juliet*, nor did he know the word itself (which entered the English language having Langobardic origins, during the first decades of the 17th century). The "balcony", as an architectural and iconographic element, was the contribution a sequence of stage directors, play adaptors, and film producers brought to this well-known scene, thus generating a real cult of the balcony. And, as such, after the first globally successful movie adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* done in 1936 by George Cukor, starring

Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard, the balcony was finally born in Verona. Ever since, millions of people look at it, sigh and cry and move on to happily (or not) live their own love stories. What is more, the famous love scene has been known as the “balcony” scene and has gained an iconic status. It has also come to be seen as a metaphor for impossible love stories but at the same time countless Romeos have climbed it literally.

The present volume gathers a set of contributions as varied and thought-provoking as one might expect. Though not great in number, the authors propose angles and approaches drawing on as many fields of studies as one can get: ranging from literary and cultural studies to film studies or from cognitive studies to linguistic and translation studies.

In Chapter One, *Sposami a Verona*, Dana Percec presents the famous balcony in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* in a double hypostasis, as a space both real and fictional. Insofar as the Capulets and the Montagues are characters in a tragedy, which Shakespeare placed in Verona for the exoticism of an Italian place name, the balcony is a figment of imagination, just like the cauldron from which the three witches extract the vision of Macbeth’s future. However, the balcony is not imaginary only in the sense that since Juliet did not exist in real life, she could not have owned a house, in Verona or elsewhere, with a balcony or without. It is a space that has changed in time, together with the complex process of reception and adaptation which has affected all Shakespearean afterlife, especially in the contemporary, commodified and popular culture. But the balcony is not to be dismissed as a mere marketing product. The window above and the orchard below are legitimate equivalents which boost the potential of the “balcony” projected against the backdrop of early modern mentalities about feminine worlds, secrecy and intimacy, and the control of space as a result of gender hierarchies.

In Chapter Two, *There Is No Balcony in Romeo and Juliet. Only a Love Scene*, Pia Brînzeu analyses the most famous love scene in Shakespeare’s drama against some postmodern fictional adaptations of the tragedy. It all starts with a fake. Not the scene, not the love declarations of the two protagonists, but the balcony. The word “balcony” never appears in Shakespeare’s play. Various editions indicate: “Enter Juliet aloft”, “Enter Juliet above at a window”, or “Juliet appears above at a window”. Later, when the nurse calls her in and Juliet exits the stage twice, she returns to the window. The stage directions say: “Re-enter Juliet above”. There is no mention of a balcony anywhere. Neither is it mentioned in Shakespeare’s source, the story of Matteo Bandello. The author explores what happens in the numerous postmodern fictional adaptations of the tragedy and whether there is a balcony in such novels as *Escape from*

Verona by David Gray (1996), *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* (2006) by Lisa Fiedler, *Juliet* by Anne Fortier (2010), and *Juliet's Nurse* (2014) by Lois Leveen.

Chapter Three, *What's in A Balcony Scene? A Respondent-Oriented Romeo and Juliet Based Case Study* by Luminița Frențiu and Codruța Goșa approaches the balcony scene from a comparative and reader/viewer response perspective. Five balcony scenes from five hallmark film productions spanning almost a century were selected for a comparative analysis. The instrument used for eliciting the response to the scenes proposed for viewing took the shape of a written account, retrospectively produced by 1st and 2nd year students in an English medium Translation Studies programme, after watching the aforementioned balcony scenes. The data driven analysis shows a respondent reaction rather emotional in nature, relying heavily on preferences and rankings, mainly based on verisimilitude and closeness to the original.

Chapter Four, *Sweeping Her off Her Feet. Courting Moves and Language*, proposed by Valentina Mureșan investigates the courting strategies and the linguistic particularities of the oral discourse in the balcony scene, both in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and in four of its cinematic adaptations (Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film *Romeo and Juliet*, Baz Luhrmann's 1997 film *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, John Madden's 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love* and Kelly Asbury's 2011 animation *Gnomeo and Juliet*). The main focus rests on discussing the different courting moves as they are reflected at the linguistic and paralinguistic level of the text, while also exploring the shift towards contemporaneity, analysing how such language and strategies operate nowadays. To validate the relevance of the courting discourse for a contemporary audience, the chapter makes reference to a reflective piece of writing of a student and her reactions to the discourse of wooing now and then.

Chapter Five, *"Arise, Fair Sun, And Let Down Your Hair". Romeo and Juliet's Balcony Scene for Kids and Teens* by Andreea Șerban takes the reader in the realm of children literature. The balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* has often been considered one of – if not– the most romantic scene/setting ever, an early modern instantiation of courtly love. But what does the balcony as a setting element mean to us today? How do contemporary adaptations for the younger generation represent it? These are the questions whose answers are sought by looking into some adaptations of Shakespeare's scene for children and teenagers in three different forms and media: fairy-tale, manga, and animation. Without neglecting the linguistic adaptations, the analysis focuses on the visual input, which

comes to complete or clarify the written text. Thus, on the one hand, the chapter discusses the changes in perspective and the way(s) in which they affect the courtship ritual; on the other hand, it looks at the characters' representation (i.e. looks and costumes) and the influence of classic fairytales and contemporary popular romance on the story of the "star-crossed lovers".

In Chapter Six, *What if Enter Lady Capulet? A Counterfactual, Reader Oriented Approach to the Balcony Scene*, Codruța Goșa investigates the way in which humans approach reality by creating alternatives to events already happened. Having its origins in psychology, counterfactual research drew the attention of researchers from other social sciences related fields such as history, human behaviour or political sciences. As a cognitive process, counterfactual research seeks to explore and gain insights into the way humans think. As such, the story of Romeo and Juliet, one of the most popular works of literature worldwide, often seen as rooted in a real social phenomenon, is approached from a counterfactual research angle. To this end, the alternatives to the story, proposed by a number of respondents are explored, starting from the balcony scene where one factor is manipulated. The respondents who are asked to re-think the continuation of the story have different ages and levels of initiation in literary studies in general and in Shakespeare studies in particular. In her study, the author also attempts to investigate whether counterfactual thinking might have a positive pedagogic dimension, especially when it comes to motivating students to read and study literature.

Chapter Seven, *A Norm-oriented Study on Three Romanian Variants of the Balcony Scene in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* by Mihaela Cozma analyses the scene from a translational perspective, focusing on the change of the translation norms as reflected by three Romanian variants of the fragment in question. In accordance with translation theory, one instrument by means of which norms can be studied is represented by the translation techniques used when producing these texts, as such techniques provide evidence of the manner in which the Romanian translators manipulated the linguistic material in order to produce what they considered to be appropriate target texts. Consequently, the translation techniques revealed by the three Romanian variants will be discussed, with a view to pointing to the relationship established between each of these texts and their source, on the one hand, and to the relationship that these translations establish with one another, on the other.

Last but not least, Chapter Eight, *Translating Shakespeare: Between a Clash and a Feast*, proposed by Andreea Șerban and Loredana Pungă, was

prompted by the authors' participation in a conference on translating Shakespeare. Within this conference the participants were asked to (re)translate three of Shakespeare's most famous scenes, one of which was the "balcony" scene. Within this frame, the authors analysed and compared three Romanian translations of the scene in terms of readability and performability. The analysis showed that these two approaches to assessing the quality of a translated dramatic text are not mutually exclusive, but complementary, and that all three translations, though different, seem to be equally successful and they are all still staged in Romanian theatres.

In all, after briefly overviewing the chapters that make up this volume, I hope that I have managed to entice the reader into reading it on to the last chapter. I do believe that what makes this volume distinctive and recommends it as a strong read is the variety of discursive angles and cultural perspectives, approaches which all converge towards an integrated and complex picture of the "balcony".

—The Editor

CHAPTER ONE

SPOSAMI A VERONA

DANA PERCEC

Introduction

23 Via Cappello, Verona, Italy. The backyard. A sarcophagus. Or, at least, these are the directions one would get for this location had it not been the famous Shakespearean balcony in *Romeo and Juliet* (first published in Quarto in 1597). The Cambridge Companion to *Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (2007), which features a statue of coy Juliet in bronze on the front cover, argues that the inclusion of Shakespeare on the tourist trail is a thing of the 1970s. Still, let us consider this introductory paragraph of chapter nine in Charles Dickens' 1846 *Pictures from Italy*:

I had been half afraid to go to Verona, lest it should at all put me out of conceit with Romeo and Juliet. [...] It was natural enough, to go straight from the Market-place, to the House of the Capulets, now degenerated into a most miserable little inn. Noisy vetturini and muddy market-carts were disputing possession of the yard, which was ankle-deep in dirt, with a brood of splashed and bespattered geese; and there was a grim-visaged dog, viciously panting in a doorway, who would certainly have had Romeo by the leg, the moment he put it over the wall, if he had existed and been at large in those times. The orchard fell into other hands, and was parted off many years ago; but there used to be one attached to the house—or at all events there may have, been—and the hat (Cappello) the ancient cognizance of the family, may still be seen, carved in stone, over the gateway of the yard. The geese, the market-carts, their drivers, and the dog, were somewhat in the way of the story, it must be confessed; and it would have been pleasanter to have found the house empty, and to have been able to walk through the disused rooms. But the hat was unspeakably comfortable; and the place where the garden used to be, hardly less so. Besides, the house is a distrustful, jealous-looking house as one would desire to see, though of a very moderate size. So I was quite satisfied with it, as the veritable mansion of old Capulet, and was correspondingly

grateful in my acknowledgments to an extremely unsentimental middle-aged lady, the Padrona of the Hotel, who was lounging on the threshold looking at the geese; and who at least resembled the Capulets in the one particular of being very great indeed in the 'Family' way (2013, 284).

After deploring the unacceptable state of decay and totally unsuitable new destination of this most revered place, Dickens continues his log book, describing his visit to Juliet's tomb, in the old, old garden of an old, old convent, with a "bright-eyed" woman who abandoned her job of washing clothes for a temporary position as a tourist guide, informing Dickens that *la tomba di Giulietta la sfortunata* was long forgotten. Dickens concludes that "it is better for Juliet to lie out of the track of tourists, and to have no visitors but such as come to graves in spring-rain, and sweet air, and sunshine" (p.284), although, for Yorick's ghost, for example, it might have been consolatory to hear footsteps overhead. The sightseeing craze in today's Verona seems to have been in full swing even 200 years ago, if not more.

But, like the 21st century literature consumer and pilgrim-tourist, Dickens seems to forget that both Juliet and Yorick are fictional characters rather than real-life people and that, consequently, their tombstones, houses, and balconies are mere figments of our imagination. This simple observation is enough to turn one's experience of the tour in Verona upside down. The house, *detta di Giulietta*, belonged to a Veronese family called Cappello and was later converted into an inn-house (which Dickens considered sheer bad taste); the balcony is not visible from the street, but oversees the inner yard; in fact, the balcony is a very late addition to the house, being, in fact, a richly decorated sarcophagus, which was glued to the masonry.

Baci di Romeo

The contemporary tourist who goes to Verona and wants to get in the mood for love with Romeo and Juliet has to pay 6 Euros for this. The fee includes a tour of the house on 23 Via Cappello, sightseeing the exhibits: medieval frescoes, chairs, manuscripts, vases and pots, a studio, a bedroom, a balcony. They are all, according to the multi-lingual inscriptions, objects, rooms, domestic spaces which belonged to a certain Miss Juliet Capulet, some six centuries ago. In a frenzy to photograph all these elements and immortalize themselves against a background which belonged to Shakespeare's heroine, the tourists forget that, although the artifacts are quite genuine, their status would have remained forever anonymous had they not been claimed by the Veronese and international

industry, on fictional Juliet's behalf. Juliet's bed, wonderfully undone, to stimulate the visitors' imagination, could not have belonged to Juliet since it was a stage prop used by Franco Zeffirelli in his famous 1968 film about the star-cross'd lovers. The balcony is even less real, because its basic function has been altered for the tourists' pleasure: once the house was officially and irrevocably declared Shakespearean, it was in desperate need of its most important accessory and, a wooden or concrete box being out of the question, a stone sarcophagus was preferred.

The blurred boundaries between fiction and reality suit the interests of the Commune di Verona and private investors quite wonderfully. The entrance fee to Juliet's house may be only 6 Euros, but a glimpse of Juliet's tomb in the Franciscan Abbey costs another 6 Euros. If an enthusiastic couple wants to have their wedding ceremony in Juliet's balcony it costs them 300 or 400 Euros, while any food savoured in Verona, from pizza and pasta to nocciola ice-cream, bearing names such as "Romeo's Kisses," "Juliet's Sighs," or "Penne Romeo with gorgonzola" can be a pricey culinary experience. But one has to keep in mind that the original Shakespearean text was as close to such blurred boundaries as it gets. Starting with presumably precise geographies, which are, in fact, deliberately contradictory, so as to place a story more in the realm of imagination than reality, and ending with the scarcity of stage directions, which makes any argument about location in Shakespeare quite difficult, the Bard's works are full of spaces which invite the cultural historian's exploration.

Bohemia, by the sea

This is probably the most confusing stage direction in all Shakespeare, placing *The Winter's Tale* in an imaginary realm, at the crossroads between fiction and reality. A Central European province, Bohemia is as far from the sea as it can be, enhancing the general impression of fantasy, romance, and magic atmosphere, typical of the late comedies. In fact, in discussing the multiple functions of space in Shakespeare, and in early modern English texts for that matter, I paid particular attention to *The Winter's Tale* (Percec 2014, 172-6), describing how the intensity of the marital relation between Leontes and Hermione is circumscribed by the domestic space. More specifically, I looked at a certain location in the play, deliberately referred to in multiple, ambiguous ways by various characters, the room where the queen spent her years of confinement, also the place where the entire family gets reunited for the happy ending. After the presumed dead daughter is found and acknowledged by the remorse-

stricken father, they are both invited by the loyal servant Paulina to see the statue of the late queen and, while they admire the realism of the representation, the statue comes back to life, revealing the true Hermione, who, as alive as ever, is full of love and forgiveness. This room is an intermediate space, neither the court, nor the wilderness, where other moments of the plot were allocated; a shelter used for 16 years, polymorphous in its users' and visitors' view: a "chapel" (a quiet and isolated place), a "gallery" (hosting Hermione's statue), a kitchen (Leontes' references to "eating"), a hospital (Hermione recovered from her broken heart), a prison (Hermione didn't leave this room for a decade and a half, having no contact with the outer world), a "poorhouse" (Paulina modestly makes excuses to the king for the room's inadequacy), etc. The reader is offered no clue about the architecture, design, material arrangement of this environment, so they can only assume that this complete absence of detail must signify. Although this is clearly a habitat, the only lodgings known to the queen for 16 years, it is anything but private, since no trace of life is detectable by the visitors, who step in it, unsuspecting, as they would do in the impersonal space of a "gallery." But it seems that the more neutral this ambience is, the more probable is the reconciliation with the husband and the reunion with the long lost daughter, Perdita. In a territory which has no identification marks, which bears the imprints of no family member, the making-up scenario seems less fantastic, as if the room plays the role of a supreme arbiter.

It is true that the chapel-cum-gallery in *The Winter's Tale* is less famous than other hot spots in Shakespeare's plays, but it is crucial in understanding how the Bard employs the terrain, especially the domestic one, as a reflection of the way in which the early modern society regarded geography, spatial organization, and space control. A first feature is the permanent in-betweenness of space, neither public, nor totally private, or intimate, neither inside, nor outside, neither comfortable, nor completely uncomfortable, neither sheltering, nor exposing, etc. It is easy to conclude that this in-betweenness of many Shakespearean locations is not only a metaphoric comment on the characters' understanding of the world and their positioning within this universe. The numerous studies in the material aspects of the medieval and early modern home (for example, Cowen Orlin 2009) indicate that, even for the elites, privacy was an unachievable desideratum. Large country houses, for the aristocracy, had multifunctional halls, in which people ate, slept, and entertained guests, while upper floor rooms remained non-separate well into the modern age. For the middling sort, who lived in the ever growing towns, privacy was even harder to obtain, with crammed houses arranged in rows in narrow streets.

If we relate space with gender, as numerous recent studies have (Flather 2011, Trull 2013), the ambiguity is maintained. Earlier anthropologists like Philippe Ariès in his famous *History of Private Life* (1989) attempted to describe the boundaries between public and private, between inside and outside, between self and other, arguing these notions were not perceived as opposite items in a binary pair during the early modernity. They were areas with fluid boundaries, with no clear-cut distinction between them. “Private” was, at most, a “gregarious private” (Ariès and Duby 1989, 47), a universe which was familiar and friendly to the individual, in which the others were known faces, comfortable company, but in which little, if any, privacy could be gained. In a dangerous world, the relations of vassalage and other forms of dependence, the belonging to a community was a guarantee of survival. As the Middle Ages approached the early stages of modernity, though, the rise of individualism was favoured by: the growing importance of the state over smaller communities and local leaders; the new attitude towards family, with less pressure from dynastic principles over nuclear structures and modern forms of sociability; and, most importantly, a different perception of daily, material life and spatial organization. As the period advanced, the domestic interiors changed, becoming more functional, though perhaps not yet intimate, in our contemporary understanding of the term. The forms of personal privacy, “interiority, atomization, spatial control, intimacy, [...] secrecy” (Cowen Orlin 2009, 2) are today taken for granted, but during the early modern period they were part of an experience on the edge.

The balcony

If the chapel in *The Winter's Tale* is a less famous Shakespearean location, the closet in *Hamlet*, the cavern with the boiling cauldron in *Macbeth*, the bed where Desdemona is killed in *Othello* and, of course, the balcony where Romeo and Juliet make their vows are major spots (and sights). Of those, perhaps only the closet bears as many marks of in-betweenness as the balcony. The closet is the mini- or pseudo-room separated from Queen Gertrude's bedchamber by a curtain. Behind this curtain, Polonius hides to eavesdrop and finds his death when Hamlet, coming to have a private conversation with his mother, assumes he is Claudius. Hamlet's haste to put his sword into the curtain without checking must be explained by his conviction that the function of this space, the closet, is unique and unequivocal. The closet is where the queen may retire to pray, the only cell of privacy in a palace in which, like in any medieval building, people come and go and everyone can witness what

everyone else is doing. However, it is the curtain which separates the chamber, frequented by sons, ladies in waiting, and other royal attendants, from the secluded closet and, therefore, this piece of cloth makes all the difference between two forms of habitat, the former, although called a bedchamber, a public space of family and household rituals, the latter, a private space of meditation and secrecy. Hamlet wrongly expects the only other person with a right to invade the closet is his mother's husband. In fact, the queen seems to have lost even this final resource of privacy, now occupied professionally by the court's official spy. The curtain both increases and diminishes the private potential of the closet, covering while it exposes and reveals.

Similarly, the balcony of Juliet's bedroom is a dual space: an extension of the maiden's intimate chamber, which makes the cell accessible from the outside world. Had the room not had a balcony with a window, the initiation of the star-cross'd lovers' relationship would have been delayed, or perhaps wouldn't have blossomed at all. According to the OED, a balcony is "a platform projecting from the wall of a building with a balustrade or railing along its outer edge, often with access from a door or window," thus an extension of the interior of a house towards the exterior, being neither in, nor out, separated from the world (by the rail), but connected to it (accessible and visible). The technicalities of the lovers' meeting point have incited the visual imagination of artists in the process of Shakespeare's reception more than anything else. I will not refer here to how a film director's vision has been responsible for the development of one of the most commercial Shakespearean avatar (George Cukor's in 1936) because this is the focus of another chapter in this book. I will, instead, briefly mention the blooming business of painting and sketching scenes from Shakespeare, which began with Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in the 1790s, continued with the enthusiastic assimilation of the Bard's stories by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and ended with the conservative Victorian and Edwardian illustrations.

In Boydell's Gallery, there is probably the first (painter John Francis Rigaud's) visual representation of the Veronese lovers' consummated relationship, projected, in the viewers' imagination, with the help of the said balcony. Juliet and, in the background, the nurse, in typically baroque attire and posture, are standing on a railed terrace, while Romeo is disentangling from the girl's arms, sitting on the rail, ready to climb down. In full colour, the painting has the first rays of sunrise shine fully on the still embraced lovers, while a somewhat frightened nurse, standing by the chamber door, is hiding in the shadows of the night that has passed. Ford Madox Brown's 1867 painting, tributary to the Pre-Raphaelite technique

(minute detail, vibrant colours, great clarity, among others), is even more explicit and pragmatic. The rosy pigment used for the sky indicates it is dawn time, while the roofs and spears in the backdrop place the story in a typically Italian landscape. Romeo has one leg thrown over the rail of the balcony, a rope twisted around his slender thigh. He is putting a kiss on the neck of an enraptured Juliet, her early modern bodice cut a trifle too low for historical accuracy. William Hatherell's 1912 "O, Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore Art Thou Romeo?" would be suitable as a prim and proper illustration of a classical edition of the play. Juliet, alone and chaste on the moon-lit, ivy-clad stone balcony, looking in the distance, over the tops of Mediterranean pine trees, is the perfect equivalent of a Romantic *châtelaine*, the heroine in search of a hero, Romeo yet to arrive. This is, of course, only a selection of representative visual illustrations of Romeo and Juliet, or just Juliet, on the said balcony, the list continuing almost endlessly.

The window

But all this discussion about the balcony, in painting, film, or tourism, is completely pointless because there is no such thing as a balcony in any of the five acts of Shakespeare's tragedy. To support the truth of this, the following is a complete list of locations in *Romeo and Juliet*: Verona, a public place, a street, a room in Capulet's house, a hall in Capulet's house, a lane, Friar Laurence's cell, Juliet's chamber. Finally, the closest Shakespeare gets to the "balcony," is "a window, above." Two scenes are set here: Act II, scene 2, when the two lovers confess their feelings for each other, and Act III, scene 5, when Romeo and Juliet, having probably consummated their affair, say good-bye and plan to be reunited after feigning death. The "window above" bears some of the architectural characteristics of the "balcony:" it is a space in between inside and outside, it is elevated from ground level, it connects with and also separates the intimacy of Juliet's chamber from a rather crowded, and male, exterior (the streets, lanes, and places are public, with citizens, servants, heroes and villains, cousins and rivals roaming them constantly).

Women's negotiation of the public/private boundary in the early modern period was subject to the anxiety of drawing too much attention to them, argues Mary E. Trull (2013, 84). Public exposure and popular scrutiny, various forms of notoriety are a real danger for a good woman's reputation, something that many Shakespearean heroines dread. A woman with an exposed reputation is a fallen woman, the laughing stock of streets and taverns, the very places populated by the very citizens lurking outside

the walls of the Capulet house and window. The public exposure of a gentlewoman, wife or, even worse, maiden, is the most degrading form of publicity, and many Shakespearean and early modern texts dramatize the female experience of leaving the private to enter the public space, attracting negative observation and judgment. This is a common trope in the tragi-comedies, where heroines are suspected of having abandoned the domestic space with its respective duties, being involved in the Bard's famous "bed tricks." Juliet's and her family's good name is in serious danger because of this breach in the Capulet clan fortress, the window, which is in the middle of an orchard, at a stone's throw from the neighbouring lane, the public place where rivals and duelists meet. The window (terrace/balcony) is the extension of Juliet's chamber, a gendered space, in which only female characters have access: Juliet herself, the nurse, and Lady Capulet. The chamber is the place where all decisions affecting the maiden's life and name are discussed—the marriage her parents impose, the secret affair, the elopement, etc.—in other words, a space in which family control and individual freedom are competing for the upper hand, negotiating an outcome in which power and gender hierarchies play the most important part.

In the early modern period, numerous (male) moralists considered that gendered duties were principles that provided people with "a divinely ordained and natural spatial system through which human experience should be organized" (Flather2011, 1), i.e. that men and women knowing their place was a matter to be taken literally. A household space that was clearly gendered helped people learn better how to do their duties and what rules not to disobey; not trespassing spatial boundaries also meant for males and females not going against the orders of society about their part to be played in the micro-universe and in the Chain of Being. Just as there were tasks to be undertaken specifically and exclusively by women, so were there spaces associated with these tasks, spaces with a dual nature, of shelter and protection, on the one hand, and of confinement and punishment, on the other. A kitchen, a closet, a bedroom, a private chapel, a lying-in room, a nursery were all female provinces, where a few moments of intimacy, in a permanently crowded household and busy program of chaste and honest visibility, were possible, but also where the dynamics of power relations and control were most successfully exerted.

The orchard

An extension of the maiden's (or woman's) bedchamber is, in the good medieval Christian tradition, the garden. Throughout western history, in

fact, women have been attracted by the garden for reasons ranging from ecology, physical exercise, aesthetics, and spirituality. As Twigs Way puts it (2006, v), “[w]eeders, artists, housewives, designers, society refugees, plant lovers, and even just plain ‘gardeners’; the history of the garden is a history of women.” But, like other forms of history (versus her-story), this mini-story is also one that has been neglected and dismissed as small, uneventful, one from which few lessons, if any, could be learnt. Women in the garden are not the famous landscape designers, the grand estate owners, the audacious explorers and tamers of the wild, the influential scientists. They are those who silently and discreetly, but often self-rewardingly, lived in the vicinity and protective shade of the garden, the park, or the orchard. Recent writings on this topic (see especially Way 2006) offer an overview of female spirituality and efficiency from the viewpoint of gardening in a narrative that begins with the convent-like gardens of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, through the baroque displays of the 18th century, the romanticism of the Victorian period and the necessities of the war-time vegetable plot in the first half of the 20th century.

The medieval garden was the earthly equivalent of the Garden of Paradise, a territory that belonged rightfully both to Eve, who had named all the plants in Eden, and to Virgin Mary, an enclosed locus of transformation and transfiguration. Rose arbours, clean sources of water, scented flowers and vividly coloured birds grow and live forever behind the protective walls—*hortus conclusus*, the enclosed garden, is a virginal realm of natural and spiritual fertility. *Hortus conclusus* can take the shape of a walled monastic yard, a flower garden, a vegetable plot, a hothouse, a fruit orchard, in many songs, poems, prayers, illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. The horticultural world was then, and has been ever since, the special domain of womanhood, “symboliz[ing] [the female] virtues and echo[ing] her virginity” (Way 2006, 3). The walled orchard or garden reflects the circumscribed, secluded lives of women who inhabit an enclave, which is prescriptively private, their necessary virtue being protected and guaranteed by this natural area, which acts as a buffer between domesticity and the public sphere, the marketplace, the male universe. It is in this *hortus conclusus* that female activities are carried: not only gardening, but also reading and writing letters to other women, looking after the children, meditating, being creative in an unobtrusive way. But it is also in the enclosed garden that passions arise, many of them illicit.

In this context, the way in which Shakespeare chooses to arrange the space for the star-cross’d lovers’ affair is significant. Act II, scene I, the

stage directions: “A lane by the wall of Capulet’s orchard, Capulet’s orchard.” The orchard appears first as the place that shelters Juliet Capulet from the outside, presumably also from potentially dangerous Montague men. It appears again in Act III, when Juliet and her nurse discuss the secret affair and the meager chances for its success in the context of the two families’ rivalry, her parents’ decision to have her married to a man who can strengthen their alliances, and, in general, her filial duty and the decorum expected of a maiden of gentle birth. Finally, the orchard is featured in Act III, scene 5, when Juliet and Romeo appear together “above, at the window”, a clear spatial indication that Romeo has taken possession of Juliet’s body, just as he has taken possession of this enclosed space. The window of Juliet’s bedchamber, just like the wall that surrounds the orchard, becomes a fortress, a common enough trope in the medieval symbolic kit of *amour courtois*. The woman is to be besieged and conquered, she will resist and then she will surrender. Spatially, the strategy described by Shakespeare works along the same coordinates: in the first orchard scene, Juliet is above, Romeo below, standing adoringly, but also, possibly, lurking dangerously; in the second, Juliet descends, with her female confidante, in the walled garden, a space which is fitting for her confession, secrecy, and passion; in the third scene, she is back “above”, but so is Romeo, who has successfully beset the female fortress and his elevated position announces his changed status from a pretender to a rightful owner.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to present the famous balcony in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* in a double hypostasis, as a space both real and fictional. Insofar as the Capulets and the Montagues are characters in a tragedy, which Shakespeare placed in Verona for the exoticism of an Italian place name, the balcony is a figment of imagination, just like the cauldron from which the three witches extract the vision of Macbeth’s future. However, the balcony is not imaginary only in the sense that since Juliet did not exist in real life, she could not have owned a house, in Verona or elsewhere, with a balcony or without. It is a space that has changed in time, together with the complex process of reception and adaptation which has affected all Shakespearean afterlife, especially in the contemporary, commodified and popular culture.

But the balcony is not to be dismissed as a mere marketing product. It has a genuine—though this choice of words may be tricky in an argument about reality and fantasy—counterpart in the young lovers’ tragedy, a

counterpart which reflects an entire culture of privacy and domesticity. The window above and the orchard below are legitimate equivalents which boost the potential of the “balcony” projected against the backdrop of early modern mentalities about feminine worlds, secrecy and intimacy, and the control of space as a result of gender hierarchies.

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CHAPTER TWO

THERE IS NO BALCONY IN *ROMEO AND JULIET*: ONLY A LOVE SCENE

PIA BRÎNZEU

Introduction

The most famous love scene in Shakespeare's drama and – why not? – in world literature is a fake. Not the scene, not the love declarations of the two protagonists, but the balcony. The word “balcony” never appears in Shakespeare's play. Various stage-directions in the well-known first scene of Act II indicate: “Enter Juliet aloft,”¹ “Enter Juliet above at a window,”² and “Juliet appears/enters above at a window.”³ Later, when Juliet is called by the Nurse and exits twice the stage, she returns to the window. The stage directions say: “Re-enter Juliet above.” There is no balcony mentioned anywhere. Even Romeo refers to a window when he looks up admiringly to see Juliet appearing to him like a rising sun: “But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.” (II. 1. 45)⁴

But did Shakespeare really know what a balcony was? Lois Leveen (2014b), “a flagrant Shakespeare adaptor”, as she called herself, after having published her novel *Juliet's Nurse*, is adamant: not only that there is no balcony in *Romeo and Juliet*, there is no balcony in all of Shakespeare's drama and in all of Shakespeare's England.⁵ That is why

¹ Shakespeare 1988:345.

² Shakespeare n.d.:751.

³ Shakespeare 1824:754; 1843:38; 1868:25; 1874:516; 1906:102; 1923:1074; 1968: 912.

⁴ All quotations are given from Shakespeare 1988.

⁵ Leveen is not exactly right in her statement: there is one stage direction in *Titus Andronicus* which mentions a balcony. It is to be found in the last scene of the

balconies greatly astonished English travelers who went to Italy. Tom Coryat, in his 1611 account of the tour of the Continent he undertook three years earlier, describes something that was a balcony:

I noted another thing in these Venetian Palaces...and it is very little used in any other country that I could perceive in my travels, saving only in Venice and other Italian Cities. Somewhat above the middle of the front of the building, or...a little beneath the toppe of the front they have right opposite unto their windows, a very pleasant little tarrasse, that jutteth or butteth out from the maine building: the edge whereof is decked with many pretty little turned pillars, either of marble or free stone to leane over. These kind of tarrasses or little galleries of pleasure...serve only for this purpose, that people may from that place as from a most delectable prospect contemplate and view the parts of the City round about them. (Levine 2014b)

There is no balcony in Shakespeare's sources either. In *Giuletta e Romeo* (1554), Matteo Bandello places his heroine at a window:

The windows of Giuletta's chamber overlooked a narrow passage, a farmshed being opposite; and when Romeo passed along the main road, on reaching the top of the passage he often saw the girl at her window, who always smiled and seemed delighted to see him. He often went there at night and stopped in this passage, as it was unfrequented, and also because, if he stood opposite Giuletta's window, he could sometimes hear her speak. (Bandello 1985, 181)

In Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), another probable Shakespearean source, Romeus is described passing by Juliet's windows:

And while with ling'ring step by Juliet's house he passed,
And upwards to her windows high his greedy eyes did cast,
His love that looked for him there 'gan he straight espy. (Brooke 1908 lines 439-441)

Charles Lamb (1985,12) rewrote the play in 1807 without mentioning a balcony. The young lover, Lamb says,

leaped the wall of an orchard which was at the back of Juliet's house. Here he had not remained long, ruminating on his new love, when Juliet appeared above at a window, through which her exceeding beauty seemed to break like the light of the sun in the east.

play, when Lucius kills Saturninus and "LUCIUS, MARCUS, and others go up into the balcony" (V.3.65 in Shakespeare n.d.:742).

The balcony appeared for the first time in *Giuletta e Romeo*, Luigi da Porto's 1524 version of the story:

It happened one night, as if ordained by Love itself, that the moon shone out more brilliantly than was her wont, that Romeo, climbing the balcony walls, was seen by the damsel who, whether by chance or hearing someone stirring, came to the balcony, and opening the casement windows caught sight of her lover. (da Porto 1921)

German,⁶ Hungarian,⁷ Romanian,⁸ and Albanian⁹ translators mention a window. French translations alternate the window with the balcony.¹⁰ Other translations say that Juliet appears above.¹¹ Even today's critics are divided into two groups. There are those who refer to a balcony when the two lovers reveal their love: "when he next sees her on the balcony, he addresses her as the sun, the physical representation of the light of God" (Line 2004, 17), or "that's why the balcony scene, with its gorgeous speeches between the divided lovers, works so powerfully—and perhaps why it has become the play's most potent image" (Dickson 2009, 325). And there are those who place Juliet at a window: "'Fain would I dwell on form —,' says Juliet from her window to Romeo in the moonlit orchard below" (Levin 2004, 164).

In general, illustrations of older and newer editions of the play stick to the balcony. Painters also feel that it has become quintessential for Shakespeare's tragedy and that they cannot ignore it, even if the text refers to a window.¹² Examples abound: John Massey Wright's watercolor

⁶ "Julia erscheint oben an einem Fenster" in Shakespeare 1842:768; 1882a:374; Rötsher 1864:137.

⁷ "Julia fönt egy ablakban megfelen" in Shakespeare 1901: 295; "Julia megjelenik fent az ablakban" in Shakespeare 1964a:76.

⁸ "Julietta se arată/apare la fereastră (deschisă)" in Shakespeare 1848:76; Shakespeare 1882b: 35; 1964b:541; 2016:105; "Julietta apare în pervazul ferestrei" in Shakespeare 1907:29.

⁹ "Zhulietta duket lart në një dritare" in Shekspir 1957:34.

¹⁰ "Juliette (ap)paraît à la fenêtre" in Shakespeare 1910:37, 1961:125; "Juliette apparaît à son balcon et rêve à la nuit sans voir Roméo" in Shakespeare 1948:73; "Juliette au balcon du pavillon à gauche" in Demogeot 1852:36; "Juliette paraît à un balcon" in Shakespeare 1887: 316.

¹¹ "Julia erscheint oben" in Shakespeare 1925:288; "Julietta se arată sus" in Shakespeare 1964c (1912):315.

¹² In *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* 1912:57, the text says: "Juliet appears above at a window", but two illustrations and the inner cover show her on a balcony; in *Shakespeare's Romeo und Julia* 1875:35 and in Walter Victor

(1800), Ford Madox Brown's (1870) and Sir Frank Dicksee's (1884) oil paintings are but a few of the old paintings that picture the balcony. Present-day illustrated adaptations for younger readers show Juliet on the balcony, adding such comments: "This scene from *Romeo and Juliet* is very famous. Many people call it 'the balcony scene'. Juliet speaks from the balcony of her bedroom window". Indications are even given how to play the scene and how to build the balcony: "The audience will love it." (Shakespeare 2007, 46)

Explanations for the association of Shakespeare's love scene with a "balconied" Juliet are quite numerous. Only on the balcony can Juliet speak to Romeo without being heard by the Nurse. When the latter interrupts the scene by calling Juliet from "within", as indicated in all editions of the play, we logically infer that Juliet is somewhere out and responds therefore with "I come." In the Globe theatre, Juliet was probably situated in the gallery above the stage wall, a place known to have been used by Shakespeare's contemporaries for the balcony scene. Moreover, since the Renaissance Juliet was interpreted by a boy-actor, she had to be kept as far away as possible from Romeo. No kissing, no hugging, no holding hands could happen between the two lovers, although their words encourage the actors and actresses of today to show as many signs of affection as possible.

But what happens in the numerous postmodern fictional adaptations of the tragedy? Is there a balcony in such novels as *Escape from Verona* by David Gray (1996), *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* (2006) by Lisa Fiedler, *Juliet* by Anne Fortier (2010), and *Juliet's Nurse* (2014) by Lois Leveen? Do these authors feel that the balcony has become an irresistible modern issue, despite its absence from Shakespeare's play?

Lois Leveen (2014b) is the only one who avoids all references to the balcony. She even rejected her agent's idea to place the image of the balcony on the cover of *Juliet's Nurse* so that ignorant readers should know what the book was about. The other novelists mentioned above use the balcony with two aims: either to recreate Shakespeare's romantic scene or to ironically deconstruct, parody, or caricature the atmosphere of the lovers' encounter. While in the former case the readers are invited to pay attention to the intertextual nature of the rewrites, in the latter they are required to detach themselves from the exotic medieval or Renaissance story and follow a new, unexpected direction towards an

1953:214, the text says "Julia erscheint oben an einem Fenster", but the window is replaced by a balcony in the illustrations.

ironic present-day context. This is what the present essay aspires to demonstrate.

Star-favoured lovers: Rosaline and Benvolio

Lisa Fiedler's novel *Romeo's Ex. Rosaline's Story* (2006) is a sequence of narrations and interior monologues which alternate the voices of Shakespeare's four major male characters: Romeo, Tybalt, Mercutio, and Benvolio. Surprisingly enough, the only feminine voice is that of Rosaline, with whom the Shakespearean Romeo is in love before he meets Juliet, and who is never present in *Romeo and Juliet*. Lisa Fiedler turns the absent Rosaline into the central character of her novel and makes Romeo encounter her in a healer's house, where she takes care of diseased people, and where Romeo brings Petruchio (the main character in *The Taming of the Shrew*) with broken ribs and a shoulder dislodged by a constable who caught the young man dallying with his wife.

The protagonists' first person narrations offer explanations, comments, and interpretations of old and new situations, amalgamated in a complex intertextual tissue. The major moments of the tragic plot are closely followed by Fiedler, but, if in Shakespeare's play the characters are as much in love with language as with each other, believing that "words can beget emotions, alter identities, and ordain events" (Conrad 1995:60), Fiedler returns to everyday non-poetic speech, cultivating a minimalist discourse. Although her characters frequently repeat Shakespeare's lines, they ironically mirror the poetic style of the Renaissance, offering a postmodern suggestion that the greatest of all the great playwrights cannot be rivalled. He can only be more or less successfully appropriated, pirated, or subordinated to contemporary scenarios. Fiedler also adds her own bombastic rhyming couplets at the end of some chapters, again with an ironic touch, because they are much longer than the traditional iambic pentameter, and are meant to conclude the chapters of the most frequently caricatured protagonists—Romeo, Mercutio, and Tybalt. Whenever Fiedler's characters use Shakespeare's replies, the lines are given in italics. This is a very useful strategy for making the readers become aware of the Shakespearean part in the mixture. The source is easily recognizable, even if it is rewritten in prose. One example will suffice to underline this peculiar construction of the novel. It is Benvolio's interpretation of Mercutio's speech about Queen Mab:

Mercutio, in fine, angry spirits, teases our friend [Romeo], and does so with bold, randy humour—some windy speech about the fairy’s midwife, the mythical Queen Mab. He wreaks his poetry upon us, casting a wordy spell as he chants on and on so that even the night listens. “Dreams, and chariots. Cricket’s bones. Elflocks, prayers, and ready maids...” /.../ I whirl on Mercutio. “*This wind, you talk of, blows us from ourselves,*” I shout, more harshly than I mean to. “*Supper is done, and we shall come too late!*” Mercutio growls at me, then chuckles and rolls his eyes. He snaps me a bow of acquiescence, then strides off in the direction of the feast. But Romeo stays me, with a heavy hand upon my forearm. His voice goes soft. “*Some consequence yet hanging in the stars shall bitterly begin his fearful date with this night’s revels...*” (*Benvolio*).

The action of Fiedler’s novel takes place in 1595, a hot summer in which the hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets makes the inhabitants of Verona “greet their neighbours at sword point” (*Rosaline*). Rosaline is worried: although the origin of the feud is long forgotten, the two households behave without dignity, hurling stones, insulting one another, and mercilessly killing their enemies. The first discussion between the seventeen-year-old Rosaline and her thirteen-year-old cousin Juliet reveals their confusion about the obligation to hate the Montagues. However, the context in which the two Capulets express their desire to have peace between the inimical families is quite unexpected: they go to steal flowers for the feast given by the Capulets in no other place but the Montague garden.

The same ironic frame is kept in the novel’s various balcony scenes, used to contrast and, indirectly, to ridicule the romantic atmosphere of Shakespeare’s play. The first time Fiedler mentions a balcony is after the Capulet ball, when the guests leave, and Rosaline tries to convince Juliet that Romeo declared his love in the same hollow words in which, not long before, he wanted to convince Rosaline of his passion for her. She advises Juliet to remain on the balcony because some stargazing might take her mind off Romeo, a piece of advice that exhibits the same sympathetic mockery of love that pervades Shakespeare’s play in its first act. Not believing in the ideal of love, Rosaline makes fun of Romeo’s absurdities and of the mighty force which makes fools of all those whom it too much possesses. His inflated rhetoric is rather comic:

Chaste, sayeth she? Waste, say I! What will medicine know of her perfection? A suffering man consumed with the horror of his illness shan’t recognize the grace of her hands as they minister to him! Hands made to caress doomed to cleansing wounds, setting bones, bleeding the sickness