

READING *ROMEO AND JULIET'S* ILLUSTRATIONS AS PARATEXT: A CLOSE-UP ON THE BALCONY SCENE

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ABSTRACT. *Reading “Romeo and Juliet”’s Illustrations as Paratext: A Close-up on the Balcony Scene.* Paratextual elements, particularly illustrations, play a crucial role in how the texts they accompany are understood by their readers. As instances of intersemiotic translation—the result of transfer of linguistic signs into visual ones—, they direct the readers’ meaning-making process by encapsulating not only the illustrators’ own artistic vision, but also by bringing to the fore socio-cultural elements of both the historical context and its contemporary readership. The range of intersemiotic translation techniques in use to do this lead to the creation of illustrations whose degree of faithfulness to the text varies. This article considers a number of illustrations corresponding to the balcony scene in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* that were produced in

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a time span between the 18th century and the present. It looks in more detail at how these illustrations faithfully connect to the original play and to the broad historical context in which it was written or, rather, use them as input only to reflect other attitudes, points of view, socio-cultural tendencies, etc.

Keywords: *illustrations as paratext, intersemiotic translation, the balcony scene, William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," text re-creation*

REZUMAT. Ilustrațiile tragediei Romeo și Julieta ca paratext: prim plan cu scena balconului. Elementele paratextuale, inclusiv ilustrațiile, au un rol crucial în felul în care textele pe care acestea le însoțesc sunt înțelese de cititori. Ca exemple de traducere intersemiotică – rezultat al transferului între semnele lingvistice și semnele vizuale –, ilustrațiile ghidează procesul de construire a sensului de către cititori nu numai prin faptul că sintetizează viziunea artistică proprie a ilustratorului, ci și prin aceea că aduc în prim plan elemente atât ale contextului istoric și ale cititorului contemporan. Gama de tehnici de traducere intersemiotică folosite pentru a face aceste lucruri duce la propunerea unor ilustrații fidele sau mai puțin fidele textului. Prezentul articol analizează modul în care câteva ilustrații corespunzătoare scenei balconului din *Romeo și Julieta*, piesa lui William Shakespeare, produse în intervalul de timp dintre secolul al XVIII-lea și prezent, dovedesc.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ilustrațiile ca paratext, traducere intersemiotică, scena balconului, Romeo și Julieta de William Shakespeare, re-crearea textului*

Introduction

Though it is the literary text itself that lies at the core of a book, the paratextual elements that surround it are of no less importance in capturing the readers' interest. Consequently, these elements have also often been of concern to scholars.

Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean's are perhaps the most often cited names when it comes to directing attention to those elements that accompany a text (author's name, title, preface, illustrations, reviews of the book, interviews with the author) and those elements that prolong it "in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning, to *make it present*, to assure its presence in the world, its reception and its consumption" (1991, 261).

All paratextual elements represent "areas of transaction" (1991, 261), sites where meaning is negotiated with the readers, based on what the author himself/ herself, the preface writer, the reviewer, the interviewer, or the

illustrator suggest to be (the) possible key(s) to the interpretation of the text these elements surround. Thus, they play a crucial role in guiding readers through the hermeneutic process.

Of all paratextual elements, illustrations are the only ones that do not encapsulate meaning in the verbal code, but function as “iconic paratext” (Genette and Maclean 1991, 265). As such, they may well be looked at as instances of intersemiotic translation, anchored in the text, but zooming in on some of the details it offers, condensing, making explicit or implicit, omitting or adding elements as compared to it, just like in interlingual translation (as we have shown in previous studies on intersemiotic translation, e.g. Percec, Pungă 2021). The selection of intersemiotic translation techniques as well as the results of resorting to these techniques, i.e. the illustrations themselves, presuppose that the illustrator has already placed the text under his/ her own lens, and has given it a personal interpretation. Quite often, as Genette and Maclean (1991, 265) suggest, this personal interpretation carries marks of the influence of the “factual” paratext. To add to what the French scholar thought the factual paratext encompassed—among other things, “the historical awareness of the period which saw the birth of a work,” which “is rarely a matter of indifference when reading it” (1991, 265)—, we suggest that the historical and cultural awareness of the period when the text was received, interpreted and illustrated also impacts the shape its illustrations take.

This article focuses on a number of illustrations from a range of historical periods, in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*—more exactly, on illustrations inspired by the famous “balcony scene.” It seeks to interpret them, based on what was said above, as artefacts carrying a specific cultural, historical, and personal imprint and offering, via visual signs, suggestions to the readers in various epochs for interpreting Shakespeare’s own words.

Shakespeare Illustrated

The history of illustrated editions of Shakespeare’s *Complete Works* coincides with the history of Shakespeare’s appropriation and the playwright’s transformation into a national and, later, international cultural asset. After a first century of oblivion, in the 1700s, the joint efforts of actors, writers and visual artists bring Shakespeare back to the general public’s attention as the “Bard,” the uncontested literary and moral authority.

It is worth noting that, while particular examples of the process of responding to Shakespeare’s play through images have been documented (there are studies on the Boydell Gallery, on the Pre-Raphaelites’ interest in Shakespeare, on some famous illustrators of the Golden Age, etc.) to the best of our knowledge there is no comprehensive study—diachronic or otherwise—of

illustrated Shakespeare. And, as the paper focuses on the balcony in *Romeo and Juliet*, to the best of our knowledge, there is no comprehensive study about the illustrations of this scene.

Among the earliest—and most notable—examples of Shakespeare revival in the eighteenth century, which contributed to the stabilization of the myth, was The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, a project put forward in 1786 by John Boydell, printer and engraver. His goal, via the publication of the first illustrated edition of the Elizabethan playwright's works, was also that of establishing a national school of painting. In order to achieve this idea he brought together the most important and talented British artists, as well as new, undiscovered talents, who all shared, if not a common style, at least a common vision about national culture and history. Boydell invited them to illustrate famous scenes from Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies. As Rosie Dias (2013, 31) argues, The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, which, over a decade, exhibited 170 original paintings to be reproduced as illustrations in a *Complete Works* edition, located national identity and specificity in Shakespeare's plays.

The Victorian period, with its Edwardian and interwar extensions, added another dimension to Shakespeare's reception in Britain, well reflected in the illustration of his original and adapted works. Not just a national cultural icon, the Bard was now a vehicle of education, an arbiter of good taste, a role model for families, from junior to senior members. This may seem surprising, given the violence of many Shakespearean scenes and the bawdiness of his language, but the nineteenth-century Shakespeare industry heavily censored both, on stage and in print. The result was either an idealized, escapist version of the plays, or an edulcorated, prudish one. A book that greatly contributed both to the dissemination of Shakespeare's plots among all social strata of the society and to their perception as household goods was Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. First published in 1807 with illustrations from Boydell's gallery, the siblings' ideas caught on, becoming and remaining popular throughout the nineteenth twentieth centuries. Rewriting 20 of Shakespeare's best-known plays, *Tales from Shakespeare* intended, as Mary argued in the preface, to narrate the stories in a language that was friendlier to the readers, without giving up the original text entirely by voiding modern phrasing. The result was an accessible and atemporal text, an impression supported by the illustrations that accompanied the stories. As Jeff A. Menges suggests (2011, 11), if the Lambs' initial intention was a version of Shakespeare that would not be highbrow, but suitable to middle-class tastes and average levels of education, eventually the book's successive editions contributed to the fact that "Shakespeare was embraced as a symbol of British excellence." It is worth noting that the history of the illustrated editions of the *Tales*, reaching a climax of popularity during the Golden Age of illustrations, from the 1880s until the interwar period,

consolidated this reputation of the Elizabethan plays. In Menges' words, "the acceptance of Shakespeare's work on a higher social level made it a respected subject for gallery works, attracting artists not perceived as illustrators" (2011, 10). Artworks inspired by well-known Shakespearean characters and scenes made their way into fine-art circles. The effect was also visible on the book market of illustrated Shakespeare, the Lambs' *Tales* as well as the original texts receiving "gift book treatment" with full-page illustrations that were sophisticated artworks in their own right (Menges 2011, 10).

After more than a century of being a symbol of British excellence, towards the end of the twentieth century, the perception of Shakespeare became that of a pop icon. Appropriation into popular culture is a democratic cultural phenomenon which blurs political and social boundaries, gender, ethnic, and linguistic differences, as well as cultural hierarchies. A reflection of this can be found in the rewriting of the *Complete Works* in a non-canonical or counter-canonical key, but also in the educational projects aimed at increasing the accessibility of the Shakespearean text and reviving the interest of the younger readers in an established cultural authority. If the Lamb's *Tales* were, declaratively, aimed at children, but gained popularity and respect from all age groups, Shakespeare for today's young adults is meant to restyle the Bard as "cool," for entertainment purposes, or as "no fear," for learning purposes. While the list of such projects is quite long, for the purposes of this paper, we would like to mention only two examples, which also capitalize on the visual potential—the graphic novel and manga.

The graphic novel's elitist claims are quite recent, while its origins, in the comic book genre, are more modest. Commercial success was followed by critical and even academic interest in the 1980s, probably beginning with Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist and editor Art Spiegelman's serialized graphic book *Maus* (1980-1991). After this, the graphic novel vogue was responsible for the increased trust of educators in the genre's capacity to bring reading practices into a new age. According to respectable educational journals, graphic novels are good for teachers and students alike, helping them bond around a common goal, that of "moving beyond words" (Knutson 2022, 1). Graphic novels are also said to develop visual literacy, inference skills, as well as to engage reluctant readers. Needless to say that a popular educational and editorial endeavour is that of rendering Shakespeare's plays into graphic novels, designed for different age groups. The experience of the Shakespearean text is layered and gradual, the graphic versions may suggest, as the reader can be initiated into the basic elements of the play (plot, characters, etc.), continues with some familiarity with the Elizabethan verse (in a selection of famous lines), and finishes with the original, complete Shakespeare. The graphic enterprise follows these three stages, providing a "quick text" novel (more image than text), a "plain text" book (Shakespeare re-told with illustrations for every scene) and an "original text" version (the entire Shakespearean text backed with explanatory illustrations).

A genre that literally annihilates cultural and geographical boundaries is manga. A type of graphic novel originating from Japan, manga follows a stylistic framework that goes back to the nineteenth century and is not addressed only to teenagers. More than a genre, in fact, manga is a medium, which covers fictional and nonfictional areas and an almost endless variety of subgenres, from detective fiction and romance, to science fiction and drama. According to Hirohiko Araki (2017), a well-known creator of manga in Japan, this is more than a genre, more than a medium, but rather a synthesis of many art forms and expressions. Given the popularity of manga, Shakespeare as manga became, in the 2000s, an expression of the need to appropriate the Bard's works not only in a manner that was not tributary to a specific time frame, but, more importantly, in a manner that was free of specific cultural influences. Manga is a Japanese medium, with recognizable Japanese specificities, but when it features Shakespeare's famous English-speaking characters, these two cultural extremes neutralize each other, resulting in a hybrid product. However, with a balanced ratio of text and drawing, Manga Shakespeare has become not only an editorial success, but also a critically acclaimed endeavour. The series is coordinated by both a Shakespeare scholar and an educational editor and offers abridged versions of the play that allow readers (and teachers) to focus on key moments from the play's plots. According to the editors (on mangashakespeare.com), Manga Shakespeare is good for learning English as a second language, is suitable for both boys and girls, follows Shakespeare's texts and keeps young readers' interest in Shakespeare alive.

Romeo and Juliet, and the Balcony

There are many locations in Shakespeare's plays that are well-known even to people who have never read a line of Shakespeare or watched a minute of a Shakespearean performance. The ramparts of Elsinore Castle, where Hamlet meets his father's ghost, the Scottish heath, where the three witches mix their potions to answer Macbeth's questions, or the English heath, where King Lear goes mad, are all famous. And they also all have at least approximate real life geographical equivalents. But there are numerous venues described in Shakespeare's plays which are mere figments of imagination, some more obviously so than others. The best-known Shakespearean venue, however, is another figment of imagination, the balcony in *Romeo and Juliet*. In a book dedicated to this famous scene, Percec wrote about how much of the present-day balcony in Verona is the result of a process of appropriation, first for artistic reasons, later for tourists' convenience (Percec in Frențiu 2016, 9). On 23 Via Cappello, in Verona, Italy, there is a house, *detta di Giulietta*, to which tourists have been going on pilgrimage since the mid-nineteenth century. Even though the original Renaissance house did not have a balcony (as few Renaissance

houses ever had), the local municipality had an ancient stone grave, beautifully carved, added to the old architecture, under a certain window, to accommodate the expectations of visitors, unwilling to make the difference between their real life tour of the city and the fictional love scene in Shakespeare's tragedy. More attention to both architectural and textual details would prompt the tourists not to look for the balcony at all, but this old object with a reinvented function is a good example of how consumerist expectations alter physical reality.

The star-crossed lovers meet at Juliet's house twice in the play, in act II scene 2 and in act III scene V. The spatial indications are minimal in the text, referring to a window and an orchard. These places can be added to the full list of locations in the Veronese tragedy: a public place, a street, a room and a hall in the Capulet House, Friar Laurence's cell, a lane, etc. The balcony as such is neither explicitly mentioned nor implicitly described, though the window above could be reminiscent of some of the balcony's specific features: a transition between outside and inside, between public and private, between male and female, between open and secret. The window above, confused with a balcony, is an extension of Juliet's chamber, an intimate, domestic, feminine space, separated from other locations, which are crowded and formal, like the ballroom, or rowdy like the marketplace, filled with citizens. These venues, in the absence of an individualized approach, can be all read as various representations of masculinity. Juliet's chamber, as we learn from Act III, scene V, is a figurative fortress, to which access is permitted only to other females – the Nurse and Lady Capulet, Juliet's mother. An extension of the girl's private room which is still coded as feminine, bearing the same characteristics of enclosure, secrecy, discretion, domesticity, is the garden. Romeo's entering the orchard in order to climb to Juliet's window is the first step towards conquering the woman's private space—and her heart—because the garden is, in western secular and religious traditions, a woman's privilege and responsibility. According to Twigs Way (2006, 5), modest women who worked as weeders, housewives who grew vegetables for their families, nuns who sought spiritual salvation within the walled gardens of monasteries, artists in search of a theme related to nature, and privileged women who used gardening as a pastime, all illustrated the fact that “the history of the garden is a history of women.”

Juliet's complete privacy starts to disintegrate when Romeo, at the beginning of Act II, crosses a real and symbolic boundary, at the end of “a lane by the wall of Capulet's orchard, [into] Capulet's orchard.” What happens next is one of the best-known Shakespearean moments: Juliet being caught unaware while declaring her love for a Montague man and her hope that, for love, he will be ready to give up his name and overcome the family feud. Her love, uttered aloud only because she thought herself alone, is no longer secret and, with this revelation, the affair of the two lovers begins, because Juliet, allowing Romeo to

be privy to her most intimate feelings, has no reason to keep him outside her private chamber (and her body).

What is interesting to observe about the reception of the star-crossed lovers' tragedy is that the visual representations of the play contributed, in the most substantial manner, to the invention of the balcony. The favourite scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, revisited again and again by painters and illustrators, certainly include Friar Laurence's sleeping potion, which Juliet drinks in Act IV to appear dead, the lovers' actual deaths, but none is more popular than the so-called "balcony scene," more properly called "the window" or "the orchard" scene.

Boydell's gallery immortalizes the balcony for the first time in a 1797 painting and engraving by John Francis Rigaud (Figure 1). Victorian painting and illustration are rife with balconies, the lovers' embrace being detailed in rich colours and establishing the two major directions in which this scene is presented—with erotic overtones, like Ford Madox Brown's Pre-Raphaelite 1870 composition (Figure 2), or following the sentimental tradition, like one of the period's favourites, Frank Bernard Dicksee's 1884 painting (Figure 3). These influential painters are important sources of inspiration for almost all subsequent illustrations of the love scene (whether Act II scene 2 or Act III scene 5), which feature a version of the balcony and the lovers' whispered conversation or embrace. Victorian in chronology and later in spirit, illustrations of the original play and of retold versions until the 1920s (H. C. Selous, Figure 4, William Hatherell, Figure 5, or Frank C. Papé, Figure 6) can be regarded as variations on the theme of the balcony.

Recent pictorial adaptations for young adults may sometimes attempt a faithful continuity, as we can see in the graphic novels (Figure 7). But they are so tributary to this topos that, even when trying to displace it, as happens, for example in the Manga Shakespeare genre (Figure 8), the balcony – of a modern block of flats against the cityscape of skyscrapers – is still there.

Nineteenth-century Representations of the Balcony

Among the first known illustrations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is John Francis Rigaud's painting and, later, engraving. A member of the Royal Academy of Arts when Boydell commissioned him to illustrate the scene of Act III scene V, Rigaud provided the gallery with one of the four artworks inspired from the star-crossed lovers' tragedy. A typical neoclassical composition, Rigaud's *Romeo and Juliet* features three characters in eighteenth-century attire in an eighteenth-century décor. The engraving is heavily anchored in the time of its creation, as indicated also by the detail of the railing, a richly decorated wrought ironwork. A rope ladder is hanging from the balustrade.



Figure 1

Source: <https://www.sellingantiques.co.uk/701498/a-georgian-engraving-print-of-romeo-juliet-1797/#>

Romeo's pose, while athletic (sitting astride the railing), is the most sentimental of all, clinging languorously to his beloved before jumping off. Juliet, somewhat maternally but rather sternly, is trying to disentangle herself from his embrace. Sitting upright while Romeo is straddling the balustrade, Juliet also appears taller than her lover. This is a possibly unintentional reversal of gender roles, with a pleading, love-stricken man and a self-assured, poised woman. The nurse in the background is making ample gestures to hasten the separation of the two, thus reinforcing the impression of female control. The composition translates into image the final moments of the lovers' sexual encounter in Act III, scene V, interrupted by the nurse who announces the arrival of Juliet's mother:

Your lady mother is coming to your chamber
The day is broke; be wary, look about. (39-40)

Juliet's apparently more composed state depicted by Rigaud contradicts

the Shakespearean text, where both lovers seem overwhelmed by bad premonitions as they deplore their separation:

Juliet, "Therefore stay yet; thou needst not to be gone (16),
Romeo, "More light and light, more dark and dark our woes!" (36).

Rigaud's engraving selects only Romeo's depressed state to convey a sentimental overtone to the composition.

Considered one of the most romantic artworks on this subject, Frank Bernard Dicksee's *Romeo and Juliet* was created for a luxury edition of the tragedy, illustrating Romeo's line "Farewell, farewell, one kiss and I'll descend" of the same third act and fifth scene. Like Rigaud's, Dicksee's painting presents the balcony from within, the light of dawn outside in contrast with the shadows of the night still lingering inside. In fact, replicated behind the lovers, the structure on which they are shown standing bears the architectural features of a loggia, a covered gallery supported by richly decorated columns. This proves Dicksee's attention to historical and cultural verisimilitude, as these details, together with the rooftops and spires of buildings and churches in the distant background, create a convincing impression of Renaissance Italy.



Figure 2

Source: <https://tumblrpics.com/pics/915132.html#gallery-3>

The artist captures the sense of doom in the lovers' words, quoted in the previous paragraph, in a symbolic way, showing their bodies, prisoners of the dark but aiming for the light. Dicksee's attention for historical detail can also be seen in the display of specific elements in the male protagonist's clothes. Romeo, fully dressed, unlike Juliet, is equipped with a plumed red hat, a sword with a silver handle, a leather coin purse and a red cloak. His readiness to depart is chromatically opposed to Juliet's plain white gown and more static position. Another detail, which is less tributary to historical accuracy and disconnected from the Shakespearean text, but typically Victorian, is the presence of flowers. In the background, on Juliet's side, a bunch of white lilies symbolizes bridal purity and innocence, reminding viewers of the two lovers' secret nuptials. The passion fruit clinging to the marble column on Romeo's side has flowers in full bloom, suggesting that the wedding has just been consummated.

Dicksee's composition is heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite vision, not only in the use of vibrant colours, but also in the interest for the historical past.

The best-known Pre-Raphaelite translation into image of Romeo and Juliet's romantic affair belongs to Ford Madox Brown, a member of this movement who was less concerned with its escapist quality and more with the inclusion of social commentary and even caricature. His *Romeo and Juliet* departs from both Victorian sentimentalism and Pre-Raphaelite Romantic fantasy and presents a slightly taboo-breaking, eroticized version of the love story. Brown has Romeo dressed completely in red, suggesting fiery passion, in contrast with Juliet's golden yellow gown, imitating the hues of the dawning day. Romeo plants a passionate kiss on Juliet's naked and exposed neck and very low-cut décolletage. While his face is hidden from the viewers, Juliet's mimicry and body language suggest a trance-like or, rather, enraptured state. In contrast with Rigaud's composition, which presented a Romeo more determined to stay and a Juliet more inclined to let him go, at the Nurse's advice, Brown's Romeo and Juliet go back into the predictable gender patterns. Romeo's outstretched left arm and hand indicate his resolve and haste to leave, while Juliet's fingers cling to his bodice, in an attempt to hold him still and prolong the moment.

Meticulously, the painter adds a rope ladder to a balcony with wrought iron railing, the only anachronistic element in a painting which, otherwise, observes the Pre-Raphaelite interest in historical accuracy. The balcony is surrounded by a blossoming apple tree, which hints at Romeo's remark in the play:

This bud of love, by summer's ripening
 May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet. (Act II, scene 2, 120-22)



Figure 3

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/DickseeRomeoandJuliet.jpg>

It seems, then, that Brown creates a shortcut between the second act, when the two lovers meet in secret for the first time, and the third act, when they actually make love. This is, in fact, something that Shakespeare himself often did in the plays, accelerating the plots and shortening, often at the risk of unnaturalistic improbability, the temporal and spatial distance between various scenes. Still a promise, the two lovers' affair in Brown's painting may not have been consummated yet, despite the intense erotic charge, which makes viewers wonder whether "the bud" did become "ripe."

Increased sentimentality makes most of the late Victorian and Edwardian illustrations aseptic. Faithfully realistic as well as prudish, suitable for consumption by families with children, most of the illustrated editions during the middle and late Victorian period have a higher degree of formality than their predecessors. One such conservative approach can be seen in the 1864-1868 edition of the *Complete Works*, illustrated by the Victorian artist Henry Courtney Selous, which includes full-page drawings and engravings, with captions guiding readers to the exact lines they are meant to detail. Romeo and Juliet in the black-and-white engraving are re-enacting the separation in Act III scene V:

Juliet: Then, window, let day in and let life out.
Romeo: Farewell, farewell. One kiss and I'll descend. (41-42)

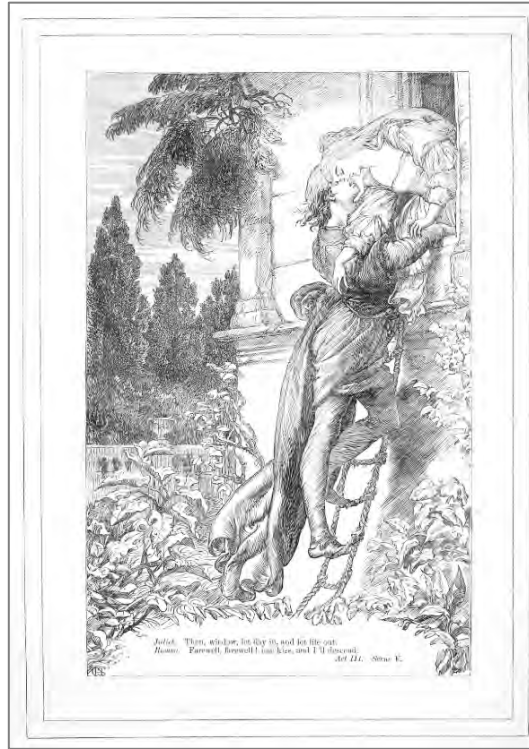


Figure 4

Source: <https://www.openculture.com/2016/09/3000-illustrations-of-shakespeares-complete-works-from-victorian-england.html>

The illustrations, conservative as they are, also display echoes of the Romantic tradition of engraving, perfected by the French artist Gustave Doré, whose propensity for fantasy conveyed a dreamlike dimension to his works and whose great attention to the background and the details of the landscape gave the impression of a three-dimensional experience. Selous borrows something from Ford Madox Brown, too, choosing to hide Romeo's face and to contrast the colours of the lovers' clothing. Juliet's light-coloured gown is matched with her fair hair, not favoured by many nineteenth-century painters, except the same

Brown. A significant architectural detail, among the details of the garden with flowers, the trees in the background and the stones of the walls, is the absence of the balcony, or of the loggia, and their replacement by the original “window above.” The rope ladder is leaning against the wall, and the two lovers’ posture gives a sense of movement to the composition: Juliet is reaching out for a Romeo who is climbing down, her hands holding him feebly, in a gesture that combines despair with resignation. Her lowered gaze and half-closed eyes reinforce this impression.

The Balcony during the Golden Age of Book Illustrations

The aseptic quality of the illustrations continues in the early twentieth century, even if the mentalities have changed dramatically. Regarded as indisputably canonical, Shakespeare is approached in an academic way, with little room for innovation and even less potential for critique. A luxury edition of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* from 1912, published by Hodder and Stoughton, has 22 watercolours by William Hatherell, a painter and illustrator considered suitable as his main subject materials were related to historical fantasy. A balcony scene decorates the frontispiece of the book, showing Juliet alone, at the beginning of act II. Hatherell’s favourite topics, the Arthurian legends, influence the style of the heroine’s dress, making Juliet a generic *châtelaine*, possibly reminiscent of the tragic Lady of Shalott, immortalized by another famous Pre-Raphaelite, John William Waterhouse. Juliet is standing on a moonlit, ivy-clad stone balcony, lost in reverie, her body language overly sentimental (her hand at the back of her head, in a meditative pose). The watercolour’s title, “O, Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore Art Thou Romeo?,” indicates the moment of the play, when Juliet’s private space is invaded by the lover who steals into the orchard and overhears the girl’s declaration of love. Hatherell’s illustration is apparently the most chaste of all because Romeo’s presence is only inferred. However, the perspective is clearly Romeo’s, the heroine being watched upwards, from below. The unsuspecting Juliet on the balcony is, therefore, the subject of the illicit male gaze. This may be an explanation for the surprise and fear the girl voices in the play when she first realizes Romeo has overheard her soliloquy and trespassed into her private space:

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (II, 2, 62-65)



Figure 5

Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hatherell-o-romeo-romeo-wherefore-art-thou-romeo-n02937>

Understandably formal are also the illustrations of adaptations, such as Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. As the book is explicitly targeted at children, many illustrators choose the fairy-tale mode when rendering both tragic and comic Shakespearean subjects. A good example is a 1923 illustration in colour of *Romeo and Juliet* by Frank C. Papé. The British artist was one of the most prolific book illustrators before World War I and during the interwar period, his works decorating well-known editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, *The Odyssey*, retold histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel, among other projects. Combining realistic and fantastic elements, Papé was ideal for children's books with an educational value and the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* were a very good example of such reading material. Coloured in pastel shades, Papé's balcony scene is graceful, even balletic, with the protagonists embracing in a flowing movement. Romeo is climbing on the said blossoming apple tree with rounded pink flowers while standing on his tiptoes, to kiss Juliet on her cheek, chastely. Juliet is leaning over the loggia lovingly, her hands around Romeo's neck. Like the fairy-tale rendition of the balcony scene by H. C. Selous, Papé's illustration features a Titania-like blonde Juliet, in white, unsubstantial garments, in contrast with Romeo's outdoor attire, complete with a sword. The

moment of the play depicted in the illustration is related to the reference to “the bud of love” prepared to ripen, in Act II, scene II, and summarized in the caption with a line from the Lambs’ retelling: “The day was breaking when they parted.” Remarkably, even if this is the most prudish of all illustrations of the balcony scene, it is also the closest in structure to Brown’s *Romeo and Juliet* (the pink apple flowers, Romeo’s extremely dynamic posture in contrast with Juliet’s more static bearing, the chromatic contrast between the two characters, etc.).



Figure 6

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/84301824245809371/>

Revisiting the Balcony in the Twenty-first Century

In visual renditions of the play from our contemporary period, there is a noticeable tendency to intervene in the original Shakespearean text, to add or extract content, to direct attention to issues that may or may not have been relevant to the Elizabethan audiences. The graphic novel, meant primarily for educational purposes, simplifies the plot, reducing it to essential moments, and the illustrations follow suit. The graphic novel version of *Romeo and Juliet*, rewritten in “plain” text by John McDonald and illustrated by Will Volley, is presented, by a reviewer on Amazon, as “inspired [...], depicts every scene of

the play in full-colour illustrations, accompanied by every word of the original text. Authentic yet easy to follow, this exciting adaptation is ideal for purists, students, and readers who appreciate Shakespeare's matchless verse." The accompanying images are reduced to the essential, as seen in the balcony scene that decorates the book cover. This time, both Romeo and Juliet are dressed in red, in an attempt to suggest more gender equality between the two. The tree Romeo is climbing is an unidentified species, a sign that plant and flower symbolism, so important to the Victorians, is no longer relevant for contemporary readers. However, one particular detail is brought to the forefront, a sign that the illustrator intended his composition to target readers informed by the global popular culture and mass tourism. The balcony on which Juliet is standing contains the sculptural details seen by the tourists during their visit to the house *detta di Giulietta*, on 23 Via Cappello, Verona, Italy. The readers who would recognize these specific elements are those who have been engaged in a popular ritual distantly connected to Shakespeare and more closely to the experience of visiting Italy: possibly they have touched Juliet's bronze statue in Verona, hoping to be lucky in love, or they have eaten "Penne Romeo with gorgonzola" at a local restaurant and an ice cream called "Juliet's sighs" at the *gelateria* next door, as even the most basic Veronese travel guide book would recommend.

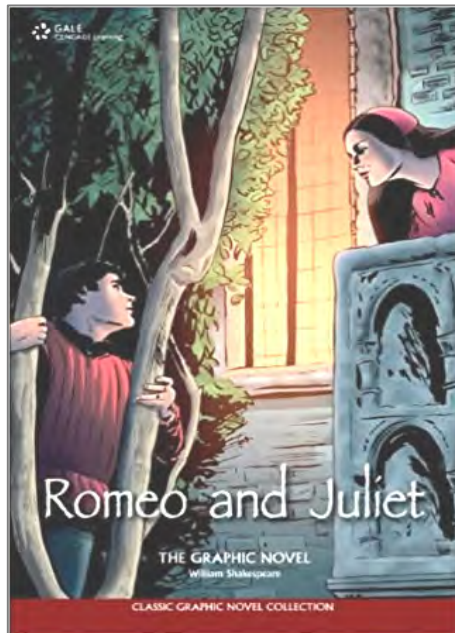


Figure 7

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Romeo-Juliet-Graphic-Classical-Collection/dp/1420506315>

The illustration on the cover is repeated in the book, for Act II, scene 2, from which the author selects the following exchange:

Romeo: Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

Juliet: How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (II, 2, 61-65)

Juliet's spatial position above and Romeo's precarious balance among the branches of the tree are replicated in these lines which also indicate that Juliet initially had the upper hand, reminding us of Rigaud's early work for the Boydell Gallery.



Figure 8

Source: Shakespeare, William, and Sonia Leong. 2007. *Manga Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*. Harry N. Abrams.

Finally, the Manga Shakespeare combines an essentialization of the Shakespearean text with a graphic design that bears little—if any—connection with the Elizabethan world. Even if they are designed by western artists and scholars for a western audience, the Manga Shakespeare comics have recognizable

Japanese manga characteristics such as the big, expressive eyes of the characters, the tall, slender figures, the realistic settings, the vignettes, etc. Manga *Romeo and Juliet* is no exception. The balcony scene contains a transition from two vignettes showing Juliet, preoccupied, talking to herself with sparkling white daisies in the background, to the scene itself, in which the two protagonists are seen from a distance, in an urban garden with geometrically cut shrubs, separated by a (concrete) wall from a modern city with skyscrapers in the distance. Juliet is standing on the balcony (with a transparent glass railing), looking down at a Romeo dressed in severe black (mourning-like) clothes. According to Andreea Șerban (2016, 73), the transparent balcony could also be interpreted as an intertextual reference to the fairy-tale fantasy, where dark-haired Juliet is imprisoned in a glass casket, Snow-White-like, waiting for the prince to rescue her. The casket can be symbolically connected to the pressures put by Juliet's family and their constant control on her decisions and even on her body.

Juliet's aside, in the vignettes, is a shortened version of her soliloquy, overheard by Romeo, who is hiding in the shadows:

[...] the mask of night is on my face,
 Else would a [...] blush bepaint my cheek
 For that which thou has heard me speak to-night (II, 2, 85-87)

The word left out in line 86 is *maiden* ("a maiden blush bepaint my cheek," in the original). This may work in the spirit in which Dicksee's use of flower symbolism presented a transition from the virginal white lilies to the passion flowers in full bloom. If not her maidenly quality, Juliet's very young age is most emphatically indicated in this manga rendition, the girl wearing two very long pigtails, blowing in the wind, contrasted with her ample, mature, and elegant dress. Both lovers' clothing, in fact, creates an impression of formality, doubled by the physical distance between them.

The text accompanying the scene is completed with another sentence which, in fact, continues Juliet's line, but the bubble is placed above Romeo, thus giving the false impression that it is spoken by him. The sentence is a substantial contraction (four lines are reduced to one, after another string of 18 lines, from 87 to 103, is annulled):

[...] thou overheard'st [...]
 My true love's passion: [...]
 [...]
 Which the dark night hath so discovered. (II, 2, 103-06)

The decision to attribute one of Juliet's lines to Romeo may have a levelling effect. If the balcony places Juliet above her lover, in a posture that may suggest aloofness (but, given the sparkling daisies of the close-up, is probably more a sign of shyness), the discursive advantage Romeo seems to have over Juliet brings the two lovers back on a par with each other.

Conclusion

The illustrations discussed in this paper belong to different cultural periods, are targeted at different audiences, add or subtract details, according to the current trends in illustration or in the reception of the Shakespearean text. Some of them capitalize on an idealized version of chaste love, while others contain clear sexual overtones. They follow gender stereotypes in describing the two lovers' relationship, or they challenge these gender stereotypes. However, they are all examples of the way in which the cultural memory of Shakespeare (and, in this case, of "the balcony scene") depends less on the literary text and more on the mechanisms of interpretation and appropriation.

This analysis of illustrations of what is known (though inaccurately, as we have explained) as "the balcony scene" in Shakespeare's famous *Romeo and Juliet* has pointed at how these paratextual elements, the result of intersemiotic translation, are connected to or disconnected from the text they accompany and the socio-cultural context in which this text was written.

While concentrating on these aspects, the paper concludes that, like in intersemiotic translations, like interlingual ones, faithfulness to the original is not always sought after. The illustrators' own aesthetic inclinations, their response to the socio-cultural context in which the original play was created or, on the contrary, their departure from it so as to get closer to the socio-cultural dimensions of the context in which the play is received, their preoccupation with the functionality of the text they illustrate: all these factors have a bearing on how they transfer the text in visual form. The illustrators' choices are similar to those of translators working with words only: they sometimes "literally reproduce the textual elements in the pictures" (Pereira 2008, 109), other times they add elements that are not present in the text or omit some that the text mentions, "emphasize specific narrative elements" or "adapt the pictures to a specific ideology or artistic trend" (Pereira 2008, 111, 114). Like interlingual translators, illustrators also resort to intertextuality in their artwork – it is not seldom that, as we have seen in some of the cases discussed here, they bring elements of previously made illustrations into their own.

As forms of "interpretive imitation" (Leach 1982, 175), both translations and illustrations re-create the text, offering to the public what can be described as

reading keys to the book. Translators and illustrators are both, as Behrend (1997, 24) said, intruders with their own interpretation, “into an intellectual and aesthetic transaction that would otherwise involve only the literary author and the reader.” They are, thus, intruders in the readers’ meaning-making process as well.

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