

THE GARDEN SCENE IN «ROMEO AND JULIET»

Its representation on stage, canvas, and screen

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It is hardly possible to imagine a Renaissance writer and poet, who was more attracted by the image of the garden – even enchanted by it – than Shakespeare (Spenser following closely). The image itself seems to be recurring in his writings, getting more powerful and persuasive with each mention in either lyrical or dramatic works. The garden is never just an element of the setting; it always penetrates the rhetoric and semiotic structure of the text, turning into an extended metaphor of Shakespeare's artistic universe.

The earliest appearance of the garden image in Shakespeare's writing, according to the commonly accepted chronology of his works, takes place in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1589?). One of the initial scenes in this play is set in the garden (act I, scene III), where two girls, Lucetta and Julia, are discussing the merits of Julia's potential suitors, in particular, Proteus. The garden here is a space assigned for feminine pastime, talk and behavior: the girls argue, make jokes, and exchange opinions about men who are not admitted into this small world of maidenly dreams and expectations. In Julia's garden gender is more important than social position. Julia freely discusses private issues with her maid-servant, ignoring the class gap, and even seeks Lucetta's advice and approval in love affairs.

The garden, a secure place for the heroine, is opposed to the image of the forest as a marginal territory which shelters the outlaws and gives Proteus a chance to display his vile intentions towards another female character, Sylvia. But the garden itself hides a threat within – the traitor of feminine solidarity, Lucetta, who behaves like the Snake in Eden. Her hints lead to Julia's deliberate exile from the garden: Lucetta possesses the intelligence and diplomatic talent of a shrewd, serpentine kind, which makes her mistress read Proteus' love-letter and accept his declarations

more favourably. As a result Julia leaves her secure home and follows Proteus, disguised as a young page. The girl has to abandon her identity – her name, gender, social position – and the scene in the garden is the pivotal point in making this decision.

Julia's monologue pronounced after Lucetta's departure reveals her readiness to renounce her name for the sake of her love to Proteus. The rhetoric of her passionate speech distinctly resembles the same of another female character, almost her name-sake, pronounced in a similar setting – in the solitude of the garden (also in Verona). Both heroines – Julia and Juliet – talk about the relationship between a name and a person. In doing this Julia draws direct connection between these two facts, and plays with the pleasure of coupling her and Proteus' names, both aurally and in a written form («Thus will I fold them one on another: / Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will», I, 2) – which reveals her strong desire to be united to her lover the way their names are:

And here is writ «love-wounded Proteus».
Poor wounded name! my bosom as a bed
Shall lodge thee till thy wound be thoroughly heal'd;
And thus I search it with a sovereign kiss.
But twice or thrice was «Proteus» written down.
Be calm, good wind, blow not a word away
Till I have found each letter in the letter,
Except mine own name: that some whirlwind bear
Unto a ragged fearful-hanging rock
And throw it thence into the raging sea!
Lo, here in one line is his name twice writ,
«Poor forlorn Proteus, passionate Proteus,
To the sweet Julia»: that I'll tear away.
And yet I will not, sith so prettily
He couples it to his complaining names.

(Two Gentlemen of Verona, I, 2)

Juliet expresses ideas in direct opposition to those of her dramatic predecessor. She tries to persuade herself that a name lacks its importance and is only a conventional way to represent someone, who could be easily designated otherwise:

Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

(Romeo and Juliet, II, 2)

Julia has a cruel lesson to learn: not only a name can be false, but the person that bears it, too (Proteus deceives her). Juliet's lesson is no less cruel: under this or that name, love will lead her and Romeo to peril. For both heroines the moments of meditation in the garden become the crucial point of their way, for Julia – through death (metaphorically, by abandoning her personal identity) to love; for Juliet – through love to death. The garden in these two plays becomes synonymous with the pleasures and dangers love can give; it is the place where doubts, fears and temptations of the heroines blend into exciting mixture of emotions, forcing them to make a decisive fatal step. Besides, the garden image in both cases is initially associated with the virginal status of the heroines, which they are ready and even eager to overcome.

The audience of these two plays, as well as many others by Shakespeare, must have been aware of the importance of the garden scene for the development of the plot and for the fate of the characters, but one cannot help wondering what theatrical effects were conceived by Shakespeare as a stage producer in order to make the scene look more significant (considering that Elizabethans had «a theatre in which a forest is represented by a placard»¹). The details of the scenic representation of the garden are now unavailable. Our knowledge of stage and scenic principles of Elizabethan drama is rather limited, and can be reduced to the belief that the scenery was very simple, not to say primitive, and didn't imply too much artistic freedom and ingenuity². «The Elizabethan stage was poor in its means for creating a *mise en scene*»³. The decorations and scenic belongings rarely presented any special value as a piece of art, but definitely possessed useful practical qualities (were easily removed or transformed).

¹ Eckert 1972, 32.

² Hattaway 1982, 34.

³ Eckert 1972, 32.

What Shakespeare's contemporary theatergoers saw while watching the garden scene in *Romeo and Juliet* most certainly looked like a nearly empty stage with a few trees crudely painted on canvas⁴. It is almost useless to wonder whether this minimalist image revealed somehow its «geographical» location – if there were any signs of its Italian, «Veronese» identity, though some later critics and historians believed there were. «When Shakespeare has to deal with descriptions of natural scenery, he almost invariably localizes himself with the utmost distinction»⁵. Charles Knight (1791-1873) regarded *Romeo and Juliet* as a very *Italian* play, somehow confusing the verbal representation of the drama with its scenic visualization: «With the exception of a few English allusions, they [the manners of the play] are thoroughly Italian. Mrs. Jameson has noted the sunny brilliance of effect, with which the whole of this drama is lighted up; and she adds, 'the blue sky of Italy bends over all'»⁶. Some later scholars share this slightly preconceived view: «That the scene was laid in Italy, he [Shakespeare] was profoundly aware. For every Englishman thought of Italy as a land of beauty and luxury and romance, and also of violent passion and desperate deeds»⁷. William Strunk Jr., professor of English at Cornell and literary adviser on MGM version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1936), speaks here of the perception of the play by the audience in general, and of the cross-cultural stereotypes connected with it, rather than of real stage representation, especially Elizabethan.

«The Elizabethan stage was by no means the austere affair of bare boards [...] and it affords no legitimate precedent for skeletal Shakespeare. But it was a theatre in which the spoken word was predominant, the poetry painted the picture and the actor dominated the scene»⁸. The playwrights of the Tudor period had to rely upon the viewers' imagination in visualizing the setting of the play, which depended more on aural than visual perception: the performers described the surroundings for the audience, specifying what they themselves imagined rather than what there really was on the stage. That's why we have to picture the way the garden around Juliet looks like by what she chooses to relate – and thus we get a very limited picture: walls, moon (most surely «played» by a torch), outline of the trees in the dark and, probably, some rose bushes.

⁴ *Ivi*, 24-27.

⁵ Knight 1867, 26.

⁶ *Ivi*, 24.

⁷ Strunk 1936, 23.

⁸ Walker 1972, 15.

The appearance of this flower in Juliet's monologue can be used to signify that the rose presented itself to her sight in the moonbeam and inspired her to compare its beauty and perfection to Romeo's virtues. At the same time, the verbal image of the rose has certainly been a successful rhetorical device, as its message would be clear to all sections of Shakespeare's audience.

The image of the rose in poetry is universally connected with love themes, and the Elizabethan poets could say a lot upon the subject. The rose was attributed to Venus⁹, and its appearance in Juliet's speech reveals her desire to renounce virginity for the sake of passionate love. For Shakespeare himself this image was especially suggestive: he uses the rose imagery in his sonnets to persuade his lyrical interlocutor to produce offspring and thus to preserve his beauty in the world: «From fairest creatures we desire increase, / That thereby beauty's rose might never die [...]» (*Sonnet I*, 1-2).

The rose in the so called «procreation» sonnets symbolizes perfect beauty; at the same time it is a part of *carpe diem* poetical imagery, which is used to remind the young coxcomb, who is the addressee of the sonnets, that mutual love is the only way to avoid wasteful self-consumption. This argumentation is reproduced by Romeo, when he talks about Rosaline's strict chastity: «For beauty, starv'd with her severity, / Cuts beauty off from all posterity» (I, 1). While Rosaline prefers virginal solitude, Juliet shows that she accepts the argumentation of the sonnets and «votes» for procreative love. Allusion to the sonnets unexpectedly reveals a bitter irony: choosing shared, conjugal love, Juliet makes her first step towards death: no offspring will be produced by her matrimony. Thus the rose in Juliet's speech becomes an ambivalent image, symbolizing both the sweetness and the perniciousness of love – like the rose itself combines fragrant smell and hurting thorns. Its ambivalence is intensified by the elusiveness of the surrounding space – the garden – which both shelters the heroine and betrays her (while she considered herself to be alone and secure, the garden exposed her to her enemy-lover).

The orchard was probably the only place where a girl of Juliet's age and position could enjoy repose and meditation. The house, packed with guests and servants and dominated by her father's authoritative figure, could not provide her with the required peace. Like Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, who confides in the garden and discloses her love to Proteus when she is alone, Juliet feels protected enough in the orchard to speak

⁹ Stewart 1998, 336; Cirlot 2002, 63.

aloud and express her feelings, not intended for anyone's ears. «Believing herself to be alone and masked by the darkness, she speaks her mind in sincerity and simplicity. She calls into question not merely Romeo's name but – by implication – all names, forms, convictions, sophistications and arbitrary dictates of society, as opposed to the appeal of instinct directly conveyed in the odor of a rose»¹⁰. While the world outside the garden/orchard walls seems to sink into hatred and hostility, the space in front of Juliet is filled with amorous languor and promises of bliss.

The importance of the garden is emphasized by the repetition of the scenes involving it: there are three of them in the tragedy. The garden plays a crucial part in Romeo and Juliet's love-story – it witnesses their first date (II, 2), then hearkens to Juliet's anxieties about the Nurse's delay (II, 5); finally, in the gallery above the garden the lovers part after their sole night together (III, 5). It is a territory governed neither by feudal rules, as both Capulets' and Montagues' houses are, nor by Christian teaching and wisdom, as friar Lorenzo's cell is (actually, the latter also has a garden, but of a different kind. It is neither shown nor described, since it is subdued to scientific uses and serves the friar's purposes, providing him with the stuff for his experiments). The young couple appeals to the garden as the only place in their life which is ruled by the laws of nature, which justifies their love. Romeo and Juliet are urban lovers, their life is difficult to imagine outside the city walls, and the garden is a substitute for the freedom of wildlife. In the text of the play it is referred to as an orchard, which emphasizes its cultivated and practical character (its artificial origin is later proved by Romeo's remark about «these fruit-tree tops», II, 2).

The orchard setting in *Romeo and Juliet* was not a rare occurrence in Elizabethan drama, as can be proved by Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, partly set in a garden, as well. However, the integration of the balcony scene with the garden setting in *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be Shakespeare's invention, as it is missing in previous dramatic or epic versions of the story. The earliest one, a novella, ascribed to Masuccio Salernitano (1410-1475), lacks a detailed description of the chronotope as the action in it comes to the fore. This version (novella XXXIII from *Il Novellino*, 1476), only a prototype for later variants, relates the story of Mariotto and Ganozza

¹⁰ Levin 1976, 105.

from Siena. The plot is slightly different from the commonly accepted version, but the core of the story can be easily recognized.

The next contributor to the legend, Luigi da Porto (1485-1530), imparts to it more familiar features and details, adding the names Romeo and Giulietta, the Veronese location, and some characters like Mercutio and Tybalt. In his *Giulietta e Romeo*, known also as «Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti» (1530), he also adds a balcony (which Romeo climbs on) which faces the street, not the orchard – «ed ora sopra la finestra della sua camera per forza tiratosi, ivi, senza ch'ella o altri il sapesse, ad udire il suo bel parlare si sedea, ed ora sopra la strada giacea»¹¹.

The next phase in the development of the plot belongs to Matteo Bandello (1485-1561), whose story from the collection of *Novelle* (1554), can be seen as a further step in the direction of Shakespeare's tragedy. In his version Giulietta's window still looks upon the neighbouring house: «Aveva la camera di Giulietta le finestre suso una vietta assai stretta cui di rimpetto era un casale»¹². However, a garden appears in Bandello's text, and serves as the setting for two very important steps in the development of the story: Romeo and Giulietta's wedding and their leave-taking before Romeo's departure. In the first case the garden reveals a very *Decameron*-like spirit: it's the territory of carnal love and earthly pleasures, the climax of the young couple's intimacy:

Come egli vide Giulietta, incontra l'andò con le braccia aperte. Il medesimo fece Giulietta a lui, ed avvinchiato gli il collo stette buona pezza da soverchia dolcezza ingombrata che nulla dir poteva. Era al medesimo segno l'infiammato amante, parendogli simil piacere non aver gustato già mai. Cominciarono poi a baciarsi l'un l'altro con infinito diletto ed indicibil gioia di tutte due le parti. Ritiratisi poi in uno dei canti del giardino, quivi sopra certa banca che ci era, amorosamente insieme giacendo consumarono il santo matrimonio. Ed essendo Romeo giovine di forte nerbo e molto innamorato, più e più volte a diletto con la sua bella sposa si ridusse.¹³

The garden here is associated with aspect of the heroes' relationship, which Shakespeare in his drama chose not to display. His characters' speech is full of expressive erotic declarations, echoing in the servants' and the Nurse's bold jokes and hints, but they never openly yield to their passion. Though Romeo and Juliet's love has a sensual and erotic connotations – as opposed to Romeo's former infatuation with Rosaline, una-

¹¹ Da Porto 1831, 23-24.

¹² Bandello 1928, 377.

¹³ *Ivi*, 382.

vailing and futile – the tragic fate, hovering over the couple, makes their passion more elevated than in the preceding texts. Besides, in Shakespeare they never enter the garden together, as in Bandello's novella. For Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* it is an Eden they don't have time and possibility to share and enjoy.

The story of tragic love, receiving its initial recorded form in Italy, couldn't fail to appeal to the readers of other countries, and soon started to spread all over Europe. The legend moved to France, where it was translated or, rather, retold by Pierre Boaistuau (1517-1566), who included Bandello's novella under a title of «Histoire troisieme de deux amans, dont l'un mourut de venin, l'autre de tristesse» into his collection *Histoires tragiques* (1559). That was the link between the Romantic part of the legend and the Anglo-Saxon one, as Boaistuau's translation became rather popular and was exported from France into England, where it served as a source for two very influential texts – Arthur Brooke's poem «The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet» (1562), and William Painter's XXV novel from «The Palace of Pleasures» (1566).

As it is difficult to prove that Shakespeare knew the French or Italian versions, the most obvious source for his dramatic interpretation of the plot was Arthur Brooke's verse translation of Boaistuau's story¹⁴. Brooke followed his French source much more closely than Boaistuau did Bandello's text. Both pre-Shakespearean contributors, the French and the English one, draw a lot of attention to the setting of the whole story, starting their texts with a poetic description of Veronese surroundings, emphasizing idyllic nature (Shakespeare narrows it down to one epithet «fair Verona» in the prologue, concentrating on the depiction of the social structure of Verona rather than on the landscape):

Built in a happy time, built on a fertile soil
Maintained by the heavenly fates, and by the townish toil
The fruitful hills above, the pleasant vales below,
The silver stream with channel deep, that thro' the town doth flow [...].

(«The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet», 3-6)

The blissful picture is introduced into the text to create a more distinct contrast to the ongoing feud in the city. Nature itself seems to welcome amorous moods, but within the city walls the lovers can't find a shelter. (This idea of the city itself being hostile and cruel was visualized by the Hollywood film-makers who created the 1936 screen-version of *Romeo*

¹⁴ Bullough 1957, 270-272; Muir 1957, 21-23.

and Juliet: the film starts with the sight of a stone labyrinth in a medieval city, which looks impressive and austere).

The garden in both Brooke's and Painter's versions is an ambivalent, deceitful territory, presenting a shelter for Romeo, but threatening with betrayal:

In happy hour he doth a garden plot espy,
From which, except he waresly walk, men may his love descry;
For lo, it fronted full upon her leaning place,
Where she is wont to show her heart by cheerful friendly face.
(451-454)

Brooke is the first who specifies that it is a «garden plot», a kitchen-garden, which leads to Shakespeare's orchard. Both Brooke and Painter show that the danger of disclosure, connected with visits to the garden, scares a young wooer away: «[...] one day amongs others hee espied Iulietta at hir Chamber Window, bounding vpon a narrow Lane, ryght ouer against which Chamber he had a Gardein which was the cause that Rhomeo fearing discouery of their loue, began the day time to passe no more before the Gate»¹⁵. In Shakespeare, Romeo, on the opposite, is attracted by the garden and brought therein by the inducement of a loving heart:

JULIET By whose direction found'st thou out this place?
ROMEO By love, that first did prompt me to enquire;
He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.
(II, 2)

Brooke and Painter wanted the story to sound more moralizing and edifying than the previous contributors, so the consummation of the marriage, does not take place in the garden (Bandello's variant), but in Juliet's chamber. Painter takes pains to persuade the reader in the highly serious and decent, even bourgeois character of the delicate event, mentioning the «Field-bed», prepared by the Nurse for the occasion, and Juliet's «night kerchief», and the «Tapers of virgin Wax», illuminating the room, and even the sheets – all the necessary attributes of a proper lawful wedlock. This comfortably furnished chamber is opposed to the garden, which begins to suggest a unbridled passion, renounced by virtuous lovers, especially Brooke's Juliet, who uses horticultural imagery to suppress Romeo's unexpressed desires: «But if by wanton love and by unlawful suit / You think in ripest years to pluck my maidenhood's dainty fruit, / You are

¹⁵ Painter, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34840/34840-h/34840-h.htm#novel_25.

beguiled» (541-543). Brooke completely omits the reference to the garden in the description of the wedding night («So light he wox, he leapt the wall, and there he spied his wife», 830), while Painter mentions that Romeus easily «clymed vp the Garden wall» before entering the chamber, but neither of the two texts contain the daring scene of the marriage consummation under the open sky.

None of the writers either before Shakespeare or after him imparted such great symbolic meaning and aesthetic significance to the garden setting. The three scenes located in immediate proximity to the orchard are not the most dynamic ones in the play, but show the depth of the characters' feelings and make them look more vulnerable and convincing. However, not all the garden scenes take place in the orchard itself – in the first one the lovers don't share the garden territory, they are separated by it; the second one depicts Juliet alone therein, while in the third the bridal couple parts, with only Romeo descending to the garden.

After the ball, the two lovers, amazed by the hastiness of their feelings, choose the orchard as the best place to reflect upon them, so they appear there independently of each other. The moments of initial detachment of the couple, not realized fully on stage due to the compression of time, were used by numerous painters as independent portrayals showing the lovers separately, in the last moments before the flood of passion – then of misfortune and grief – would sweep them away. The main aim in representing these moments is to render their transiency: languor and sweet anticipation are emphasized by the setting. Juliet was portrayed more often than Romeo, probably thanks to her location on the balcony. The viewer of these depictions is placed somewhere beneath the balcony, in the garden – actually, almost in Romeo's position.

The most famous and expressive visualization of this episode¹⁶, with Juliet alone and no Romeo in sight, belongs to William Hatherell, a Victorian painter and illustrator (1885-1928), who created twenty-two illustrations to the text. His picture of Juliet on the balcony (1912) is

¹⁶ Among the other versions of the same is Philip Calderon's «Juliet» (1896), with the girl sitting musingly in the open loggia, with a dim landscape beneath. Only a dark outline of trees let us guess the location of some verdure nearby; the main focus is on the Juliet's serene face. This is Juliet-virgin, with no passion overshadowing her tranquil existence yet; maybe that accounts for the elimination of the traditional garden frame of the episode.

startling, as the girl's silhouette seems to be lost in verdure. The gouache drawing, in prevailing cold and almost dreary shades of green, grey and blue, features Juliet staring fixedly at the moon in strange aloofness. If the painter hadn't emphasized the direct correspondence to a special moment of the play by the title («O Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore Art Thou Romeo?», II, 2), the scene could be identified as the one following the sad leave-taking or the arrival of dreadful news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's exile. Not anticipation, but dark premonition dominates the picture. Profuse vegetation around Juliet seems to stir in the night breeze, sending flickering shadows over the girl's face. Tangled mass of lush foliage encircles Juliet's static figure: the balcony is partly hidden under a blooming branch, and a green curtain hanging from above seeks to overtake the girl, while the dark shadow of trees stirs restlessly beneath the balcony. It is not actually an illustration, but a kind of dream vision of Shakespeare's heroine (or even heroines) in a picturesque imaginary world, portrayed as a secluded moonlit garden, a mixture of *hortus conclusus* and Hamlet's «unweeded garden» (I, 2). High walls, replaced in some films by grates, colonnade or espalier, symbolize Juliet's isolation from the outer world; Romeo is an intruder here, a stranger, whose «penetration» will bring harm, suffering and death.

When Juliet pronounces her famous monologue about the name, she «appears above at a window», not entering the orchard. As she is supposed to be in a kind of loggia or balcony, she is at the same time at home and under the open sky. This liminal position shows that she is still chained to her father's house and the patriarchal order it represents, though her soul seeks freedom, at least in that degree that the garden can provide. But even this freedom is strictly limited by the walls surrounding the garden. «These lovers, as though they never say as much, are prisoners without and within»¹⁷. The stone boundary which encircles the two lovers in the scene foreshadows another confine which is going to unite them forever – the burial vault; Juliet herself deliberately predicts their mutual fate: «The orchard walls are high and hard to climb, / And the place death». The resemblance between the churchyard and the moonlit garden is intensified by the presence of flowers in both places. The word chosen by Shakespeare to describe the location of the scene (orchard) even rhymes with the name of another crucial setting in the drama – the churchyard. A similar connection between orchard and death is present

¹⁷ Brown 1970, 47.

also in *Hamlet*. The King was said to be killed while resting in the garden: «[...] sleeping in my orchard, / A serpent stung me» (I, 5).

The scene presenting Juliet later joined by her Nurse in the orchard is obviously Shakespeare's invention, as it is neither found in the sources, nor kept in most of the later adaptations – at least, in its initial form. Both Theophilus Cibber in *Romeo and Juliet, a Tragedy, Revis'd, and Alter'd from Shakespear, by Mr. Theophilus Cibber* (1748) and Otway in *The History and Fall of Caius Marius, a Tragedy* (1769) just ignored the setting, moving the action indoors – Juliet and, consequently, Lavinia are waiting for the Nurse in their chambers. The pictorial interpretation in the XVIII and XIX centuries also preferred interior setting of this episode to that outdoors. The Boydell edition of *Romeo and Juliet* included Robert Smirke's illustration (1797) to act II, scene 5, where Juliet is pestering her Nurse, sitting in a spacious room with a balcony. Over the marble banisters we can see a fragment of charming view – a building of Romanesque style and a few trees. The girl is fashionably dressed and gracefully seated upon an elegant sofa; it's impossible to imagine her pacing the garden impatiently, storming at the elderly servant for her sluggishness. Consequently, no garden is included in the illustration.

A different approach to the depiction of the scene strongly marked by the current artistic trends in characters' clothes and general palette of the picture is Harry Perronet Briggs' illustration to scene 5 of act II (1827). The composition of the scene is built upon the contrast of light and transparent colours – Juliet's white dress, soft clouds in the background, noble grayness of the marble, delicately pink garland of roses – and the saturated, garish palette of the servant and the Nurse's dress, mostly maroon, as if alluding to carnal and fleshy matters. The colour spectrum of the picture visually intensifies the meaning of the Nurse's words addressed to Juliet: «Then hie you hence to Friar Lawrence' cell; / There stays a husband to make you a wife: / Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks, / They'll be in scarlet straight at any news» (III, 5). There's only a slight visual hint to the garden, codified in a lavish branch of a tree, a garland of roses and a marble figure of Cupid supporting the balcony. The whole impression is of Augustan, neoclassical style and taste. The garden looks like a painted backdrop for a Restoration staging of Shakespeare, and the symbolism of the details is too straightforward, though prettily realized on canvas.

In the popular perception of this episode with the Nurse, fixed in such minor forms of art as theatrical posters, post-cards and placards, the scene is set mostly in the interior, varying only in the style accord-

ing to current fashions. Still the reminiscence of the vegetative frame makes its way through generally accepted pictorial conventions, so the garden is never completely eliminated from the scene. The initial garden setting can be signified by subtle outlines of unidentified verdure at the background, or represented by some substitutes, like pots with flowers or flower garlands. The photo featuring Adelaide Nelson (1848-1880) as Juliet, with her Nurse, was obviously taken in the studio (San Francisco, Bradley and Rulofson, 1874), but the whole atmosphere of the picture is that of an outdoor walk, considering the ladies' promenade attire, especially Juliet's feathered hat. The background is deliberately blurred, and the garden is not recognizable, but the marble figure of Cupid, which has become a part of the pictorial tradition for Shakespeare's garden, can be seen behind the actresses.

A later photographic depiction of the same scene (London, Window and Grove, 1882) – Juliet and her Nurse, portrayed consequently by Ellen Terry (1847-1928) and Mrs Sterling – presents only a slight variation of the Nelson's shot: the marble sculpture is to the right, and contains no distinct figures but, combined with the plants in the background (some indistinct outline of bushes) creates a vaguely graveyard look. The vegetation element is reinforced by the floral patterns on both ladies' clothes.

A few works of visual art of XIX – early XX century show Juliet alone in the orchard, obviously before the Nurse's arrival. For Shakespeare this part of the episode must have been very important, as he wrote a very expressive monologue for it. Crossing the line between adolescence and womanhood, Juliet loses her connection with her ancestral home and its inhabitants, which makes her stay indoors unbearable. Preparing herself for the new experience and status, she seeks refuge in the natural surroundings, that had witnessed the origination of her love. Neither Nurse nor her own mother can provide her with necessary support on the verge of maturity, and she instinctively seeks it from a more benevolent and sympathetic parent – Nature.

Some of the illustrators seem to sense the importance of the moment, since they leave the Nurse out, concentrating on the girl's emotions and their connection with the natural surroundings. The garden so explicitly accentuates the girl's ardour and anticipation that a lot of artists integrated this episode with scene 2 of act III (wherein Juliet is waiting for Romeo, delayed by the brawl with Tybalt), though in Shakespeare the latter is set in the chamber. There are obvious parallels between II, 5 and III, 2 in the very text of the drama: in both cases the heroine pleads to the Sun to accelerate its course, and twice the suspense of expectation is

relieved by the Nurse's arrival. However, in the second episode the news is so bad that it directly foreshadows the oncoming disaster. Perhaps for this consideration Shakespeare transferred the episode into the room where Juliet's deathbed is located, as he wanted to emphasize the growing tension and anxiety in the play by the *cul-de-sac* of a chamber which actually has got only one exit – to the cemetery. But the artistic imagination of the following centuries chose to put forward the heroine's appeal to nature as the chief consoler or the last resort, rather than her cravings in the closed space. Though in these pictures desperate Juliet is sometimes shown in the balcony and not downstairs, she is surrounded by abundant, sometimes sinister looking verdure.

Photo of Mary Anderson (1859-1940) as Juliet (studio set, New York, 1890) shows the actress standing at the upper step of marble stairs twined by the dry stalks of a vine. A meager branchlet of flowers on the banister can't animate the view, which looks like an abandoned cemetery in autumn. It's a garden of death, not of love, which is a rare case in the pictorial tradition of *Romeo and Juliet*, intrinsically oriented towards a greater vividness. Another variant of the same scene – photographic portrayal of Adelaide Nelson, set in the studio (Napoleon Sarony, New York, 1870s) – renders a similar feeling of abandonment and brooding disaster, though the setting is richer and unexpectedly exotic. A tall orchid in the pot, stripped of leaves and strikingly out of place, is visually prolonged by a column covered by a bunch of dried and barren stalks. This, plus another exotic plant in a pot and abundance of rich cloths usurping the space of the photo, make Juliet look fragile and lost, trapped in some queer, quasi-oriental un-Shakespearean world, where no Romeo could ever find entrance. The spells of exotic decorations turned out to be irresistible at the end of the century, as they can be seen in other photosets of Juliet – for example, Julia Marlowe (1888), with an oriental carpet casually hanging from the banister and a potted palm-tree at the back.

Transferred onto canvas or film, Shakespeare's world starts transforming in the most peculiar way; it reveals its unique artistic convertibility, but still, something vital gets lost in the process of conversion. Rich and elaborate decorations either for staging or for shooting in the pavilion, decadent luxury of the costumes, unaccountable innovations like oriental carpets or plumage take us so far from the initial simplicity of Shakespearean setting which brought forward the beauty of his poetry that we can simply miss it, being distracted by decorations. «Towards the end of the last [XIX] century the spectacular element had so frequently gained the upper hand that Shakespeare's texts were slaughtered to suit

the scene-shifters»¹⁸. The same can be said about the pictorial representation of his plays – images and setting from *Romeo and Juliet* were subjected to such serious aesthetic reconsideration that they became hardly recognizable at all.

The third scene of the drama involving the garden setting is the play's acme in terms of emotional intensity. This time both lovers are on the same side of the orchard, in «an open Gallery to Juliet's Chamber, overlooking the Garden». Now we, the viewers of the scene, are beneath the balcony, as Romeo was before, overhearing what is said above, in the gallery.

Whether a balcony or a gallery, both locations are characterized by a distinctly transitional position – it is a place between the house and the garden (strictly speaking, prolonging the house and protruding into the space of the orchard). The balcony both connects and separates the two opposed locations, thus showing the fatally indeterminate situation of the lovers – between the Montagues and the Capulets, hope and despair, nuptial and deathbed.

Due to its tragic character, the last balcony scene in the drama possesses irresistible visual charm, which is more obvious than the subtle and exquisite fascination of the night talk in II, 2. This time, when the beams of the morning sun are said to touch the landscape, we get a more vivid picture of the scenery than before: Juliet mentions the pomegranate-tree, while Romeo talks about «the misty mountain tops», touched by the streaks of morning light. Whether he imagines them, dreading the road which lies before him, or really sees them in the distance – somewhere behind the scene, to put it literally –, is unimportant, since these verbal details create a powerful image similar to the effect of the Italian Renaissance paintings, with the misty mountain landscapes in the background, seen from within the room or the gallery¹⁹. The sunlight here is not a metaphor, as in the previous balcony scene, but the dominating part of the setting: «Look, love, what envious streaks / Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east».

¹⁸ Walker 1972, 115.

¹⁹ For example, *Madonna of the Carnation* (*Madonna del Garofano*, 1473), by Leonardo da Vinci, or his *Madonna and Child with Pomegranate* (*Madonna Dreyfus*, 1475-1480). A lot of Shakespeare's illustrators, Ford Madox Brown and Frank Dicksee among them, kept this detail – a misty landscape in the distance – in their depiction of the farewell scene.

Juliet's allusion to the pomegranate-tree presents another riddle for the modern reader of the play – was the sort of tree supposed to be specified on the stage? We are made to believe that the plants and trees in Elizabethan scenery were some kind of simulacrum which made the scene look more allegorical than it was implied in the text of the drama («[...] the stage properties were metonymic rather than representational»²⁰). On the other hand, we are persuaded that Shakespeare meant to create very convincing scenery on-stage, at least, arboreal: «He never misplaces the sycamore groves of the south for the birch woods of the north»²¹. Surely, the realistic representation of the vegetation was not among the playwright's aims. Besides, «the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow» (another torch, perhaps), as Romeo describes the grey morning light, wouldn't enable the viewers to discern the variety of trees on the stage. But the symbolic potential of the image of the pomegranate surpasses its limited visual qualities. Not many artists kept to this detail in the depiction of the scene, probably due to the rather unsophisticated look of the pomegranate. Among the most remarkable replacements is F.M. Brown's blossoming apple-tree.

As we know, folklore and mythological tradition connect pomegranate with abundance and fertility, due to the plentitude of seeds²², so the hint would be appropriate and justified, considering that the two part after their wedding night. Allusion to some specific arboreal variety instead of some uncertain «fruit-tree tops» makes the vague and shadowy garden from act II, scene 2 – rather a promise of the garden or its anticipation as yet – gain some definite visible features and turn into real orchard, the fruit-bearing Eden. However, bitter irony accompanies the image of the pomegranate in Juliet's speech, as their marriage would not bear any fruit (as if foreboding it, in the first balcony scene she cuts short the traditional vegetative metaphor, dropping its prolific, «fruitful» component: «This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet», II, 2). Thus the second symbolic association of the pomegranate image is activated – in connection with Persephone myth (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V 360-571) and consequently with Hades and death, which awaits the lovers. Having partaken of the pomegranate, Persephone condemned herself to the gloominess of the underworld. Tasting – metaphorically – the fruit of married love, the hero

²⁰ Hattaway 1982, 36.

²¹ Knight 1867, 26.

²² Becker 1994, 239-240; Cirlot 2002, 223.

and heroine of Shakespeare's play hasten their descent into Hades. Thus the connection between love and death, thoroughly explored in the tragedy, is intensified in this part of the play.

The scene of the bridal pair's parting above the garden holds more picturesque charm than the episode of the first date in the garden, which is carried out in very reserved colour spectrum and is built mostly upon the play of light and darkness, shadows and flicker. The morning light, though only dawning upon the dormant city in act III, scene 5, affords much more freedom for the colouristic interpretation of the whole episode, which is saturated with both grief and passion, with slight implications of eroticism, as the young couple has just left their wedding bed. It partly explains why this very episode attracted more illustrators than any other scene or image in the text (though the readers of the drama seem to prefer the first balcony scene: «I have been told, that a copy of the first folio edition identified as the one formerly in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, opens naturally at the balcony scene, indicating that college youth had picked it out as their favourite passage in all Shakespeare»²³).

The utmost simplicity of the original setting of Elizabethan performances, implying lack of strict stage directions, gave later theatrical managers and illustrators freedom to picture the scenes from this tragedy in a modified way, distant from the original textual and scenic implications. «When the theatres reopened in 1660, Shakespeare was treated freely and his works were adapted in whatever way was deemed necessary in order to cater to the changing desires of the audience»²⁴. The tradition to modernize Shakespeare and adapt his texts to the tastes and requirements of the current period left us a few pictures of Romeo and Juliet in Restoration, neo-classical and romantic style.

Russell Jackson, specialist in drama studies and history of performance, states that the Restoration period in England seemed not only to reopen the theatres, but to rediscover them and reinvent their technical aspects. «Representational scenery made of painted wings and shutters running in grooves parallel to the front of the stage, was now a pleasing and significant part of theatrical entertainment»²⁵. However, rapid development of theatrical machinery only increased the tendency to adjust Shakespearean plays to current aesthetic requirements. The image of the garden where the scenes take place was also subjected to significant

²³ Thalberg 1936, 14.

²⁴ Burnett - Strees - Wray 2011, 288.

²⁵ Jackson 1986, 187.

changes, mostly in two directions – ignoring the natural setting as superfluous and diffuse (neo-classical period); and exaggerating its significance by enriching and embellishing its representation (Victorian, especially pre-Raphaelites).

One of the most characteristic examples of these metamorphoses is provided by William Elliot's depiction of Barry Spranger (1719-1777) and Maria Isabella Nossiter (1735-1759) in a Covent Garden production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1753 (directed by Garrick). The engraving introduces us to a very unsophisticated but dainty scenery, obviously representing the first balcony episode in the play. Juliet's loggia is placed very low, making it possible for Romeo to reach it in one jump, though that seems unacceptable for this elegant gentleman in a curled wig. The natural scenery in the episode seems to be effaced. The image of the dark, shadowy garden hiding in its depth forbidden pleasures and temptations would be inappropriate and unsuitable for the taste and morals of the century. The only hints of the original setting are represented by a row of neatly trimmed trees, painted on the backdrop. Looking like Lombardy poplars or Tuscany cypresses, they impart a southern, «Italian» spirit to the scene.

The painted trees, whatever they are, were probably chosen by the stage designers due to their outlines, resembling the funeral torches, thus anticipating the tragic development of the plot. Both poplars and cypresses possess obsequial associations, reflected in ancient myths and popularized by literature. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* inform us about the origins of both poplars and cypresses: book X (vv. 106-140) relates the story of Cyparissus turned into a tree of the same name. Since the transformation was performed by gods according to Cyparissus' own wish, as the boy accidentally killed his favourite deer and couldn't bear the burden of regret, the metamorphosis itself can be seen as a form of suicide, which corresponds to the tragic fate of the Veronese lovers, taking their own lives.

The same source can be used to identify the poplar's image as funereal. Symbolic associations of the poplar are based mainly on its appearance in ancient myths connected with mourning, obsequies and Hades. Ovid (II 340-366) mentions it in the legend of Phaeton's death – the Heliads turned into poplars, bewailing their brother. Considering the verbal identification of Juliet with the sun in the scene corresponding to Elliot's engraving, the relevance of the mythological allusions activated by the image of poplars would be amazingly appropriate, imparting to the scene tragic forebodings.

Though the neo-classical period in England was marked by the revival of interest in ancient mythology and a tendency to reconsider it

in broader aesthetic and philosophical terms, it is highly unlikely that the stage decorators actually meant to appeal to the symbolic potential of the poplar images. The arboreal decorations matched the players' elegant costumes and looked very neat in the background; besides, their regular outline formed a diagonal dimension, visually enlarging the stage space, thus depriving the scene of its intimate, provocative character, present in Shakespeare's text. Therefore, the garden as it was in Shakespeare's verbal representation – dark and shady, fragrant and sensual – disappears from Garrick's staging, replaced by the image of a cultivated, conformable piece of nature (another garden element, a big pot with a long-leaved plant standing behind Romeo on the stage, only intensifies the impression). Two contradictory, interacting functions of the garden, readily springing from Shakespeare's text – the garden as a shelter and as a confinement for the two lovers – fade away, turning the setting into some kind of avenue or lane, as in the original Italian versions of the story.

However unlikely were poplars or cypresses as elements of the orchard, their introduction into the scenery seems to possess some visual attraction to later interpreters, either on canvas or film, probably due to these trees' funeral associations – or to the picture of southern, pronouncedly «Italian» vegetation. The latter case is illustrated by the sketch of the scenery design by Hawes Craven (1837-1910), made for *Romeo and Juliet* performance at the Lyceum theatre in 1882. It shows the outskirts of Verona, which serve as the setting for act II, scene 4: the whole sight is dominated by rich vegetation, with poplars lining the horizon²⁶. The funereal associations of poplars made the creators of the MGM *Romeo and Juliet* choose them to line Juliet's way home from the church. According to the script, shot 190 shows «Juliet hurrying homewards along the path which is lined with poplars, clear-cut against the blue sky»²⁷.

Cypresses or poplars govern the landscape in the XIX century graphic picture of Juliet waiting for Romeo on the gallery (Alfred Joseph Woolmer, *Come, Gentle Night*, 1839-1849). The same is true for numerous paintings and photos of the farewell scene in the late XIX century (Felix O.C. Darley, 1884; Alexander Bida). Their silhouettes can be seen in the distance in a photo of Maud Granger as Juliet and Lawrence Atkins as Romeo on the balcony (New York, 1866). A stage version with Julia Marlowe and Robert Taber included cypresses or poplars in both garden episodes, according to the photographic record of the props by Joseph

²⁶ The photo can be seen in Foulkes 1986, page 90, picture 16.

²⁷ *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare 1936, 207.

Byron (New York, 1887). We can also notice their conic outlines at the background of the studio shots by the same Joseph Byron (New York, 1903) with Kyrle Bellow as Romeo and Eleanor Robson as Juliet (since the background is not a painting, but a huge photographic landscape, it presents a peculiar example of a photo within a photo – the XIX century equivalent of Elizabethan theatre within a theatre, a simulacrum in the second degree). Elliot's depiction of the balcony scene framed by cypresses turned out to be influential, or just fitted in some unconsciously shaping code of depicting *Romeo and Juliet* chronotope, and the consequences are clearly visible throughout the centuries.

The same can be said about other pictorial details, met in XVIII century engravings and later spread onto other artistic representations of Shakespeare's images. They include the plants in pots or vases; creepers on the banister of the balcony; a separately standing tree or sapling, which is sometimes replaced by its visual analogue – a column or a pillar. A kind of graphic alphabet seems to start developing from the early stages of Shakespeare's pictorial history. Most of the immanent elements used to have some obvious semiotic meaning; thus, ivy vine or other creepers could be seen as a symbol of Juliet's unquestioning reliance upon Romeo, her utmost trust in him. A single tree or a column could be included into the scenery as an additional prop for the balcony, but with time it became a nearly indispensable part of the setting, associated with the direction of Romeo's yearning towards Juliet, who is standing above. The vases and potted flowers could be read as substitutes for the funereal urns, reminding the audience of the inevitable tragic end. Some of these details varied or lost their relevance, being transferred from the stage to the canvas or screen, but frequently continued their existence in new format, consecrated by pictorial tradition.

While Elliot's engraving reflected the tendency of the Enlightenment theatre to «revise Shakespeare to accommodate current theatrical and literary tastes», his contemporary, Anthony Walker (1726-1765) preferred a slightly different way of embellishing and enhancing Shakespeare's visual representation. His set of illustrations to five scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* could have been inspired by 1753 staging either with Spranger or Garrick²⁸, but the depiction of the first balcony scene certainly reaches beyond mere reflection of a certain episode from the performance. This is an illustration *per se*, not only recording the balcony scene, but interpreting it.

²⁸ Fowler 2002, 116.

The exact correspondence for the scene is the talk about the moon:

ROMEO Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops...

JULIET O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

(II, 2)

The balcony is set high enough to physically separate the lovers, and attraction between them is visually intensified by the vertical rhythm, created by the parallel lines of tree trunks, feigned columns and identical steles in the distance. The irregular but picturesque folds of the kerchief in Juliet's hand «rhymes» with the weird contour of the stone Cupid seen from under the balcony, completing the vertical accord of the lines²⁹.

However, the scene possesses not only a vertical, but also a diagonal vector: the row of the tree-tops and Romeo's expressive gesture point to the moon which is placed almost at the same level as Juliet's face, as if in rivalry and defiance («Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, / Who is already sick and pale with grief», II, 2). Its inconstant light illuminates the scene, making it resemble the churchyard. The marble figure in the shadow can be easily confused with grave-side sculpture, especially combined with the steles and a huge urn on a pedestal behind Romeo's back. The funereal atmosphere of the setting is increased by the foregoing pyramidal trees at the back and a row of fir-trees in the distance. The vegetation and ornamentation of the natural scenery in Walker's picture help to communicate the ominous atmosphere of the episode. The garden encircles the young lovers, witnesses their conversation and even silently

²⁹ The figure of Cupid seems to have rooted into the pictorial tradition of the garden scene. In Walker's engraving the silhouette in the shade looks ambivalent and even ominous, reminding the viewer not only of Eros, but of a satyr and a graveyard sculpture at the same time. This ambivalence is highly justified by the nature of events the figure serves as the background for (Romeo and Juliet's audacious promptness in love and inevitable death). Either this Cupid or the very idea of its relevance in the garden scene called into being marble cupids on paintings and photographs of later periods. A photo of Adelaide Wilson as Juliet sitting with the Nurse (1874) shows a marble figure on the richly decorate monument. Julia Marlowe's Juliet in 1888 photo has a marble relief with small playing cupids at her elbow. Richard Dadd (1817-1876) also plays upon the visual possibilities of the marble decorations. His Romeo in *Sketch for the Passions. Love* (1853) is shown getting down from the balcony, which is decorated by two bas-reliefs, of a satyr and of a sad-looking person, probably the Ancient Fate.

participates in it, but it is a garden of death rather than of amorous rapture, as it promised to be.

The composition of Walker's engraving seems to be reproduced in some later versions of the balcony episode. The staging of *Romeo and Juliet* with Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Johnston Forbes-Robertson at Lyceum Theatre in 1895 inspired Fred Pegram, an illustrator (1870-1937), to sketch the balcony scene. The resemblance to Walker's version is remarkable, though Pegram is less generous and abundant in details. Location of the figures, a kerchief thrown over the balcony, indispensable tall pyramidal trees in the lane, and a dim outline of a stele in the twilight make the sketch look like a more reserved replica of Walker's engraving.

A startling change in pictorial and theatrical representation of Shakespeare's works took place in the first half of the XIX century. It started with a rapid development of stage effects and decorations towards a brighter and more picturesque visual embodiment, signifying a closer convergence of two artistic means – theatre and painting. «Pictorial style meant not only highly elaborate scenery, but also detailed costumes and properties, spectacular effects and the frequent use of tableaux vivants – a static pose held by the acting ensemble at climatic moments which made the stage look like if it were a painting»³⁰. With Shakespeare this attitude became especially popular – it sprang from the previous period rich in pictorial editions of the Bard's works. Victorian readers believed that «good Shakespeare meant illustrated Shakespeare»³¹, and in the theatre they expected to find the same illustrations animated. This mutual attraction of different semiotic languages (literature, theatre, painting) brought about static and stiff staging and dynamic, vibrant paintings and illustrations.

Most of Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite depictions of *Romeo and Juliet* are not illustrations as such – they are revisionist interpretations of the scene and of the characters' story in general. The XIX century painters' *locus classicus* seems to be the parting scene from the play we are discussing here. It provided them with the necessary degree of tragedy, lyricism, sensuality and despair. Since the image of the garden occupied the central position in their artistic operation³², they were eager to combine the

³⁰ Schoch 2002, 58-59.

³¹ *Ivi*, 59.

³² See Marie Spartali Stillman, *The Enchanted Garden of Messer Ansaldo* (1899); Walter Crane's *Flora* (1908); Waterhouse's *The Enchanted Garden* (1916); Leighton's *Sweet Solitude* (1919), *After the Service* (1921) – the examples are numerous.

grandeur of its profuse beauty and vitality with the picture of affection and anguish.

Ford Madox Brown's oil version *Romeo and Juliet's Parting* (1870?) is extremely colourful and dynamic, almost triumphant, due to the predominance of red, yellow and green. The orchard is somewhat shifted downwards, but its elements – a green branch here, a blossoming bush there – make the couple look enveloped by its tender and sensual spring aura. The painter's innovation – a blossoming apple tree near the balcony – softens the deep, saturated tints of the picture, but a black shape of a crow hiding in its branches discloses the inner tension and the sense of inevitable calamity.

Frank Dicksee's version of the same scene (1884) uses a darker colour spectrum, and displays a different spatial solution. The viewer seems to be shifted from the outer position of Ford's picture to an inner one: we could be watching the farewell kiss with the eyes of the Nurse, standing guard by the newly-wed couple. The garden is cut out of sight by the balcony banister, but the lush vegetation spreads from beneath and conquers the space of the gallery – glossy leaves of a plant in the foreground and vigorous twirls of a climber twining around the pillar create the impression of a triumphantly rejoicing flora, while a few lilies standing aside possess more symbolic than decorative quality. They are highlighted by the golden beam of the dawn, but look illuminated also by some other light, whose source is not of this world. They are completely overlooked by the kissing couple, but irresistibly draw the attention of the viewer. Their innocent look and pure colour remind of the brevity of people's lives and passions; besides, they set a visual link to another depiction of Romeo and Juliet by Dicksee.

He had in fact approached the subject of the «star-crossed lovers» before, creating a free artistic interpretation of two interrelated scenes – the lovers' talk in the orchard after the ball and the parting after the wedding night. The first one (1876) is realized in sepia and graphite shades, with the only source of illumination – the moon – left outside the frame, making the couple's faces look pale. The atmosphere of the scene is sad and gloomy and, unlike the traditional compositions corresponding to act II, scene 2, can easily be mistaken for the parting episode. Dark shades seem to be gathering around the two desperate lovers, the only discernible details picked out by the moonlight being a few white lilies and a thin sapling under the high balcony. Lilies, with their rich symbolism, were especially popular with the Pre-Raphaelites³³, and could be interpreted as

³³ John Collier's *Pope Urban VI* (1896); Walter Crane's *Garden* (1908); Leighton's *The Roses' Day* (1910) etc.

the mark of the style (Shakespeare's flower for this love-story is, instead, the rose) but in this depiction the prognostication for the couple is so unfavourable that they are unlikely to ever indulge in their passion, symbolized by the rose. A thin tree emphasizes the futility of all attempt to climb the balcony and overcome the distance between the lovers. Dicksee created a hopeless atmosphere through colouration and composition only.

Other less celebrated illustrations of the balcony scene don't vary much. The early one, by Italian artist Francesco Hayez (1791-1881), includes the figure of the Nurse, but omits the garden, concentrating on the interior of the room (*L'ultimo bacio dato a Giulietta da Romeo*, 1823). German illustrator Anselm Feuerbach (1829-1880), who chose an elegiac and somber mood for this scene, rather than the bright palette of other versions, set the scene in a frame of dark branches, with a few tender flowers on them – distinctly reminding of funereal wreaths and of the churchyard. Another version from Northern Europe (*Romeo and Juliet in the Balcony*, 1886), by Swedish painter Julius Kronberg (1850-1921) holds a reserved sensual appeal as it depicts the lovers kissing each other in peculiar, slightly unnatural pose, as if caught in the sudden fit of passion at the very moment of the parting (Romeo is sitting on the banister with ropes prepared for his descending). The pliant curve of Juliet's body is repeated by the flexible line of the plant in the pot standing in the balcony (in Hans Makart's modernist version it's Romeo's body that bends in a yielding way, echoed by the twist of a branch near the balcony). The knots of the ropes lying on the floor are almost interlaced with creeping ivy. The trees behind Romeo's back are blooming with tender pink blossoms, and a branch of apple tree can be discerned; but the dark silhouette of a cypress shadows the garden's beauty.

The French contributors to the pictorial development of the legend prefer a freer interpretation of the topic, concentrating more on its amorous than tragic aspects. An intriguing variation is presented by Henri Pierre Picou (1824-1895), with Romeo and Juliet standing on two separate balconies and reaching each other for the kiss. Gaston Brüssière (1862-1928), a Symbolist painter and illustrator in his painting of circa 1900 shows a couple of happy lovers, tenderly gazing at each other on an open balcony, with a few blossoming trees at the back and a completely unusual element – an overgrown pond behind.

By the end of the XIX century the pictorial tradition of this scene had produced a full-fledged and detailed iconography of the first and second balcony scenes. Some details vary according to the artist's vision of the episodes: for example, the farewell kiss scene can include the figure of

the Nurse or miss it; the same with the ropes; the characters' clothes present the widest possible diversity of colours and styles, but in general the visual representation of both episodes seems to be made up of some essential elements, possessing most obvious symbolic sense, consecrated by more than three centuries of staging and illustration. Either taken from the text itself or generated by the popular perception of the drama and the story, these visual elements seem to spread a captivating charm, as they appear on engravings and drawings, paintings and photos, and find their way into XX century movies, ballet performances and even cartoon retellings.

As most elements of *Romeo and Juliet* traditional depiction «on stage and page» were fixed by the end of the XIX century, the film-makers were practically bound to either subject themselves to these visual stereotypes – or refuse and refute them. However, even outstanding directors emphasized their indebtedness to the pictorial tradition. William Strunk, the literary adviser for George Cukor's film, proudly informed the audience that «for this background of Italian life and manners in the Renaissance, many works have been consulted, works of writers of the period and of modern historians, but an equally important source of information has been the paintings of the great masters of Italian art»³⁴. «The film was shot in Hollywood but two years previously a production crew had gone to Italy for shots and sketches of paintings, architecture and museum piece to inspire the set's décor»³⁵. This is equally true for the later screen version by Renato Castellani: «[...] the same kind of elaborate preparations were embarked upon: the setting for the balcony and ballroom scenes was in Ca' d'Oro in Venice; the costumes and props were copies from fifteen-century Italian paintings, the camera set ups planned to duplicate actual art works»³⁶.

George Cukor, director of the 1936 screen version of *Romeo and Juliet*, can't be counted among Shakespeare's greatest fans, as his works don't include any other screenings of his plays. *Romeo and Juliet* was chosen as it provided Cukor with the necessary material for luxuriant and spectacular performance, based on an infallibly popular plot, which perfectly suited the pompous MGM-studio style. Plenty of crowd scenes and inadmissibly mature, but celebrated and glamorous Norma Shearer as Juliet (aged 34) and Leslie Howard as Romeo (aged 43), added a special attrac-

³⁴ Strunk 1936, 21.

³⁵ Eckert 1972, 13.

³⁶ *Ivi*, 20.

tion to the movie, which was advertised by a 3-minute trailer as «the most famous scene on stage or screen, the never-to-be forgotten balcony scene». To support this praise and make the balcony scene really memorable, the producers retained it on some of the posters for the film, giving the portrayal of the episode the only attraction it lacked in the film: colour. The style of the placard is strongly reminiscent of the Hollywood musicals, with Juliet in buoyant sparkling pink and Romeo in navy blue, with golden braids and – unaccountably – in brown gloves. The lover has reached the base of the balcony, decorated with plastic putti, and is holding the hand of encouragingly smiling Juliet, stooping towards him from above. The background looks like a garden illuminated for some outdoor celebration – golden and shimmering, but blurred and looking detached.

The Capulet's orchard as one of the most significant settings is paid a lot of attention. The script specifies all its details and elements, taken from different picturesque and literary sources. The garden was supposed to look like «a park enclosed on two sides by high stone walls, the third by stables, and on the fourth by the great house itself. There is an orchard, an herb garden, and a pleasance of lawn, poplars, flowers and ornamental shrubs. Against the walls are espaliers of peach and grape. Within the pleasance is a fish pond, a fountain of a Renaissance design and a sun-dial on the wall. In the background are dove-houses, something for falcons, and a well with curb and a roof of medieval design»³⁷.

We see it briefly after a fierce clash in the city square, which creates a striking contrast to the tranquil atmosphere of the garden. The latter is an emphatically feminine place, as it assembles three women – Juliet, her mother and Nurse – for a private and delicate talk. In Shakespeare's text the discussion of Juliet's prospective marriage takes place indoors, in the girl's chamber, but in the film this scene is set in the orchard, with Juliet caressing a tamed doe, which makes the actress look very innocent, underlining her meekness and gentleness. A doe or a fawn is undoubtedly a very Hollywood-like introduction – a similar pet is associated with popular cartoon character, Snow-White, who appeared on screen a year after *Romeo and Juliet*, though Disney Company started working on it in 1934³⁸. This connection, however subtle, turns MGM Juliet into a princess from a fairy-tale, and the garden behind her into an enchanted forest. But it is also a very Shakespearean move, to link the heroine with this

³⁷ «Romeo and Juliet. Scenario Version», in *Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare* 1936, 154.

³⁸ Smith 2006³, 33.

symbol of meekness: a parallel can be met, for instance, in *Titus Andronicus* (II, 1) and in *The Rape of Lucrece*, so it metaphorically indicates Juliet's tragic fate. In the text of the play the Nurse calls Juliet «lamb» (I, 3), which also contains sacrificial connotations; as a visual image a fawn is more exquisite and looks more elegant on the screen.

The tame doe, as well as other garden amendments – arches, elaborate flower-beds and beautiful lanterns – were meant to create the image of a magical world, securing the heroine. Her mother means to evoke her from this enchantment by informing her of Paris' proposal, and this moment becomes «the start of her journey from a childhood harmony with Nature to the world of manipulated relationships which set out to tame Juliet»³⁹. Juliet's strong connection with nature and, specifically, with the garden, were emphasized by numerous depictions in art, but the film-makers decided to give it a dynamic realization as well. When Juliet leaves it, the garden visually accompanies her everywhere, turning her into a fairy or dryad for instantly enamoured Romeo at the ball.

Juliet's appearance at the feast is anticipated by a slight change in the convivial atmosphere of the celebration: instead of the immodest farce of the masquers and the foppish dancing processions we see the arrival of the «singing boys – at the far end of the ballroom, at entrance of the garden. They wear wreaths of pink and white carnations and carry golden branches hung with jeweled apples and birds. They form, on either side of the entrance to the garden, a background of fantastic foliage and fruit, such as Botticelli placed behind his figures»⁴⁰. This description reveals the director's intention to underline the picturesque aspects of Romeo and Juliet's first encounter and the wish to keep the elements of natural environment, so fitting the heroine, even in indoor scenes. The boys softly sing while Juliet appears from the garden with a group of girls who perform a lovely dance and create a live aisle which Juliet runs through. The elements of the vegetation are transferred from the garden to the ballroom to accompany Juliet. She even carries a flower which absent-mindedly hands in to Paris. Similar associations already existed in Juliet's pictorial history. In Cibber's version Romeo, having wandered into Capulet's orchard, instantly recognizes her abode by its distinctly «vegetative» associations: «This sure shou'd be the mansion of fair Juliet, for in such groves the Deities first dwelt». Another instance of a similar identification of Juliet with the elements of Nature can be seen in J.E. Pawsey's illustra-

³⁹ Davies 1996, 155.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, 163.

tion of the ball episode, where the ballroom is lavishly decorated with verdure – garlands of foliage hanging everywhere. In the film *Romeo + Juliet* (by Baz Luhrmann, 1996) the vegetation imagery associated with Juliet is replaced with that of water. The heroine is first seen bathing, and sees Romeo for the first time through a huge fish tank. Even the confession after the ball takes place around and in the swimming-pool – in the aggressive and hostile world of American civilization, water is the only living element, while gardens and plants entwined with wires, illuminated by searchlights and neon lamps, are artificial – that is, dead.

Though the garden in Cukor's film is Juliet's territory, we are shown a very rare episode almost completely missing in any previous theatrical or pictorial representations of the night scene – Romeo alone in the garden, cautiously moving through this dark world, unaware of the reward waiting for him up ahead. The garden is full of shadows and sharp lines of plants and trees; and straight lanes, marble urns and descending stairs make it resemble a cemetery at night. A big square pool in the middle with upturned reflection of the garden outlines makes everything look unreal and strengthens the unsettling impression of the whole scene. As Romeo sees the light that «through yonder window breaks», the viewer feels almost relieved at seeing someone alive in this cataleptic place. We also can't help noticing an indispensable row of tall cypresses, a column nearby, cupids on the bas-relief of the balcony and the creepers on the wall, which constitute the familiar iconographic language of the scene.

The distance between the speaking lovers makes their conversation chaste and almost formal, and the garden at the back seems to freeze in silent approval the ongoing communication. But as soon as Juliet leaves the balcony, the whole setting regains its gloomy aspect. Surely the advance of colour filming had significantly facilitated the designers and decorators' task. In the black and white version of 1936 they had to add such a detail as a sun dial, to emphasize the difference between the way the garden looks at night and in the daylight. Waiting for her Nurse's return, Juliet impatiently checks the time and plucks a flower. Another addition to the scenery here is a garden fence, replacing the thick and dull stone walls around the orchard.

All boundaries and bars seem to fall down when the words of the priest's blessing are pronounced over the bridal couple! Verona itself turns into one exultant blossoming garden as it is shown in a floating movement of the camera, with only blooming trees and a bell-tower in the distance. The elation of the moment makes the oncoming disaster – Tybalt's death by Romeo's hand – even more excruciating for the young

bride, ardently anticipating her husband's arrival. The orchard is shown once again, but not in the scene of Juliet's expecting Romeo, as in the text. We see it in a *déjà vu* shooting of Romeo's night passage through the shady isles between the bushes, but this time the walk is less pleasant and blithe. To display the growing impediments on the lovers' way the decorators set the balcony much higher than in the preceding scene, where Romeo managed to touch Juliet's outstretched hand: this time he is shown deeply beneath the balcony, like in a dark well, and really needs a rope to get to his wife. A sliding shot of the deserted garden, full of rose bushes, with the rippling water of the pool and the twinkling stars above, delicately alludes to the marriage consummation taking place in Juliet's chamber. The orchard itself, with the dark silhouettes of the trees clearly cut against the pale sky, seems to awake the couple, reminding them of harsh reality. Once again Romeo crosses the garden, weakly lit by the dawning sun, and leaves it forever, taking with him all promise of happiness.

Both film-makers and contemporary critics seemed to be satisfied with the production, whose special attraction was generally accepted to be the first garden scene: «The balcony scenes are imaginatively shot, with an awareness of the vertical distance being sustained in the high- and low-angle shooting. While the placing of massive potted plants momentarily suggests a garden center, the longer shots of the surrounding greenery reinforce without crudeness the nature imagery with which the poetry of the play is so finely interwoven»⁴¹. One of the critics tried to plunge into the relationship of Shakespeare's text and the different means of its visualization:

In scene and motion, the screen has gloriously released the play from the limitations of the stage [...] the balcony scene, no longer confined to a miniature window and painted garden, has a lush midnight beauty of physical things which merges graciously with the spoken rapture of the lovers' lines. Verona, in brief, and all the places within it have spread beyond painted canvas and stiffly standing props to come alive in their proper proportion, tone and hue. In such matters the screen is beyond the reach of the boards and footlights.⁴²

And yet, the picture of the garden, however truly and properly presented, lacks Shakespeare's depth and symbolism. It remains a mere element of

⁴¹ *Ivi*, 156.

⁴² Nugent 1936.

the decoration, unlike the lush verdure in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film, resembling a ruffled green sea eager to engulf two lovers. Zeffirelli stores the garden setting mostly for the scene of love's triumph, allowing his Romeo (Leonard Whiting) climb the balcony and indulge in his first caress with Juliet (Olivia Hussey). A sad leave-taking after the wedding night occurs mostly indoors, and the morning garden is shown very briefly, thus remaining in the viewers' memory the symbol of victorious passion, not of the tragic farewell. Cypresses are shown in the graveyard scenes, but not specified in the depiction of the orchard, separating the two spatial images.

Renato Castellani, whose movie appeared in 1954, was obviously captured by the image of Verona no less than Cukor. The stone labyrinth of the city, bustling with everyday activities, is presented in colour, as distinct from Cukor's film. So the charm of the picture is mainly in the medieval architecture and décor, while natural surroundings are limited to a few branches next to the balcony or a few flower pots on the city walls. The balcony scene is presented in a slightly unusual way, with Juliet (Sandra Shentall) on a wide gallery and Romeo (Laurence Harvey) talking to her through a steel grate, standing on the broad stairs nearby, almost at her level. The ivy on the wall and a thuja in the center of the yard are the only green patches within the tall walls, so it is hardly an orchard at all. This scene clearly demonstrates Castellani's infatuation with the old city's sights; in the film production he, metaphorically speaking, thinks like an architect, not like a gardener.

The scene with the Nurse's delay doesn't add much to the image of the garden already outlined by a few scanty strokes. Juliet meets her in a different part of the garden, not under the balcony (a similar trick was used in Cukor's version – Juliet's balcony faced one part of the orchard, while a talk with lady Capulet and a second one, with the Nurse, were located somewhere else, thus separating the night scenes from the day events). The conversation between Castellani's Juliet and her Nurse takes place in a rather barren-looking location, unsettling because of its resemblance with the cemetery – more obvious than ever before. Stone arches, alternating with short shrubs, create a kind of monotonous visual rhythm, as in Lorenzo's church and in Capulet's graveyard. Branches of a seemingly dead tree, menacingly stretching over the ladies' heads, and a tiled floor with a big flower-pot in the middle of a small yard, intensify the graveyard impression. The verdure within is poor, mostly ferns and some vine on the walls, and it is inferior to the lavish floral bas-relief on the stone urn. Nature looks bleak and subdued in comparison with mighty and

forbidding stone constructions around. In the film green is the colour of clothes, interior and decorations, not of the scenery; its highest intensity reveals not in the depiction of the garden, but in the shots at the cemetery, with its marble pillars entwined by sprouts and stalks.

None of the screen versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, except Luhrmann's, allow much freedom in the depiction of the orchard. It mostly remains within the borders of the previously originated pictorial tradition, which dictates almost indisputable rules and conventions, closely connected with the stage history of the drama: «Shakespeare on stage is semiotically bound to space, to the form of the theatre itself, to the location that defines cultural ambience, audience demographic and therefore semantic specificity»⁴³.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as in other plays and poems by Shakespeare, the garden is a kind of metatextual symbolic image, connected with such essential concepts as love, death, sexuality, temptation, moral choice. As can be seen from the text, the garden is a highly ambivalent space in terms of its influence upon the characters and their fate: it can be a shelter and a prison, a cradle of love and a herald of its tragic end. As a substitute for the territory of wild nature within the city walls the orchard is a symbol of restraint. In the proverbial Renaissance opposition of Nature and Culture the garden is the embodiment of cultivated, subdued natural power. Still, this Elizabethan Eden is never completely safe and tamed, as its essence is eager to reveal its true face, being «the unweeded garden» of hidden impulses and pernicious passions. In *Romeo and Juliet* the orchard is not merely the background of the couple's relationship; it seems to participate in it, accelerating its development and inspiring fatal decisions. For example, the famous balcony scene from act II is impossible to imagine indoors, as the garden location provides the necessary conditions for the hasty declaration – the dark, the moon, the rose scent and the distance separating the lovers, which is unbearable for them at the moment.

The garden image in *Romeo and Juliet* is characterized by its opposition to two other important *loci* in the drama – the city square and Capulet's house. The former is the territory of open aggression and hostility, which was distinctly perceived by most film-makers and retained in the vehement battle scenes. Capulet's house is associated with feudal hierarchy and order, suppressing a girl's freedom to choose a lover to the rules of the clan's interests. The garden instead is shown in the drama as a

⁴³ Wells 1996, 333.

private isolated place, assigned for individual experience. Both canvas and film support this distinct position of the garden through every kind of artistic techniques: expressive colouration of the garden scenes, abundant symbolic details like flower language or colour semiotics, visual parallelism between the natural surroundings and emotional atmosphere.

For more than three centuries *Romeo and Juliet* has ranked as one of the most popular and acclaimed texts for pictorial and screen reproductions. The illustrations to the tragedy are too numerous to categorize, but one feature is too striking to be missed – the predilection of the artists to visualize the young lovers within the vegetative setting. Either shrubbery or espalier or just some potted plants accompany the portrayal of the couple in their most intimate moments, as well as the most fateful ones. Their love is seen as a faint but beautiful flower arising on the ruins of the «ancient grudge» and crushed by its violent final outburst; thus the image of the garden has eventually become an intrinsic element, inherently harmonious to their story. Throughout the centuries the visual representation of the garden in *Romeo and Juliet* has acquired its own pictorial alphabet, whose elements, randomly combined on stage, canvas or screen, help to narrate the legendary story to further generations of eager and sympathetic spectators.

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