Recreating the *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scenes on the nineteenth-century Spanish stage

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If there is one scene that most theatre-goers and readers would choose as the one that best represents the story of the star-crossed lovers of Verona it would probably be the famous encounter that takes place in act II scene ii. *Romeo and Juliet* only meet four times in Shakespeare's timeless story of passionate love thwarted by the irrational feud between two rival families. Nevertheless, the so-called balcony scene seems to be the moment that stands out in the minds of those who are familiar with Shakespeare's play. There is a second balcony scene, even though it is not often referred to as such, in act III scene v when the lovers see each other one last time in the early hours of the morning before Romeo is forced to depart to Mantua. By taking a look at several nineteenth-century Spanish adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, the reader will discover how the first Spanish adaptors of Shakespeare's widely acclaimed tragedy recreated two of the most iconic scenes in the history of literature. There are no written records or detailed reviews that provide information about the staging of these plays. Thus, references to the ways in which the scenes might have been performed are based on the stage directions of the texts, the staging conventions of the period, and the architecture of the theatres where the plays were performed.

The neoclassical adaptations: Solís's *Julia y Romeo* (1803) and García Suelto's *Romeo y Julieta* (1817)

The reception of Shakespeare's works outside England began in France during the eighteenth century as a result of the rich cultural climate that permeated Europe during the Enlightenment. In spite of the opposition of critics and authors who did not always

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2 Nine adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* were produced in the nineteenth century: eight written in Spanish and one in Catalan. The last three adaptations published in Spanish at the end of the century have not been included due to the impossibility of having access to those texts.
view his plays in a favourable light, as the century unfolded, there was a gradual interest in making his works available to the French public. This often implied altering the source text so as to adapt it to the unities of action, place and time established by French classicists on the basis of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Amongst the different French authors who adapted Shakespeare, Jean-François Ducis stands out owing to the decisive role that he played in bringing Shakespeare to his contemporaries. Ducis also constitutes a crucial figure in the early reception of Shakespeare in Spain, as Shakespeare was introduced on the Spanish stage in the latter decades of the eighteenth century through adaptations derived from his neoclassical versions. Throughout most of the eighteenth century, France exercised a significant influence over Spain’s cultural sphere, which affected the way in which the theatre was conceived. Indeed, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos and Leandro Fernández de Moratín (two of the most important intellectuals of the period), in their efforts to reform the Spanish stage, proposed to embrace French tragedy, which they regarded, as Gregor explains, as “a model of order, exemplary heroism and deep refinement”.3

*Julia y Romeo*, which premiered on 9 December 1803 at the Teatro de la Cruz (Madrid), constitutes the first Spanish adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Spanish stage was in a deplorable state. With the exception of actors such as Isidoro Málquez, one of the greatest of the time, the acting style was execrable and mediocre.4 Furthermore, as Gies writes, “in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, actors struggled for respectability and for stability in a city [Madrid] beset by war, censorship, turmoil, and general indifference to their offerings”.5 It is also necessary to bear in mind the political instability that prevailed at the time, as a result of the War of Independence (1808-1812), the three-year revolutionary experiment known as the Constitutional Triennium, and the return in 1823 of absolutist monarchy under the figure of King Ferdinand VII (1823-1833). This instability partly accounts, as Calvo states, “for the scant number of Shakespearean plays performed or translated”.6

*Julia y Romeo* had posed a challenge for critics and scholars interested in the reception of Shakespeare in Spain, owing to the confusion regarding its authorship. Yet Pujante’s recent findings support the argument that had been defended by a number of Shakespearean critics in the early decades of the twentieth century (Emilio Cotarelo, Eduardo Juliá and Ricardo Ruppert), and assigns the play to the poet, playwright and translator Dionisio Villanueva y Ochoa, commonly referred to by his pseudonym Dionisio Solís.7 Prior to the appearance of *Julia y Romeo* solely three Shakespearean plays had been performed on the Spanish stage, *Hamlet* (1772), *Otelo* (1802) and *Macbeth* (1803) – all of which were adaptations of the neoclassical versions written by Ducis.8 Interestingly, the


earliest Spanish adaptation of the story of the lovers of Verona does not derive from Ducis’s adaptation of the tragedy. The literary source(s) that inspired the adaptor of Julia y Romeo had also remained a matter subject to discussion. Nonetheless, Pujante’s recent findings have also contributed to close this debate, as he has demonstrated that Christian Felix Weisse’s Romeo und Julie (1767) is the major source on which Solís based his own adaptation.9

The full title of Solís’s version is Julia and Romeo. Urban tragedy in five acts. The use of the term “urban” (urbana in Spanish) is typical of Spanish eighteenth-century drama, and it refers to the social status of the characters. This implies that the characters are distinguished by their noble birth or a notable virtue and, although they do not possess the elevated status of characters from heroic dramas, they are not as vulgar or ridiculous as the characters found in comedies.10 The text is confined within the three unities established by French neoclassicists. However, the unity of place is violated in the last act by transferring the scene from a chamber in Capulet’s palace to the Capulets’ family vault. Concerning the metre, Solís chose to transcribe his play into the octosyllabic measure of Spanish romances.11

This adaptation reduces the number of characters to seven: Julia, Madama Capelio (Lady Capulet), Capelio (Capulet), Romeo, the doctor Bentivoglio (a young man who plays the role of Friar Lawrence), Laura (Julia’s confidante) and Pedro (Romeo’s servant). The dramatis personae reveals that most characters are related to Julia, the real protagonist of this version – as illustrated by the inversion of the lovers’ names in the title, and by the fact that she appears in a significantly greater number of scenes than Romeo does. With the exception of the ending, the remaining part of the plot closely resembles Shakespeare’s. This adaptation could be acted either as a tragedy or as a tragicomedy. This is not a novelty in the European history of the afterlives of Romeo and Juliet. Indeed, in the mid-1660s, the version created by James Howard was played tragic one day, and tragicomic another.12 In Solís’s tragic variant, Romeo is killed by poison whereas Julia stabs herself with a sword. In the alternative version, Bentivoglio appears soon after Julia reawakens to tell the lovers that he had given Romeo a harmless potion, and to encourage them to flee to Vienna. The happy ending was possibly favoured during the performances of the play.13

As this version begins in media res, once the marriage has already taken place, the spectators do not get to witness the memorable encounter in the balcony. Nonetheless, the author did not completely erase this episode. What is striking is that the balcony scene, rather than being enacted, is narrated by Julia in act i scene ii during a conversation with her close friend Laura. Julia briefly explains in eighteen lines that one night, while she was approaching her balcony to take a breath of fresh air and lament the pains ailing her, she saw her beloved Romeo moving towards her and calling her name out. This adaptation portrays the love story through Julia’s perspective. Thus, unlike the situation

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depicted in Shakespeare’s play, in which we first see Romeo approaching Juliet’s window, this version invites the audience to picture Julia at her balcony first, before seeing Romeo. The passionate encounter has been extremely reduced to a single short speech in which the reader/spectator is only given one perspective on what happened. Furthermore, Julia’s brief narrative is completely overshadowed by both the asphyxiating atmosphere and the depressing tone that prevail throughout the conversation between the two women, in which the words that are recurrently used are “cry” and “tears”. The pessimistic atmosphere is not unique to this scene, as this adaptation is characterized by its extremely melodramatic and sentimental tone. According to Alfonso Par, one of the first Spanish Shakespeareans, the melodramatic plot and the happy ending caused an uproar amongst those theatre goers who were privileged enough to attend the premiere of the first Spanish production of Romeo and Juliet.\textsuperscript{14}

The second “balcony scene” starts in act I scene iii and ends in act I scene iv; hence, it is placed immediately after the aforementioned scene. It stages a meeting between the newly-weds, whose marriage we assume was consummated before the play starts, that closely resembles the situation in which we find Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet in act III scene vi.\textsuperscript{15} Apart from urging him to stay, Julia proposes the idea of eloping either to an African beach or to the cold Alps, a plan that Romeo says should be used only as a last resort in case his banishment is prolonged over an excessively long period of time. Before Romeo finds the strength to leave his wife, he promises to keep in touch by means of letters that his servant Pedro will deliver to either her or her trustworthy friend Laura. Romeo eventually exits the stage at the end of act I scene iv, and the spectators do not get the opportunity to see him again until the final act when he visits the Capelios’ family vault. The two scenes do not escape the melodramatic nature of the play, as Julia is in tears while she listens to what she strongly fears might be the last words that her husband delivers in her presence. Furthermore, she even faints the last time that she utters the word “farewell”, only regaining consciousness in the subsequent scene, once Romeo has already left her chamber.

It is worth mentioning at this point that, as Lois Leveen observes, the word “balcony” itself (or rather “balcone”) was not used in the period when Shakespeare composed his tragedy, as the term did not enter the Oxford English Dictionary until 1618.\textsuperscript{16} Nevertheless, balconies have featured in the majority of productions of the play throughout its staging history. In Solís’s version the stage direction at the beginning of act I that describes the stage setting for acts I, II, III and IV clearly indicates that there is a balcony located stage left. This balcony might have been one of the typical props used in Spanish theatres prior to the eighteenth century to represent objects such as balconies, windows, chairs or trees. The actress playing Julia might have placed herself next to this prop while recalling her encounter with Romeo. However, the stage directions that appear in act I scene iii are confusing: one pictures Romeo “looking through the window”, whereas another one

\textsuperscript{14} Alfonso Par, Representaciones shakespearianas en España. Vol. 1: Época galo-clásica; época romántica, Madrid, Librería Victoriano Suárez, Barcelona, Biblioteca Balmés, 1936, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{15} All of the references to the English source text are taken from the following edition of the play: William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, ed. René Weis, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 2012.


indicates that Romeo is “pointing at the balcony”.\textsuperscript{37} Nevertheless, whether there is a balcony or a window present is irrelevant to the action in this adaptation. Although act i scenes iii and iv bear a strong resemblance to Shakespeare’s act iii scene v, Solis’s Romeo enters and leaves the stage neither through a window nor a balcony but, instead, through one of the ordinary stage doors located stage left. Consequently, although both the conversation and the action illustrated in these two scenes are very similar to those in Shakespeare’s parting scene, and even though they take place in the presence of a balcony/window, the balcony loses the visibility it has in Shakespeare’s play. The absence of metaphorical verticality in these two scenes might have been motivated by the desire on the part of Solis to avoid any kind of sexual connotations attached to the action of portraying Romeo leaving Julia’s chamber through her balcony. As a result of the strong influence of French neoclassicism, Spanish playwrights at the time had a strong sense of decorum, which also explains why there are no references to the consummation of the marriage.

Romeo y Julieta, the second Spanish version of Shakespeare’s renowned tragedy, was first published in 1817, and premiered in Barcelona that same year.\textsuperscript{18} As with Julia y Romeo, the authorship of this text had been subject to debate, with opinions divided between scholars who assigned the text to Dionisio Solís, and those who thought it was the work of the poet and translator Manuel Bernardino García Suelto. In their latest publication Pujante and Gregor confirm that there is enough evidence to support the attribution of Romeo y Julieta to the latter.\textsuperscript{19} The full title of García Suelto’s play is \textit{Romeo y Julieta. Tragedia en cinco actos. Traducida del francés.}\textsuperscript{20} It is evident from a reading of the text that Ducis’s 1772 Roméo et Juliette was the source from which García Suelto worked. As in Ducis’ reworking, Romeo changes his name to Dolveo at an early age to escape from the persecution of Rogero (Juliet’s uncle), and is raised by Julieta’s father. Following Ducis the tragic love story takes second place and the focus is on the return of Montegón (Romeo’s father) to Verona in order to take revenge on the Capuletos, who imprisoned him together with his four other sons in a tower in Pisa, causing the death of his innocent offspring. Montegón does not succeed in his attempt to destroy his enemies, and the play also ends with the deaths of the innocent lovers.

This second adaptation does not include the famous balcony scene from act ii scene ii, which Ducis also deleted. It is important to take into consideration one of the novelties that the French playwright introduced in this adaptation: the fact that Romeo and Juliet have known each other since an early age, and have grown up almost as brother and sister. The iconic first balcony scene in Shakespeare’s play is mostly an opportunity for the lovers to reassure one another about the true nature of their feelings, as they have only had the chance of meeting once. Therefore, it could seem irrelevant to include this scene in a play in which the couple have known each other almost for their entire lives, and where the major focus lies not on their love story but on Montegon and his revenge.

\textsuperscript{37} “Mirando por la ventana”; “señalando al balcón” (Pujante and Gregor, \textit{Romeo y Julieta en España...}, p. 76). All of the translations from Spanish into English provided in the article are mine. The aforementioned volume includes the first printed version of Julia y Romeo.

\textsuperscript{18} Pujante and Gregor, “Introducción”, \textit{Romeo y Julieta en España...}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{19} For more information on the authorship of Julia y Romeo (1803) and Romeo y Julieta (1817) see: Pujante and Gregor, “La autoría de las versiones neoclásicas españolas de Romeo y Julieta”, \textit{Romeo y Julieta en España...}, p. 47-51.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Romeo and Juliet. Tragedy in Five Acts. Translated from French}.
Furthermore, neither in Ducis’s version nor in García Suelto’s adaptation do the lovers get married, which might explain why the second balcony scene is also absent.

**The mid-nineteenth-century adaptations: Balaguer’s *Julieta y Romeo* (1849), and Dacarrete’s *Julieta y Romeo* (1858)**

The nineteenth century was an extremely convulsive period in the history of Spain, as a result of recurring political conflicts which affected all levels of society, causing popular unrest. The main sources of conflict which dominated the first half of the century were, as the historians García de Cortázár and González Vesga explain, “the disputes between conservatism and moderate liberalism”. The situation worsened throughout the years as further divisions within society emerged when the liberal politicians and intellectuals split into two groups: “the exaltados (or progresistas), who demanded freedom and progress immediately, and the moderados, who opted for a more gradual – and in their view, more solid – change.” These ideological tensions originated with the death of the absolutist monarch Fernando VII in 1833, which led the nation into a period governed by “popular protests, government instability, periods of repression, [and] political assassinations”. The conflicting social and political scenario in which the country was immersed helps to account for the late arrival of the Romantic movement, since the majority of liberal intellectuals had been forced into exile. It was not until December 1833, when they were officially allowed to return, that Romanticism was fully introduced into Spain. The Romantic period did not last long, and it peaked between 1835 and 1845.

From the moment of its first performance in 1835, *Richard III* became the “emblem” for the interpretation of Shakespeare during the Romantic period. It might seem surprising that a play such as *Romeo and Juliet*, perfectly suited to the Romantic taste, was not equally popular. Its lack of popularity may have been due to the first publication and performance in Spain, in 1838, of a Shakespearean play translated directly from English, José García de Villalta’s *Macbeth*. Gregor and Pujante highlight that this first attempt by García de Villalta to translate Shakespeare from the original source text was a complete failure which, in turn, affected the reception of the Bard in Spain during the rest of the century. Moreover, authors interested in Shakespeare started to believe that the only way of introducing his plays onto the Spanish stage was by adapting them to the taste and demands of the general public. The dominance of *Richard III* on the Romantic stage, together with a reluctance to translate Shakespeare from English, explains why there were only two versions of *Romeo and Juliet* produced during the mid-nineteenth century, both of which were adaptations influenced by the ideals of Spanish Romanticism. These plays were Víctor Balaguer’s *Julieta y Romeo* (1849) and Ángel María Dacarrete’s *Julieta y Romeo* (1858).

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24 Par, *Representaciones shakespeareanas en España*, vol. 1, p. 147.
Balaguer was a Catalan writer, liberal politician, journalist, historian and one of the most eminent literary figures in Catalonia during the Romantic period. Nevertheless, his *Julieta y Romeo*, which premiered at the Teatro Principal of Barcelona on 21 May 1849, was only performed once, a fact that suggests that this version displeased the public.\(^{28}\) Balaguer divided the action into three acts and limited the number of characters to five, the smallest *dramatis personae* created up to that point in time. The only characters that this version includes are the following: Capuleto (a nobleman from Verona), Julieta, Romeo Montecho (a rich gentleman from Verona), don Alvar (a Spanish gentleman who is the equivalent of Count Paris), and Talerm (a knowledgeable doctor and magistrate from Verona who acts as Friar Lawrence). The small number of characters helps to focus the action on the conflicts that surround Capuleto and his family. The family feud is present from the opening scene, and the families are never reconciled in this version in which Romeo’s parents do not even appear. As in the 1803 adaptation, the protagonists are already married and they have not seen each other for two months. This adaptation is characterised by the heightened dramatic tension added to the ending of each of the three acts. The first one ends with the reference to Tebaldo’s death (Julieta’s brother), and with Capuleto’s promise to marry his daughter to the gentleman who brings her Romeo’s head as a wedding gift. The second one ends with Romeo’s unexpected appearance at Julieta’s wedding with Alvar, although the ceremony does not take place because she falls unconscious to the ground due to the effect of the beverage administered by Talerm. The third act ends with the deaths of the two protagonists, who see each other one last time before they expire.

Shakespeare’s second balcony scene does not appear in Balaguer’s adaptation, and the first one is briefly narrated by Julieta in act 1 scene v. The writer might have taken inspiration from Solís’s own version of the episode as both “balcony scenes” are narrated by the female protagonist (rather than enacted), and both occupy eighteen lines. The speech is written in verse, in heptasyllables and hendecasyllables, following the formal structure of the rest of the text. Act 1 scene v takes place at night in Capuleto’s salon, and it constitutes the first of the six encounters between the married couple. Julieta’s brief narrative tells the story of the daily misery that she felt during the two months she spent without her husband. The audience learns that she opened her window (not a balcony) every night in the hope of seeing her beloved husband, but to no avail, as she always left her window broken-hearted, knowing that Romeo would not appear.

The stage direction included at the beginning of act 1 specifies that there is a window onstage. This would have probably been a hole made in a *bastidor*, one of the wooden frames located at both sides of the stage that were part of the set. However, the window seems to have no dramatic function in this play, as Julieta merely draws Romeo’s attention to it, but she does not position herself next to it while she recalls her late-night visits to her window. The omission of the liminal space of the window/balcony has its moral implications. As Alexander Cowan asserts in relation to the social function of balconies in Venice during the early modern period, “the balcony was [...] used both to observe and to be observed. Walking on to a balcony was never a neutral action”.\(^{29}\) The same argument can be applied to a window. Thus, by omitting the image of Julieta

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\(^{28}\) Par, *Representaciones shakespeareanas en España*, vol. 1, p. 223.

approaching her window at night, Balaguer might have wished to avoid depicting a woman engaged in an act of self-display, attracting unwanted attention from male passers-by. The fact that the protagonists are already married when the play begins, together with the omission of references to the consummation of their marriage also reflect the author’s concerns about morality.

In 1858, during the period known in Spain as Postromanticism, Ángel María Dacarrete published *Julieta y Romeo*. The play premiered in Madrid from 29 to 31 May 1858 at the Teatro Novedades; it was also performed six months later in Barcelona at the Odeon Theatre on 14 and 21 November. In his introduction to the play the author explains that he wishes to imitate rather than to faithfully reproduce Shakespeare’s tragedy. Dacarrete altered the original plot, added new roles and reduced the number of main characters to six: Julieta, Laura (a married lady in love with Romeo), Leonora (Julieta’s young nurse), Romeo, Capuleto, and Rodrigo Loredano (a gentleman from Verona who is the equivalent of Count Paris). Julieta is the real protagonist according to the author, and she is extremely constant. She breaks her promise to marry Romeo when she realizes that her intentions affect her old father and, instead, marries Loredano (her father’s chosen candidate). Loredano later finds his wife alone in a room with Romeo, he wrongly assumes that the two have had sexual intercourse, and he starts a fight in which Romeo kills him. In the final act, in the presence of her late husband’s tomb, Julieta agrees to be Romeo’s wife as long as God forgives her. Nevertheless, their union never takes place as both lovers die in the same manner as in Shakespeare’s play.

The balcony is a prominent element, since it features in several scenes. It is also the first time that it is incorporated into the performance of a Spanish adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. As Julieta shouts in act I, the balcony belongs to her father; hence, it can be interpreted as a symbol of paternal authority. The fact that Romeo often jumps over it to steal into Capuleto’s palace can be read as a way of openly defying the man’s will within his own household. The balcony first appears in act I scene i and later in act I scene iv when Leonora opens the doors that lead into it so as to ascertain whether Romeo is coming. It appears again in act I scene v, coinciding with the first meeting between Julieta and Romeo. The iconic balcony scene is once more narrated, on this occasion by the two lovers, in a brief conversation written in octosyllabic lines. The protagonists stand by the balcony to remember the first time they saw each other in an erotic manner: Julieta recalls how she took pleasure in breathing the night air, and Romeo mentions how he felt her burning hand trembling within his. The balcony was probably one of the props used during the production of the play, and it possibly had a balustrade, since there are references in the text to the railing. The second balcony scene is placed immediately afterwards in act I scene vi. However, we only witness the second half of the famous passage, as Leonora roughly interrupts the pair in the early hours of the morning to urge Romeo to leave the house. Verticality is obliterated as the spectators are told that Romeo jumps out of Leonora’s window but, instead, they see him leave the stage through a side door that leads to the servant’s room. In order to depict the window, the company might have placed behind the aforementioned door a forillo, a small piece of painted cloth typical of the stage design of the period.

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Dacarrete chose to revisit the second balcony scene at the end of act II scene vii by recreating a free version in hendecasyllabic lines of the conversation, omitting the irritating presence of Leonora. The scene is transferred to the garden surrounding the palace of the prince of Verona, and it ends with references to the lark and Romeo’s forced departure. Nonetheless, no balcony is present on stage. In a section entitled “Notas” [Notes], Dacarrete writes that in act II scene vii he tried to imitate part of the features of Shakespeare’s “immortal” work. He also provided a translation into prose of the exchange, from Juliet’s “wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day” (III. v. 1.) to “it is, it is! Hie hence, be gone, away!” (III. v. 26). Thus, it is evident that during the mid-nineteenth century, adaptors were starting to become aware of the importance that the balcony scenes have in the economy of the play.

The balcony also appears several times in act III scenes which are not present in Shakespeare’s plot. It is the first element that the audience sees in act III scene i when Romeo enters Capuleto’s palace through the balcony, immediately after Julieta’s wedding. It appears once again in act III scene iv, when a tearful Julieta in her wedding dress approaches the balcony alone, fearing that Romeo will enter to declare his ardent love. Interestingly, when Romeo finally confronts her, he refers to the balcony to make Julieta feel guilty for not having been faithful to her promise to marry him. Hence the balcony appears to become a symbol of their love. The balcony is used one last time in act III scenes viii and ix. Loredano is already dead, and Capuleto pushes Romeo onto the balcony to help him escape, as he fears that his daughter’s honour might be questioned if Romeo is discovered inside her chamber. The balcony is no longer an entrance for the passionate Romeo who wishes to see his beloved one, but the gate that allows a murderer to escape from the crime scene. Thus, throughout the play, Romeo illustrates Cowan’s argument on the use of balconies as “illicit points of exit or entry from a house”. 35

The adaptations of the 1870s: Viñas y Dezas’s and Sunols’s Romeo y Julieta (1875), and Balaguer’s Las esposallas de la morta (1878)

The First Republic (1873–1874) was another year of major political instability in the long, tumultuous history of nineteenth-century Spain, with the country governed by four successive presidents within a single year. The Borbón monarchy was restored in 1875 under the figure of King Alfonso XIII (1875–1885), initiating the Restoration period. He was succeeded by his son Alfonso XIII in 1886, who reigned until the implementation of the Second Republic (1931–1939). The latter decades of the nineteenth century coincided with the consolidation of a capitalist system that favoured the bourgeoisie, and with the rise of working class unrest. 36 As the century drew to an end, a deep feeling of pessimism permeated the country due to the strong social and economic crisis that resulted from the loss of the last Spanish colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) in 1898.

The last third of the nineteenth century coincided with the revival of some of the Romantic ideals, ushering in a new trend, Neo-Romanticism, that many playwrights had begun to cultivate since the start of the Restoration period. This new current was described by Menéndez Onrubia and Ávila Arellano as the “violent expression of the traditionalist mentality [of the time], asphyxiated in economic terms and on the verge of

36 García de Cortázar and González Vesga, Breve historia de España, p. 506.
being extinguished". The adaptation of Romeo and Juliet published by Lucio Viñas y Deza and Fabio Sunols in 1875 constitutes an example of one of the neo-Romantic plays produced in the latter decades of the century. As Calvo remarks, the period which goes from 1868 to 1890 is crucial in the history of the reception of the Bard in Spain, as it coincides with the appearance of several new translations of Shakespeare's plays written by some of the most prominent scholars of the century: Matías de Velasco y Rojas, Jaime Clark, Guillermo Macpherson or Menéndez Pelayo. Furthermore, it was during the second half of the nineteenth century that the first versions of Romeo and Juliet directly translated from the English source text began to appear. The first one was Julieta y Romeo, a prose translation by Matías de Velasco y Rojas published in 1872. In spite of the proliferation of translations of Shakespeare’s works, new adaptations of Romeo and Juliet were still produced. One of them was Romeo y Julieta, an arreglo [adaptation] in verse published in 1875 by Lucio Viñas y Deza and Fabio Sunols, pseudonyms used by the writers Luis Díaz Cobeña and Luis Bonaños. The tragedy was staged for the first time in Madrid on 30 and 31 January 1875 at the Teatro Circo. The production was also taken to Barcelona, where it premiered at the Teatro Principal on 24 May. The play was a complete failure, according to Par, and it was never performed again. This new version closely resembles Shakespeare’s plot, and it includes all of the main characters with the exception of Romeo’s parents and Count Paris.

The first balcony scene is placed in act II scene i. It is the first time that a Spanish adaptation of Romeo and Juliet follows the structure of Shakespeare’s famous scene: Romeo enters the stage, he sees Julieta at her window, and they start expressing their feelings. The text of the original scene was barely altered, although some speeches (especially Romeo’s) were lengthened. The rationale behind this change was that the playwrights wanted Rafael Calvo (the main tragic actor of the Neo-Romantic period) to play Romeo and, consequently, expanded his speeches to highlight the actor’s declamatory talents. The dramatists also changed some words and lines so as to keep the play within the boundaries of decorum. For instance, in Shakespeare’s play Romeo asks Juliet “O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?” (II.ii.125), to which the lady replies “what satisfaction canst thou have tonight?” (II.ii.126). This adaptation omits the terms “unsatisfied” and “satisfaction” due to their sexual connotations. Instead, the brief exchange has been reproduced as follows:

ROMEO. What! Are you going to leave me like
This?
JULIETA. What do you want?
ROMEO. To exchange
My faith for your faith (II.i)\[10\]

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35 Par, Representaciones shakespearianas en España, vol. 2, p. 35.
37 Par, Representaciones shakespearianas en España, vol. 2, p. 35-36.
38 ROMEO ¿Cómo! ¿Me vas a dejar / así? JULIETA ¿Qué quieres? ROMEO Cambiar / mí fe por tu fe (Lucio Viñas y Deza and Fabio Sunols, Romeo y Julieta, Madrid, Imprenta a cargo de J. J. Heras, 1875, p. 33).
The playwrights' preoccupation with propriety is also found in the rendition of the second balcony scene (III.i.x and x), as the lovers do not consummate their marriage. This version begins with Romeo's abrupt entrance into Julieta's room in order to apologise for Tebaldo's death. The text then reproduces a dialogue similar to the one found in Shakespeare's play before the arrival of Lady Capulet. The entrance of the Nodriza [Nurse] and Romeo's exit occur in act III scene x and, for the first time in the history of Spanish adaptations of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo leaves the stage climbing down from the balcony. In Barcelona both balcony scenes might have been performed inside one of the box seats located at both sides of the stage of the Teatro Principal, as the outside structure of the box might have easily stood for a balcony. If this was the case, the company would have needed a ladder in act III scene x to help Romeo climb down onto the main stage.

In 1878 Víctor Balaguer published Las esposallas de la morta [The Engagement of the Dead Lady], an adaptation of his 1849 version of Romeo and Juliet. This new text constitutes the first edition of the tragedy published in Catalan, and the second one of a Shakespearean play written in that language. Its publication coincided with the apogee of the Renaixença [Renaissance], a cultural movement that defended the imperative of using Catalan rather than Spanish as the language of literature and culture; Balaguer was one of its prominent figures. Las esposallas de la morta premiered in Barcelona at the Teatro Principal on 6 March 1878. The production was a huge success, and it was still being played regularly in Spanish theatres right into the mid-twentieth century.

The action of this new adaptation also develops along three acts. Nevertheless, Balaguer eliminated the division into scenes, and considerably reduced what already was a short play to virtually a very long conversation between Romeo Montesi and Julieta, whose love story is the entire focus of the play. The other three characters that appear onstage are Capuletti, Conrado de Arlés (the new Count Paris), and Fray Lorenzo (Julieta's confessor). Balaguer followed the plot of his previous version, cutting all of the scenes that were the product of his own imagination, and keeping only the most important passages.

While in the 1849 version Balaguer only recreated the first balcony scene, this new version simply includes the second one, with which the playwright chose to open his play. The conversation between the lovers has been extended to emphasize their wish to delay Romeo's departure. The spectators know that the couple have had sexual intercourse, and it is probably not the first night that they have spent together, as they are already married when the play begins. In this version Romeo must leave Capuletti's home because nobody knows that the protagonists have got married. Furthermore, since Julieta does not have a friend or a nurse, no intruders interrupt the blissful couple. Romeo eventually exits the stage by climbing down the stairs that lead to a garden, while Julieta says her farewells from the top of a balustrade that stands for a balcony. The scene might have been performed inside one of the box seats located at either side of the stage of the Teatro Principal. However, the company could also have added to the set a balustrade and stairs.

39 Abelardo Coma's Otello il moro di Valenza (1874), a parody in verse, was the first translation into Catalan of a Shakespearean play (Didac Pujol, "Bibliografía comentada de les traduccions catalanes de Shakespeare: Part I (1874-1969)", Estudis Romànics, nº 31, 2010, p. 290).
40 Par, Representaciones shakespeareanas en España, vol. 2, p. 118.
41 Par, Representaciones shakespeareanas en España, vol. 2, p. 10.
leading to the stalls, following the way in which the stage had been decorated in 1877 to host an award ceremony.\textsuperscript{42}

**Conclusion**

This journey through nineteenth-century Spanish adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* has shown that most playwrights chose not to reproduce faithfully the two balcony scenes present in Shakespeare’s play. One of the most striking departures from the source text was found in the versions published by Solís (1803), Balaguer (1849) and Dacarrete (1858), where the famous encounter that takes place in act ii scene ii is briefly narrated rather than enacted. It is also significant that prior to the version of *Romeo and Juliet* composed by Viñas y Deza and Sunols in 1875, the balcony or window had no dramatic function. This became more evident during the performance of Shakespeare’s second balcony scene, as the stage directions included in the early versions of the tragedy indicated that Romeo had to exit the stage through a side door. The obliteration of verticality may have been motivated by a conscious desire to avoid the sexual connotations attached to the image of Romeo leaving Juliet’s chamber through her balcony. Moreover, not only do these first adaptations eliminate the vertical axis and its metaphorical and moral significance, they also omit references to the consummation of the marriage, since Romeo and Juliet are often married when the play starts. An awareness of the negative effect that the theatre could have on contemporary audiences explains why it was not until the appearance of Balaguer’s *Las esposallas de la morta* (1878), that Spanish audiences learned that the lovers had had sexual intercourse during the second balcony scene. Thus, the most important changes added to the dramaturgy and staging of these emblematic scenes do not appear to have been aimed at offering a new perspective on the traditional way in which the scenes had been represented throughout the staging history of *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead, those changes seem to have been made to ensure that the plays would not deviate from the moral standards of the period.

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