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An unconventional adaptation: Ángel María Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* (1858)*

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Abstract: This article examines *Julieta y Romeo* (1858), an unconventional adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* written by Ángel María Dacarrete. The play has received no scholarly attention since Alfonso Par's pioneering works on Shakespeare in Spain (published in 1936 and 1940), and it deserves to be re-evaluated. It focuses on the innovations introduced by Dacarrete, the performance history, and the ensuing rejection by most contemporary critics owing to a supposed lack of originality and equally supposed appalling immorality. It argues that, at a time in which Shakespeare was largely unknown, adaptation was beneficial rather than detrimental to the reception of Shakespeare in Spain.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Spain, adaptation, appropriation.

Una adaptación poco convencional: el *Julieta y Romeo* (1858) de Ángel María Dacarrete

Resumen: El artículo examina *Julieta y Romeo* (1858), una adaptación poco convencional de *Romeo y Julieta* escrita por Ángel María Dacarrete. La obra no ha recibido atención de la crítica desde los estudios pioneros de Alfonso Par sobre Shakespeare en España (publicados en 1936 y 1940). El artículo se centra en las innovaciones introducidas por Dacarrete, la puesta en escena y la consecuente reacción adversa de la crítica por la supuesta falta de originalidad y deplorable inmoralidad de la pieza. Este trabajo defiende que, en una época en la que Shakespeare era prácticamente un autor desconocido, la adaptación de su obra contribuyó positivamente a su recepción en España.

Palabras clave: Shakespeare, *Romeo y Julieta*, España, adaptación, apropiación.

Uma adaptação pouco convencional: *Julieta y Romeo* (1858) de Ángel María Dacarrete†

Resumo: Este artigo analisa *Julieta y Romeo* (1858), uma adaptação pouco convencional de *Romeo and Juliet*, escrita por Ángel María Dacarrete. A peça não recebeu nenhuma atenção académica desde os trabalhos pioneiros de Alfonso Par sobre Shakespeare em Espanha (publicados em 1936 e 1940), e merece ser reavaliada. Este estudo centra-se nas inovações de Dacarrete, na história da representação e consequente rejeição da peça pela maioria dos críticos seus contemporâneos, devido a uma suposta falta de originalidade e a uma igualmente suposta grande imoralidade. Argumenta-se que, numa época em que Shakespeare era no geral desconhecido, as adaptações foram mais benéficas do que prejudiciais para a receção de Shakespeare em Espanha.

Palabras-chave: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Espanha, adaptação, apropriação.

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1. Introduction

The reception of Shakespeare in Spain begins in the late eighteenth century, with the first performance of a Shakespearean play on the Spanish stage, *Hamleto*, in 1772. The starting date is not the result of pure chance. In Britain the eighteenth century coincides with the age of bardolatry, as Dobson amply documents in *The Making of the National Poet* (1992). It is during this period that Shakespeare, newly baptised as the Swan of Avon, was elevated in his native country to the prestigious status of national icon. Similarly, on the continent, and particularly in Germany, the advent of Romanticism with its emphasis on individual genius contributed to the gradual introduction of Shakespeare into new literary milieux. However, during this early phase of Shakespeare in Europe, the plays produced often had little in common with the Elizabethan and Jacobean texts that are familiar to twenty-first century readers and theatergoers worldwide. One of the figures responsible for this lack of faithfulness to the Shakespearean text is undoubtedly the French dramatist Jean-François Ducis. He played a major role in the dissemination of Shakespeare on the continent. Ducis did not speak English and relied heavily on plot summaries, most of which written by Pierre-Antoine de La Place, that had little — or barely anything — in common with the Shakespearean text. Still, his rewritings became hugely popular, not only in France but also beyond. His adaptations became a particular favourite amongst European playwrights who often used them as source texts. It should come as no surprise, then, that the earliest version of a Shakespearean play staged in Spain, the 1772 *Hamleto*, was a translation of Ducis's *Hamlet*. The text is generally attributed to Ramón de la Cruz (Gregor 2010, 7). Adaptation of Shakespearean plays was not a phenomenon exclusive to non-Anglophone countries. One ought not to forget that during the Restoration Shakespearean texts were altered and rewritten to suit contemporary tastes. One example is Nahum Tate's 1681 *King Lear* with its unexpected happy ending.

The history of the reception of *Romeo and Juliet* in Spain is also dominated by the preference for adaptation over faithfulness to Shakespeare. The turn of the nineteenth century gave birth to the earliest adaptations: *Julia y Romeo* (1803) by Dionisio Solís and *Romeo y Julieta* (1817) by Manuel Bernardino García Suelto.[1] Both neoclassical adaptations owe

[1] For more information on the play's neoclassical adaptations see *Romeo y Julieta en España: las versiones neoclásicas* (Pujante and Gregor 2017a) and "The Early Reception of *Romeo and Juliet* in Spain" (Ruiz-Morgan 2022).

more to continental influences than to Shakespeare. Solís's source text was not Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but *Romeo und Julie* (1768) by Christian Felix Weisse. This German adaptation contained numerous elements directly borrowed from eighteenth-century sentimental melodrama that were incorporated into Solís's *Julia y Romeo*. García Suelto resorted instead to Ducis's *Roméo et Juliette* (1772). This French adaptation moves the focus from the young lovers to Montegón (Roméo's father) and his avid quest to avenge his family from the pain inflicted by the rival faction.

Italy constitutes the other major influence in the reception of *Romeo and Juliet* in Spain during the nineteenth century. The first staging of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in Italy took place late, in 1869, with a successful adaptation by Ernesto Rossi. Adaptations of the Veronese plot, however, date back to 1818 (Calvi 2017).[2] In Spain the tragic story of the lovers of Verona was popularised in the 1830s, particularly in Madrid, as a result of the successful operas by Rossini and Bellini (Calvo 2008). Echoes of another Italian opera, *Giulietta e Romeo* (1828) by Felice Romani, can be traced in Víctor Balaguer's *Julieta y Romeo* (1849). This is the third adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* produced on the nineteenth-century Spanish stage. Balaguer's play constitutes a free version that draws heavily on the furore over Romantic drama that had taken the Spanish theater by storm a decade earlier. It was performed only once, on May 21, 1849, demonstrating that it failed to please audiences (Par 1936, 223).

The next adaptation in line is the focus of this article: Ángel María Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* (1858). Dacarrete was the first Spanish adaptor who had read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in English. This author too favoured adaptation over translation, signalling that the former was the preferred and most convenient option at the time. Ten years earlier, in 1838, Manuel García de Villalta had translated *Macbeth*, the first Shakespearean translation for the Spanish stage.[3] The translation was praised unanimously. Nonetheless, the production, although lavish and highly anticipated in the press, failed to meet expectations. This unfortunate experiment kept translations of Shakespeare away from the stage for the remaining decades of the nineteenth century, further evi-

[2] For more information on the circulation of *Romeo and Juliet* in Europe see Cerdá, Delabastita, and Gregor (2017) and Rayner (2021).

[3] The earliest translation into Spanish of a Shakespearean play was Leandro Fernández de Moratín's *Hamlet* (1798), a translation to be read rather than staged.

dencing that it was preferable to adapt rather than to faithfully imitate Shakespeare if one was aiming for success.[4]

The reception of *Romeo and Juliet* in Spain up to the mid-nineteenth century is a clear example of Lanier's highly influential application of the rhizome (an organic form with no origin) to the study of Shakespearean adaptation (2014). The rhizome allows us to displace the Shakespearean text from the restrictive conception of "original" and exclusive source text from which all subsequent adaptations derive. Instead, one can look at the process of Shakespearean adaptation as a complex — and endless — web of connections influencing one another, in which there is not a sole unique source. Once that adaptation is acknowledged, different dilemmas may arise. Is adaptation necessary? Is it ethical? The answer to the first question regarding nineteenth-century Spanish theater is clear: absolutely. The 1838 experiment had proved that translating Shakespeare was inefficient and ineffectual. In this context, as Fischlin and Fortier argue, adaptation becomes "a way of making Shakespeare fit a particular historical moment or social requirement" (2000, 17). Deciding whether adaptation is an ethical practice is more problematic. In nineteenth-century Spain, a time in which Shakespeare was largely unknown to the public, writers were relatively free to appropriate Shakespeare. In 1858, the lack of familiarity with the Shakespearean text precluded any possible outcry from ordinary theatergoers who could not establish the connection with Shakespeare. In a context that favours re-writing, adaptation could be viewed as an opportunity to engage in a creative process, which is one of the ways in which adaptation should be regarded according to Sanders (2016).

This favourable understanding of adaptation can be applied to Dacarrete and his own conception of his *Julieta y Romeo* as an example of what Hutcheon considers "repetition without replication" (2006, 7). In the preface to *Julieta y Romeo* Dacarrete reflects on the creative process behind the composition of his play. Nonetheless, in the eyes of contemporary literary critics, *Julieta y Romeo* constituted a questionable example of appropriation, which in this particular case, was not understood as "re-vision" (Kidnie 2009, 9) or as a bi-directional positive "exchange" between Shakespeare and the adaptor (Desmet and Sawyer 1999, 4). Instead, in the eyes of critics, *Julieta y Romeo* constituted an example of the fiercest connotations associated with the practice: "the metaphor of appropriation as theft" (Iyengar 2023, 46), appropriation

[4] For a detailed explanation of this episode in the reception of Shakespeare in Spain see chapter 18 "*Macbeth*, 1838: la frustración de un Shakespeare 'auténtico'" (Pujante 2019, 235–56).

as "aggressive seizure" or appropriation as "forced possession" (Huang and Rivlin 2014, 2).

This article focuses on Dacarrere's *Julieta y Romeo* (1858) to contribute to the ever-growing field of the reception of Shakespeare in Spain. This adaptation is unique in its distortion of the image of pure love traditionally associated with the characters of Romeo and Juliet, often regarded as the personifications of that universal feeling. Even though the production fared well with general audiences, it was harshly received by critics. Dacarrete was accused of not being original, and of taking an immoral approach in his rendering of *Romeo and Juliet*. Accusations of lack of originality might seem irrelevant after the rise of post-structuralism, especially since Roland Barthes questioned the authority of an "original" source text in his well-known essay "The Death of the Author" (1977). The methodology adopted takes the form of a case study of the reception of Shakespeare in Spain in the mid-nineteenth century. The article offers an examination of the text of *Julieta y Romeo*, an exploration of its performance history, as well as an analysis of the negative criticism recorded in the contemporary press. My main argument is that during this initial stage in the reception of Shakespeare in Spain adaptation was the best way to introduce Shakespeare to new audiences. Nonetheless, by analysing Dacarrete's ensuing rejection received by critics, I also wish to showcase how adaptation can be a highly problematic practice, in which the conception and boundaries of what constitutes (creative) adaptation or (wrongful) appropriation are not always clear. Ultimately, I argue that by attacking or accusing an adaptor of appropriating Shakespeare one is also taking part in an equally questionable act of selfish and possessive seizure of Shakespeare.

2. Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo*

Ángel María Dacarrete Hernández (1827–1904) was a politician and a writer. Today, he is a largely unknown figure. In fact, there is very little information available about his life and work. We know that in 1852 he moved from Seville to Madrid to continue his law studies and it was in the capital that Dacarrete began to devote time to poetry and drama (Hernández Cano, n.d.). His first play, *Una historia del día*, was published in 1853 and his last, *Las dulzuras del poder*, in 1859. In the 1860s, he stopped writing to focus on politics instead (Real Academia Española, n.d.). The few extant biographical sources highlight Dacarrete's prowess

as a poet and his political career. Nothing, however, is mentioned about his work as a dramatist. This significant lack of information implies that he might not have achieved much success as a writer. It would also explain why he completely abandoned his literary pursuits after 1860.

Julieta y Romeo was Dacarrete's penultimate play. The only extant edition was published in 1858, which opens with an interesting preface titled "Dos palabras al que leyere" ("Two Words Addressed to the Reader").[5] In this brief note, the author explains his writing process. A thirty-one-year-old Dacarrete confesses that he had devised the play more than six years before its publication and acknowledges that he "imaginó un argumento, muy diferente del de la obra del inmortal autor de Macbeth" [he [had] imagined a plot very different from the work of the immortal author of *Macbeth*] (Dacarrete 1858, n.p.). The reference to *Macbeth* suggests that Dacarrete was possibly familiar with García de Villalta's *Macbeth* (1838), the first staging of a Shakespearean play directly translated from the English. This might have been one of the reasons why Dacarrete decided to adapt rather than imitate Shakespeare, which had been his original intention.

Dacarrete did not translate Shakespeare, but he did not discard translation altogether. The edition includes at the end a brief section titled "Notas" ("Notes") that offers a translation from English of the first twenty-six lines from act 3, scene 5 that correspond to the iconic parting scene before the break of dawn. The inclusion of this short translation demonstrates that Dacarrete is the first Spanish adaptor who had read *Romeo and Juliet* in English. The first full translation into Spanish did not appear until 1868.[6] The author himself admits that when he resolved to unearth his manuscript: "había leído ya y estudiado, lo que no hiciera antes, la magnífica tragedia *Romeo and Juliet* del inmortal Shakspeare [sic]" [he had read and studied, something not done earlier, the magnificent tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* by the immortal Shakspeare [sic]] (Dacarrete 1858, n.p). The fact that Dacarrete was familiar with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* but claimed to have imagined "una obra dramática que lleva por título el de otra de aquel inimitable poeta" [a dramatic work that bears the title of another from that inimitable poet (1858, n.p.)] would lead critics to embark on a heated discussion in

[5] All translations from Spanish texts are the author's.

[6] This translation is Hiráldez de Acosta's *Romeo y Julieta* (1868), possibly from the French. The first text directly translated from the English was Matías de Velasco y Rojas's *Julieta y Romeo* (1872).

the press regarding the questionable originality of this "new" literary creation.

Several critics accused Dacarrete of wrongdoing because they believed he had appropriated Shakespeare. Those who held this view seemed to ignore the fact that Shakespeare need not necessarily be regarded as the only source text. Three adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* had already been staged before 1858, two neoclassical and a third strongly influenced by Romanticism (Víctor Balaguer's 1849 *Julieta y Romeo*). The neoclassical adaptations, *Julia y Romeo* (1803) by Dionisio Solís and *Romeo y Julieta* (1817) by Manuel Bernardino García Suelto, should be regarded as antecedents and not source texts. Firstly, the manuscript of *Julia y Romeo* was not published during Dacarrete's lifetime.[7] Secondly, it was last performed in Madrid in 1836. It is unlikely that a nine-year-old Dacarrete, born (and possibly raised) in Seville, would have attended this performance in the capital. Although both Solís's and Dacarrete's plays share a predominantly melodramatic tone — at times, excessively so — this should be regarded as purely coincidental and also as the result of the popularity that the genre had in Spanish literature, particularly in the early decades of the nineteenth century. There are no traces of influences whatsoever of García Suelto's *Romeo y Julieta*, an adaptation of Ducis's *Roméo et Juliette* (1772).

On the contrary, there are several parallels between Balaguer's *Julieta y Romeo* (1849) and Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* (1858) starting with the obvious inversion of the names of the lovers in the title. This is a peculiarity of the Spanish reception of *Romeo and Juliet*, introduced by Solís in 1803 and retained in most of the subsequent adaptations that emerged throughout the century. It visually highlights another unique feature of the reception of *Romeo and Juliet* in Spain: the greater importance given to Juliet over Romeo. Most adaptors focus on Juliet and her feelings, depicting the story from her perspective. Regarding the *dramatis personae*, in both Balaguer's and Dacarrete's adaptations, Romeo is the only living member of the Montagues. Moreover, there are no motherly figures. Both adaptors retain the irrational feud between the rival factions, and both fail to offer the expected and desired reconciliation. Both Balaguer and Dacarrete include a final verbal exchange between Romeo and Juliet in the crypt and both adaptations are strongly influenced by Romanticism. This alternative cemetery scene (a popular Romantic setting) provided the perfect gothic-inspired sce-

[7] The text of *Julia y Romeo* was first published in 2017 in a critical edition, together with García Suelto's *Romeo y Julieta* (Pujante and Gregor 2017a).

nario. It allowed theater companies to show the frightening body of a woman, supposedly waking up from the dead, before bidding her beloved farewell, onstage. All of the aforementioned similarities hint that Balaguer's *Julieta y Romeo* ought to be considered another major source of inspiration for Dacarrete in addition to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

The only edition of Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* that exists was published in 1858 but an extant copy of the original manuscript (dated 1856) is held at the Spanish National Library (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MS 14544/2). A detailed reading of this surviving copy reveals that no alterations to the plot were made in the 1858 edition. Even the mistake in the ordering of scenes in act 1, where scene v is accidentally omitted, is retained in the published version. The variations between both texts are minor: single words are changed and a few stage directions added.

Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* is a four-act tragedy written in verse. Even though the title refers to that of Shakespeare's play, there are considerable differences. The *dramatis personae* includes new creations. Six characters intervene the most: Julieta, Laura (a married lady in love with Romeo), Leonora (Julieta's maid), Romeo, Capuleto, and Rodrigo Loredano (a Veronese gentleman, later Julieta's husband). Most importantly, Dacarrete introduced an unconventional novelty with the creation of a dangerous love triangle between Julieta, Romeo, and Laura that largely distorts the image of romantic love traditionally personified by Romeo and Juliet. This is the point where Dacarrete can be said to have been most original. The departure from the purity associated with *Romeo and Juliet* may have been inspired by the theater brought by French companies performing in Madrid in the 1850s. Vaudeville became the preferred genre of the theatrical pieces they produced (Ojeda and Vallejo 2003). These plays portrayed comic situations that included saucy scenes, leading the most moralistic critics to call the texts obscene. Possibly inspired by the popularity of these indecorous French plays, Dacarrete dared to challenge the image of devotional and pure love associated with *Romeo and Juliet* that would earn him the disdain and disapproval of contemporary critics.

The play opens with a conversation between Julieta and her servant Leonora in which they mention Laura (Romeo's former sweetheart), now a married countess. Julieta later confesses to her father that she is in love with Romeo. Iconic moments such as the balcony scene are mentioned in passing. Because of the existing feud between the Ca-

puletos and the Montescos, their love is doomed to fail. An enraged Capuleto forces his daughter to choose between killing Romeo or forgetting him forever. Act 2 begins at a masquerade ball held in the palace of the Prince of Verona. Approximately ten months have gone by, and spectators discover that Romeo has been banished to Mantua. The Prince of Verona decided to send Romeo away to protect him from being killed by the Capulet faction. In Mantua, Romeo goes back to the arms of the married Laura, whom he abandons as soon as he hears news of Julieta's betrothal to Rodrigo Loredano. Romeo arrives at the ball and convinces Julieta to elope. Capuleto tries to stop Julieta who, taking pity on her old father, eventually decides not to abandon him. Act 3 begins immediately after the offstage wedding. Romeo visits the newly-wed Julieta at her family home. On discovering them alone, Rodrigo Loredano wrongly assumes that they have slept together. During a fight between Romeo and Rodrigo, Julieta is brutally thrown to the floor by the latter, losing consciousness. Shortly thereafter, Rodrigo's death cry is heard, and Capuleto orders Romeo to leave the house immediately.

The fourth act is the one that is most infused with the type of gothic imagery that had become popular during the height of Romanticism. It takes place exclusively at the Capuletos's family vault. The opening stage direction makes clear that the characters in the scene are dressed in mourning, the light is dim, and Julieta's sepulchre is open to create an eerie atmosphere. Romeo enters the cemetery and drinks poison minutes prior to Julieta's awakening. In the presence of her late husband Rodrigo, Julieta wakes up and agrees to be Romeo's wife. Nevertheless, poison soon takes Romeo's life. The final scene portrays the most horrifying death given to Juliet on the nineteenth-century Spanish stage: an utterly desperate Julieta stabs herself with a dagger in the presence of several witnesses, including her beloved father.

It is not surprising that writers influenced by Romanticism would choose *Romeo and Juliet* as the subject matter for a play. The plot is perfectly suited to Romantic ideals, aesthetics and values. Romeo embodies the Romantic hero, described by Ruiz Ramón as the "portador de un destino aciago que atrae la desgracia sobre aquellos que le aman y a los que ama" [carrier of an ill-fated destiny, who brings misfortune to those who love him and to those whom he loves] (1967, 368). Similarly, Julieta personifies the image of the Romantic heroine, a female who is "predestinada, desde el momento que ama, al dolor y a la muerte" [predestined, from the moment she loves, to pain and death] (368).

In addition, Julieta, through her challenge to paternal authority in an attempt to follow her true feelings and free will, further embodies the quintessential Romantic hero, a character faced with the opposition of society during their search for individual freedom. Traces of the popular genre of melodrama can also be found in the emphasis on female lament, the pitiful image of the suffering old man (Capuleto), and the general feeling of despair that permeates the tragedy.

As already stated, following previous Spanish adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, Dacarrete's Julieta is also more important and visible than Romeo. The inversion of the lovers' names in the title is not coincidental. One feature that characterizes this new version of Julieta is her extreme inconstancy. She is initially presented as being consumed by an ardent desire for Romeo, however, she displays signs of selfishness in the way she rapidly changes her opinion on decisions related to her heart's desires. But it is her questionable moral behavior that would concern contemporary critics, particularly in act 3, scene 4, when Julieta declares her passionate love for Romeo after her marriage to Rodrigo Loredano. Romeo is not free from blame either, as he had an affair with a married woman (Laura) during his banishment to Mantua. Nevertheless, in the end, condemnation mostly shifts towards Julieta when she compromises her position as an honorable married lady the minute she allows her former lover to come into her home uninvited. Even though neither Romeo nor Julieta are exemplary lovers, in the end it is Julieta who is a fallen woman. It is her honour that must be defended. The play ends on a sombre note with a message of religious condemnation. The final lines are given to Capuleto, a considerably more benevolent and pitiful figure than Shakespeare's Capulet. His desperate plea for God's forgiveness reveals that, in the eyes of society, Romeo and Julieta have utterly ruined themselves with their dishonest actions:

> [CAPULETO *cae de rodillas al pie del sepulcro, y alzando los ojos al cielo, dice cruzando las manos*.]
>
> CAPULETO
>
> ¡Perdonadlos, Dios mío!
>
> [CAPULETO *falls on his knees at the feet of the sepulchre and, raising his eyes to the sky, utters crossing his hands*. CAPULETO Forgive them, dear God!]
>
> (Act 4, scene 8, p. 79)

3. Performance history

The first performance of *Julieta y Romeo* took place on May 29, 1858 at the Teatro Novedades in Madrid (Dacarrete 1858). The play initially ran for four consecutive nights (May 29–June 1, 1858), and it was re-staged on June 16 and 17, 1858 (Par 1940, 15). The Teatro Novedades was a relatively new theater at the time: it had opened less than a year earlier. José Valero was its leading actor and stage director. He received praise from contemporary theater critics such as Juan de la Rosa González, who highlighted his unusual technical apparatus and the great care in the direction and rehearsal of the productions (1858b). Valero played Romeo opposite María Rodríguez's Julieta in all the Madrid productions of *Julieta y Romeo*.

A week prior to the premiere, the newspaper *La España* was advertising a promising spectacle, highlighting that the performance would use new "magníficas decoraciones, transparentes verdaderos de gran tamaño y trajes con perfecta consonancia con la época" [magnificent decorations, authentic curtains of great size, and costumes perfectly in line with the period] (*La España*, May 22, 1858, n.p.). The production was enormously successful. A detailed review published in the newspaper *La Época* on May 31 commented on "el buen éxito de la obra" [the major success of the play] and stressed the two main factors that contributed to the audience's enthusiasm: Valero's inspired interpretation of Romeo and the new decorations created by Bravo (Juanco 1858). During intermissions, there was a musical show by the dancers Espart and Garcerán (Juanco 1858). Although there was consensus in the press about Valero's outstanding interpretation of Romeo, the same could not be said about his stage partner, María Rodríguez. Pedro Fernández, in a review published in *La Época* (June 2), was particularly severe. He ruthlessly assessed the poor acting skills that he thought Rodríguez had, not only during her performance of Julieta, but also every time she set foot on a stage:

> El carácter de Julieta, toda ternura, todo amor, toda abnegación excluye además los ademanes olímpicos, el tono iracundo, la actitud terrible que la Sra. Rodríguez adopta. [...] La experiencia nos hace comprender que este es un defecto de escuela porque vemos a la artista perseverar, incurrir siempre en él. Confundiendo la energía con la violencia, cree ser vigorosa cuando es monótona. Sin gradaciones, sin contrastes, sin claro oscuro, su dicción acaba por fatigar al

> público, y por causarle una sensación desagradable. Corríjase, pues, la Sra. Rodríguez de semejante defecto, que mucho la importa y así evitará otro escollo: el de prestar una fisonomía uniforme y amanerada a todas sus creaciones [The character of Julieta, all tenderness, love, abnegation, also excludes arrogant movements, an irascible tone, the terrible attitude that Mrs. Rodríguez has. [...] Experience has led us to understand that this is a personal defect, as we see the actress persevere, always committing it. Mistaking violence for energy, she believes to be dynamic when she is monotonous. With no gradations, no contrasts, no chiaroscuro, her diction ends up tiring the audience, causing an unpleasant sensation. Correct this defect, Mrs. Rodríguez, one that deeply matters to you and you will avoid another: applying a uniform and effeminate physiognomy to all your creations.] (Fernández 1858, n.p.)

The critic does not seem to have been alone in sharing a disregard for María Rodríguez. There is not a single word of praise for the actress in any of the reviews written around the time the production was staged in Madrid. The mediocrity that characterized the Spanish stage at the turn of the century had not entirely disappeared by the mid-1850s. All the compliments and deep admiration were reserved for Valero, of whom Par writes that he was considered the "prototipo del buen actor romántico, declamaba muy a gusto los sonoros versos de los nuevos vates, y nadie le rogó que renunciara a ellos para acomodarse a forma más humana y menos lúcida" [prototype of the good Romantic actor, he recited quite comfortably the sonorous lines of the new bards, and no one ever begged him to renounce this so as to adapt to a more humane and less magnificent shape] (1936, 149). Valero used, it seems, a declamatory style on stage.

Par records two more performances of *Julieta y Romeo* on November 14 and 21, 1858 at the Teatro Odeón in Barcelona (1940, 71). The production had a different director, Andrés Cazurro, which would have involved a change of company; Par provides no information about it and no reviews have been found. In this revival the title was expanded to *Julieta y Romeo, o las víctimas del amor*. Each act was given an impactful name following, as Par points out, "la moda romántica de doblar los títulos y de dar nombres truculentos a los actos" [the Romantic trend of doubling titles and assigning gruesome names to acts] (1940, 71). The acts were retitled as follows: "i. Los amores; ii. La maldición; iii. Un duelo a muerte; iv. La tumba de Julieta" [i. "Love," ii. "The Curse," iii. "A Death Duel," iv. "Julieta's Tomb"] (1940, 71). This peculiar labelling

further exemplifies the influence that Romantic aesthetics had in this rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet*.

4. Criticism

Whereas Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* fared well on the stage, the adaptation also had its detractors. By the mid-nineteenth century, literary critics were acquiring more knowledge of Shakespeare's work, although this was not true for the general public, for whom Shakespeare remained a largely unknown author. Those connoisseurs were starting to judge Shakespearean adaptations by comparing them to the work of "the immortal Shakespeare," as the playwright was often referred to in the press. As Sanders asserts, "an adaptation often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or through more embedded references" (2016, 35). Thus, in naming his play *Julieta y Romeo*, Dacarrete was inevitably forcing critics to draw parallels between his adaptation and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Nine reviews of *Julieta y Romeo* were published in 1858 between May 31 and July 26. Even though not all reviews contained negative comments, Dacarrete's rewriting was generally harshly criticised due to: 1) its supposed lack of originality, 2) the immorality inherent in the text, and, to a lesser extent, 3) its Romantic nature.

An eminent critic of the period, Francisco Lozano y Grau, negatively assessed the play in the journal *La España artística* owing to its clearly identifiable Romantic aesthetic. In his review, he assigned the play to the "género romántico puro" [pure Romantic genre], asserting that "poco bueno tendría que esperar de la sana crítica, que mucho tiempo hace le rechazó de la escena, sino para siempre, al menos para mucho tiempo" [little good could it expect from informed critics which, long ago, rejected it from the stage, if not forever, at least for a very long time] (1858, 245). Informed criticism (an undeniably snobbish expression) may have long ago rejected Romantic drama, but the public's opinion and taste need not always go hand in hand with the critics'. Even though the "official" end date for Romanticism in Spanish theater is 1849 with the premiere of Zorrilla's *Traidor, inconfeso y mártir*, it is generally agreed that this is merely a bookmark to signal the end of the absolute furor about the movement. The year does not imply its definitive death. As Martín, Martínez Shaw, and Tusell highlight, "el romanticismo constituyó en España un fenómeno

cultural que no se extinguió con la primera generación que lo vio triunfar, sino que duró a lo largo de todo el siglo" [Romanticism in Spain constituted a cultural phenomenon that did not extinguish itself with the first generation that saw it triumph, but lasted throughout the entire century] (2000, 491). Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and Dacarrete is a clear example of this, there were still authors reluctant to abandon Romanticism because of its potential to create haunting works of art that continued to appeal to contemporary tastes.

The questionable moral behavior of Dacarrete's own personal versions of the star-crossed lovers was another matter of concern. The critic Juan de la Rosa González referred to the "vulgar resources" used by Dacarrete (1858a). This is an allusion to the supposedly indecorous actions described in act 3, scene 4, where a newly-wed Julieta confesses her true love for Romeo. The Romantic poet Carolina Coronado was the critic most disgusted by Dacarrete's rewriting. In a detailed commentary published in the journal *La discusión* on June 1, she was very direct and explicit in her accusations of immorality, but blamed the public rather than the author, arguing that immorality had become fashionable at home and at the theater (Coronado [1858] 2007). This reference seems to be an allusion to French theater, and the aforementioned vaudeville. These plays had been recently introduced to Madrid theatergoers by French companies, who performed in their native language. Vaudeville enjoyed a considerable degree of popularity. Nonetheless, as Ojeda and Vallejo remark, "la inmoralidad de algunas de las producciones, [...] alarmaba, al menos en apariencia, a un sector del público burgués" [the immorality of some of the productions, [...] alarmed, at least apparently, a sector of the bourgeois public] (2003, 429). In fact, the popularity of vaudeville is the most feasible explanation behind the changes made to the text. Coronado's repulsion and antipathy are representative of that elitist sector of the middle classes that preferred more sophisticated and decorous cultural products, so as to distance themselves from the tastes of the common people.

Despite Alexander Pope's claim that "if ever any Author deserved the name of Original, it was Shakespeare" (1725, ii), Shakespeare can definitely not be regarded as an original writer. Adaptation studies have demonstrated, as Sanders points out, "that Shakespeare was himself an adapter, an imitator, an appropriator" (2016, 59). Consequently, the accusations of unoriginality levelled at Dacarrete today sound ironic. Coronado, Dacarrete's harshest critic, was opposed to the practice of

rewriting existing works of art. In her review, she openly expressed her profound dissatisfaction with a play that she thought evidently lacked originality.

> Lo primero que se me ocurre es preguntar al autor: ¿por qué has escrito este drama? ¿Por qué le llamas *Julieta y Romeo*? Si querías hacer un drama original, tú que tienes tanto talento para ello, ¿por qué has tomado los pensamientos de Shakspeare [sic]? Si querías traducir a Shakspeare [sic] tú que tan bien le conoces, ¿por qué has hecho la obra tuya? Para original has traducido mucho; para traducción te has dejado lo mejor en el tintero. Perfeccionarla era imposible; has querido copiarla y la has contrahecho. [The first thing I think to do is to ask the author: Why have you written this drama? Why did you call it *Julieta y Romeo*? If you wanted to write an original drama, you who have the talent for it, why have you borrowed Shakspeare's [sic] thoughts? If you wanted to translate Shakspeare [sic], you who know him so well, why have you made the play yours? As an original work, too much has been translated; as a translation, the best has been omitted. To perfect it was impossible; you wanted to copy it, and you have counterfeited it.] ([1858] 2007, 194)

Coronado was not alone in rejecting the play for its supposed lack of originality. Lozano y Grau also criticized *Julieta y Romeo* on the basis of "la escasa novedad que ofrece su argumento" [the limited novelty that its plot offers] (1858, 245). It is true that Romanticism introduced a new conception of the author as "original, autonomous, and fundamentally expressive of a unique individuality" (Bennett 2005, 54). But this was not so much the case with regard to Spanish Romanticism, which arrived considerably late, in the mid-1830s. When one analyses Spanish romantic drama, as Rubio Jiménez observes, "no menos complejo resulta delimitar el grado de originalidad de los autores deslindando entre las piezas dramáticas traducidas, arregladas y refundidas, y las producciones más genuinas y personales de los dramaturgos" [it is not easy to delimit the degree of originality of authors, distinguishing between translations, versions, and rewritings, and the more genuine and personal productions of dramatists] (1990, 19–20). Furthermore, as Ruiz Ramón points out, in relation to Spanish Romantic drama, "[es] mucho más relevante la belleza y riqueza de forma que la profundidad, originalidad y autenticidad del contenido" [Beauty and richness of form are much more relevant than the profoundness, originality, and authenticity of the content] (1967, 366).

Dacarrete's apparently unoriginal work is merely, it turns out, a sign of the times.

The strong accusations of a supposed lack of originality are also the result of a predominant bardolatry, where admirers of Shakespeare believed him to be an inimitable genius, out of reach of the ordinary man. In truth what Coronado reveals when she accuses Dacarrete of appropriating Shakespeare is a deep repugnance for this practice. *Julieta y Romeo* constitutes an example of what Sanders describes as "authentication," whereby "some authors are accused of seeking to authenticate their own activities by attaching Shakespeare's name to their own writing" (2016, 59). Indeed, possibly motivated by his reverence for Shakespeare, Dacarrete aimed to gain the audience's attention by making the connection between his play and Shakespeare's explicit and to win the favor of the press, particularly in the weeks prior to the premiere to increase advertising of it.

But those critics that accused Dacarrete of not being original and of appropriating Shakespeare, were they not also appropriating Shakespeare themselves? As Roland Barthes said, "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text" (1977, 147). Critics such as Coronado, who saw appropriation as theft, reflect a selfish and narrow-minded attitude towards Shakespeare. As Iyengar explains, appropriation as a metaphor is "based on accountancy, resources, ownership, or theft" (2023, 178). Bardolatry also has its dangers. Those critics who were so eager to censor Dacarrete for appropriating Shakespeare's thoughts were also incurring in another form of appropriation: an elitist ownership of Shakespeare. This possessive view restricts freedom of creation and imposes a limit on what writers can do with Shakespeare's work to introduce him to different audiences. After all, with his adaptation, Dacarrete, a self-confessed admirer of Shakespeare, was also indirectly paying homage to the Bard.

The failed experiment of the 1838 *Macbeth* (a faithful translation) had also proved that translating Shakespeare was a dangerous venture. It was safer for playwrights to adapt Shakespeare to contemporary tastes, drawing on tested and successful formulae. In fact, as Rubio Jiménez comments, "El público atajaba los intentos renovadores, banalizaba hasta lo indecible las nuevas propuestas" [the public thwarted attempts at renovation, trivialized new proposals beyond words] (1990, 115). If *Romeo and Juliet* had up to that point in time always been adapted, why would Dacarrete take the risk of being the first to provide a literal translation? Instead, by capitalizing on the current vogue for indecorous

plots introduced by French companies, Dacarrete departed from Shakespeare to adapt his drama to what audiences demanded from fictional romantic affairs: less decorum and more spice.

5. Conclusions

Dacarrete's *Julieta y Romeo* constitutes a valuable and interesting case study in the reception of Shakespeare in Spain owing to the opposite reactions that it garnered from the general public and critics. Contemporary theatergoers, in their general ignorance of Shakespeare's tragedy, definitely were more favorable arbiters. They lacked the knowledge to compare Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers and their Spanish counterparts. Theatergoers probably did not want — or could even be bothered — to incur in such scrutiny. It can be argued that pleasurable enjoyment rather than censorious criticism often prevails when one attends a performance of a (new) play. Men and women of letters viewed *Julieta y Romeo* through a completely different lens. Their general adverse reaction to the play reveals that adaptation was not welcomed amongst those familiar with Shakespeare, who considered the practice utterly unacceptable. Blinded by their own reverence for the playwright, these critics accused Dacarrete of wrongly appropriating Shakespeare's work. What these critics ignored with their elitist opinion is the potential that adaptation has to introduce and make Shakespeare available to new audiences. In nineteenth-century Spain, a theatrical milieu where theatergoers were generally adverse to innovation, adaptation proved to be the only effective recipe for success. It is significant that, as Pujante and Gregor point out, "*Romeo and Juliet* is, with *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's most translated play in Spain. It is one of the most staged" (2017b, 102). Regardless of Dacarrete's supposed lack of originality, one ought to focus instead on the major role he played contributing to turning *Romeo and Juliet* into one of the most popular works in the Spanish canon of Shakespearean plays.

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