Sources and Texts of Shakspere's Romeo and Juliet.

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THESIS

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A COMPARISON OF THE SOURCES AND TEXTS OF SHAKSPERE'S ROMEO AND JULIET.

SYNOPSIS.

I. Introduction.
II. General account of the source.
III. Date of the play.
IV. Comparison of different texts.
V. Comparison with the sources.
VI. Shakspere's different development of certain characters.
It is one of the privileges of genius to appropriate anything which it can put to a more perfect use than the originator has done.

If a marked improvement is not made, the appropriation is not justified and the writer is open to the charge of plagiarism.

Shakspeare is not the only writer who is largely indebted to others for the plots of his plays.

Molière borrowed largely from his predecessors, but nobody would think of censuring him for such appropriation, he justified it by making better use of the material than had been made before. Saintsbury says in his History of French Literature concerning the plot of L’Avare: "Molière was once more indebted to the ancients and to his French predecessors, but he amply justified his borrowings."

There are comparatively few of Shakspeare’s plays, the plots of which have not been borrowed from earlier writings.

His English historical plays are mainly taken from facts as stated in Holinshed’s Chronicle.

He generally follows the source in his main facts, sometimes even using the same words. This is true not only of his historical plays but of the majority of his comedies and tragedies.
The plot of "The Merchant of Venice" was taken from an earlier dramatization of a story in *Il Pecorone*, a collection of tales by Giovanni Fiorentino, published in 1558, though written nearly two hundred years before. The materials for *Hamlet*, Shakspere borrowed partly from a French version of a work by Saxo Grammaticus called *The History of Hamlet*, and written as early as 1204.

So with *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakspere borrowed largely from previous records. Furness says concerning the source:

"The story upon which this play was founded was originally told by Luigi da Porto, of Vincenza, who died in 1529. His novel did not appear till some years after his death, being first printed in Venice in 1555, under the title: *Hystoria Novella mente Ritrovata di dai nobili Amanti, Con la loro Pictora morte Intervenuta gia nella Citta di Verona. Nel tempio del Signor Bartolomew Scala.*

A second edition appeared in 1559, and it was reprinted at the same place in 1553.

In 1554 Bandello published at Sessa, a novel on the same subject; and shortly afterward Boisteau exhibited one in French, founded on the Italian narratives, but varying from them in many particulars. From Boisteau's novel the story was, in 1562
formed into an English poem with considerable alterations and large additions, by Mr. Arthur Brooke. This piece was printed by Richard Tottel with the title, written probably, according to the fashion of that time, by the bookseller: "The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet, containing a rare Example of true Constancie; with the subtill Counsels, and practices of an old Fryer, and their ill event."

It was again published by the same bookseller in 1582. Paynter in his Palace of Pleasure, vol. II, published a translation from Boisteau, entitled Homoë and Julieta.

Shakespeare had probably read Paynter's novel, having taken one circumstance from it, or some other prose translation of Boisteau; but his play was undoubtedly founded upon the poem of Arthur Brooke.

According to Malone this is proved by the following circumstances:

1. In the poem the prince of Verona is called Escalus; so also in the play. In Paynter's translation he is named Signor Escala, and sometimes Lord Bartholomew of Escala.

2. In Paynter's novel the family of Romeo are called the Montesches; in the poem and in the play, the Montagues.
3. The messenger employed by Friar Lawrence to carry the letter to Romeo is, in Paynter's called Anselme; in the poem and in the play, Friar John is employed.

4. The circumstance of Capulet's writing down the names of the guests whom he invites to the supper is found in the poem and in the play, but is not mentioned by Paynter, nor is it found in the original Italian novel.

5. The residence of the Capulets, in the original and in Paynter's is called Villa Franca; in the poem and in the play, Freetown.

6. Several passages of Romeo and Juliet appear to have been formed on hints from the poem, of which no traces are found either in Paynter's novel or in Foistean, or the original.

But we are not so much concerned in finding whether Shakspere had a knowledge of other works of the same kind as in finding whether the story of Brooke is the basis of his play.

The name of Romeo also Shakspere might have found in the poem for in one place that name is given to him; or he might also have had it from Paynter's novel, from which or from some other prose translation of the same story he has, as has already been said, taken one circumstance not mentioned in the poem. In
1570 was entered on the stationer's books by Henry Eynneman, *The Pitifful Mystory of two loving Italians*, which was probably a prose narrative of the story on which Shaksper's play is constructed.

Douce has observed that the material incidents of this story are to be found in *The Ephesiaec* of Xenophon of Ephesus, a romance of the middle ages. Dunlop in his *History of Fiction* has traced in to the thirty-third novel of Masuccio di Salerno, whose collection of tales appeared first in 1476. Whatever its source the story has at all times been eminently popular in all parts of Europe.

A play was formed upon it by Lopez de Vega, entitled *Los Castlevines y Monteses*; and another in the same language, by Don Francisco de Foxas, under the name of *Los bandos de Verona*.

In Italy as early as 1578 Lingi Groto produced a drama upon the subject, called *Hadriana*, of which an analysis may be found in Walker's *Historical Memoir on Italian Tragedy*. Groto, as Walker observes, has stated in his prologue that the story is drawn from the ancient history of Adria, his native place; yet Girolama de la Corte has given it in his history of Verina, as a fact that actually took place in the year 1303, but Maffei does
not give him the highest credit as an historian. He carries his history down to the year 1560 and probably adopted the novel to grace his book. The earlier annalists of Verona, and above all Torrello Sarayna are entirely silent upon the subject. The story is also to be found in Bandello; and it is remarkable that he says it was related to him, when at the baths of Caldero, by the Captain Alexander Peregrino, a native of Verona; we may presume the same person from whom Da Porto received it unless this appropriation is to be considered supposititious.

Schlegel remarks (of Brooke's poem) that, "there can be nothing more profuse, more wearisome, than the rhyming history which Shakspere's genius 'like richest alchemy', has changed to beauty and to worthiness. Shakspere knew how to transform, by enchantment, letters into spirit, a workman's daub into a poetical masterpiece."

Concerning the author of the poem little is known. All we know of his age at the time of writing the poem is that he was unmarried, which is rather indefinite. We also know that he was dead in 1563, and that he perished by shipwreck. This is about all that can be learned of his life.

The poem begins with a description of Verona, the scene
of the story. Romeus is introduced bemoaning his fate for loving a maid who refused to return his love; Shakspere designates this unloving maid as Rosaline. A little later he meets Juliet at her home where he had gone disguised to attend a feast. They each fall in love without knowing who the other is.

Mercutio here makes his only appearance, introduced as a friend of Juliet.

Romeus is soon after married to Juliet by Friar Laurence, and "three months doth enjoy his chief delight."

The enmity between the houses of Capulet and Montague causes an open rupture in which Romeus kills Tybalt, cousin of Juliet, for which he is banished.

Juliet's parents think her grief is caused by the death of her cousin and determine upon a marriage with Paris, a nobleman of Verona.

To avoid this marriage she drinks a potion prepared by the Friar and is accounted dead. She is taken to the tomb where Romeus finds her and believing her dead, takes poison and dies.

She awakens from the stupor into which she was cast by the potion and finding Romeus dead beside her stabs herself and dies.
There can be no question that there is real literary merit in Brooke's poem; we are very apt through, to underestimate that merit, perhaps owing to our judging this work and that of Shakspere by the same standard, which is manifestly unjust, as the treatment is entirely different in the two cases. Shakspere's work is for the stage; is for action, and is necessarily written in a different style from a poem intended to please and entertain the reader. The poem certainly deserves more credit than it receives. Shaksperean commentators as a rule treat it as deserving no special comment, but Hazlitt says of the poem: "It is a production of singular beauty for the time, full of appropriate imagery; and although the similes and other figures may now and then be too highly wrought, or not quite in the best taste, it places Brooke, in this style of writing, above any known competitor."

The poem was written in verse form of twelve and fourteen syllables each.

The conclusion of the two stories is commonly spoken of as being the same; as in both, the lovers die the same way, but in Brooke's poem if Juliet had awakened before Romeus had taken the poison there would have been a happy ending. This was made
impossible in the play, as Romeo kills Paris at the tomb of Juliet, thus making a tragedy an absolute necessity, for he would have had to suffer for his crime had he not killed himself.

In the poem the story covers a period of about six months, which Shakspere reduced to about as many days.

It would be difficult to explain each process employed in this shortening but by one or two examples we may see in a general way how it was accomplished.

In the poem it is three months from the opening to the meeting of Romeus and Juliet; "For ever the Moone could thrice her wasted horus renew,

False Fortune cast for him, poor youtha, a mischief new to brew."

In the play they meet the evening of the opening day.

Then, Brooke has them live together several months after they are married:

"Three months he doth enjoy his chief delight."

but in the play the trouble breaks forth upon the day of the marriage.

These two instances cover the longest periods and we can see from them how Shakspere took advantage of every opportunity for shortening the time.
Concerning the story in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, little need be said as the debt Shakspere owes this story is very slight if any at all. "The Goodly history of the true and constant love between Phomeo and Lizette" was published in 1567, five years after the appearance of Brooke's poem. The story is a literal translation of a story in Belleforest's *Histories Tragiques*, treating of the same general incidents as are treated in Brooke's poem and concluding in the same manner.

When one reads the play after reading the poem, he gets a fuller appreciation of Shakspere's power to express in a few words a feeling that would require many more from any other writer. We also see the different use he may make of plots that other writers all treat in the same manner. In former stories the persons in *Romeo and Juliet* served only as a framework to support the story;

Shakspere uses the story for a portraiture of character and life.

The characters in the play were well prepared for his use and he made but few changes except in the Mercutio and less noticeably in the Nurse. But the incidents in the play are the same as in the poem, except that Shakspere introduced the dual
between Tybalt and Mercutio, and the scene at the tomb of Juliet
between Romeo and Paris.

The date of the production of the play has been determined as being between July 23, 1596 and April 17, 1597 from the following circumstances:—it is observed in the title page of Q, it is said that it had been formerly "played publicly by the right honorable the L. of Hunsdon his honorable servants." There were two noblemen of the family in Shakspere's time, Henry Lord Hunsdon, the father, and George Lord Hunsdon, his son; both filled the office of Lord Chamberlain of the Household to Queen Elizabeth, though not in succession.

Henry, the father, after holding this station for eleven years, died July 22, 1596.

The company of players who were his servants were distinguished by the appellation, "The Lord Chamberlain's men." On the death of their patron they naturally fell under the protection of his son and successor to the title, and for some time continued to play under his sanction.

In August 1596 the vacant office of Chamberlain was given to William Brooke, which station he held till he died, March 5, 1596; a period of about seven months; and about six weeks after,
George Lord Hansdon was appointed in his place. During the
interval between July 22, 1596 and the following April, Shakes-
pere's company could only be called the servants of Lord Hans-
don, as they are called on the title page of this play.

They did not recover their former title till April 17, 1597,
when Lord Hansdon was advanced to the office. And this tragedy
was printed in 1599, as acted, not by Lord Hansdon's servants
but by those of the Lord Chamberlain.

These circumstances seem to determine the date of Romeo and
Juliet beyond a doubt.

The earliest edition of the play was a quarto published
in 1597 with the following title-page: An Excellent con-
ceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet As it hath been often
(with great applause) plaid publiquely, by the right Ho meorable
the L.of Hansdon his Servants London Printed by John Dantes
1597.

This was followed in 1599 by a second quarto edition, the title
page of which varied slightly from that of the first quarto.

A third quarto appeared in 1609.

Another has no date, and there is some doubt whether it was a
reprint of the one of 1609, or that a reprint of this. The
Cambridge editors seem to think that "internal evidence conclusively proves" the former; Halliwell thinks "it very difficult to say which is the earlier", but inclines to the opinion that the undated copy was published in 1608.

The text is more correct than that of the quarto of 1609.

The undated quarto is the first that bears the name of the author. on the title page which in other respects is about the same as that of the third quarto, "Written by W. Shaksper" is inserted as a separate line after the word "Globe".

According to Halliwell, this line is found only in early copies of the edition, having been suppressed before the rest were printed.

These are the only editions known to have been issued before the folio of 1623, in which the play occupies pages 53-79 in the division of "Tragedies." The text of the folio seems to have been taken from the third quarto.

Collier says concerning the text: "The first quarto is in two different types, and was probably executed in haste by two different printers. It has generally been treated as an authorized impression from an authentic manuscript. Such, after the most careful examination, it not our opinion. We think that the
manuscript used by the printer or printers was made up, partly from portions of the play as it was acted, but unduly obtained, and partly from notes taken at the theatre during representation.

The principal ground for this opinion is, that there is such great inequality in different scenes and speeches, and in some cases just that degree and kind of imperfections which would belong to manuscript prepared from defective short hand notes. It is contended that Shakspere did not alter and improve the play to its earliest production on the stage, but merely that Q, does not contain the tragedy as it was originally represented.

It is remarkable that in no edition of Romeo and Juliet printed anterior to the publication of F, do we find Shakspere's name upon the title page. Yet Meres in his Palladis Tamia, had assigned it to him in 1598; and although the name of the author might be purposely left out in Q, there would seem to be no reason for not inserting it in the "corrected, augmented and amended Q,2. But it is wanting in Q,3, although Shakspere's popularity must then have been at its height.

To show the extent of Shakspere's actual borrowing of words and thoughts, some of his expressions will be compared
with the source, showing the different manner of expressing the same thought and the different manner of treatment of the same circumstances. As for instance, in the similar scenes of the first meeting of the two lovers, Juliet uses the same means of learning the name of Romeo. The poem has it: "An ancient dame she called to her, and in her ear gave round:

'What twayne are those (quoth she) which press into the door,
Whose pages in their hand do bear, two torches light before?
And then as each of them had of his household name,
She him named yet once again the young and wilful dame.
'And tell me who is he with visor in his hand,
That yonder doth in masking weed beside the window stand'.
His name is Romeo (said she) a Montague,
Whose father's pride first stirred the strife which both your households rue".

In the play this passage reads:

J.- Come hither nurse.

What is yond gentleman?

N.- The son and heir of old Tiberio.

J.- What's he that now is going out of door?

N.- Marry, that, I think, be young Petruchio.
J. - What's he that follows there, that would not dance?

II. - His name is Romeo and a Montague.

The only son of your great enemy."

The lovers are introduced by the same means. In the poem it is:

"Within his trembling hand her left hath loving Romeus caught — Then she with tender hand his tender palm hath prest."

In the play Romeo says:

"If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holiest shrine, the gentle fines is this — "

In the meeting at the window Juliet's fears concerning Romeo's honesty of purpose, Shakspeare has copied from the poem.

"In few unfeigned words, your hidden mind unfold,
That as I see your pleasant face, your heart I may behold.

For if you do intend my honor to defile,
In error shall you wander still, as you have done this while;
But if your thought be chaste, and have on virtue ground.
If wedlock be the end and mark which your desire hath found,

Obedience set aside, unto my parents due,
The quarrel eke that long ago between our households grew.
Both me and mine I will all whole to you betake,
And following you where so you go, my father's house forsake.

But if by wanton love, and by unlawful site,
You think in ripest years to pluck my maidenhoods dainty fruit,

You are beguiled, and now your Juliet you beseeks
To cease your suit, and suffer her to live among her likes."

- which Shakspeare has: "Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed,

If that they but of love be honorable,

They purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,

By one that I'll procure to come to thee,

Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite:

And all my fortune at thy foot I'll lay,

And follow thee my lord throughout the world. ——

But if thou meanest not well,

I do beseech thee to cease thy suit, and leave me to my grief."

This scene ends the same as in the poem - "Hence will I to my ghostly father's cell,

His help to crave, and my dear hope to tell".- which is in the poem: "Tomorrow eke betimes, before the sun arise,

To frayr Laurence will I wend, to learn his sage advise."
In Friar Laurence's soliloquy concerning the poison, the expression is practically the same in both. Shakspere says:

"For naught so vile that on the earth doth live
But to the earth some special good doth give;
Nor aught so good but strained from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth stumbling on abuse",

which is in the original: "For justly of no art can men condemn the use. But right and reasons love cry out against the lawd abuse."

Again we notice the influence of the poem in the motive Friar Laurence gives for marrying the lovers. In the poem he says: "Of both the household's wrath, this marriage might appease

So that they should not rave again but quite forever cease,"

and in the play: "In one respect I'll thy assistant be;

For their alliance may so happy prove,
To turn your household's rancor to pure love."

The same excuse is used in both the poem and the play to bring the lovers together in order to accomplish the marriage secretly. In the play Romeo says:

"Bid her devise some means to come to shrift this afternoon;
And there she shall at Friar Laurence cell be shrived and married."
Which in the poem is:

"On Saturday, quoth he, if Juliet come to shrift,
She shall be shrived and married."

Friar Laurence's rebuke of Romeo for the weakness displayed when he learned of his banishment is copied from the poem:

"Art thou, quoth he, a man? Thy shape saith so thou art;
Thy crying and thy weeping eyes denote a woman's heart."

In Shakspere this reads:

"Art thou a man? thy form cries out thou art:
Thy tears are womanish."

Such a comparison as this might be extended farther so as to include many more incidents which are clearly taken from the poem, as the writing out of the names of the guests to be invited; the securing of the ladder for Romeo to climb to Juliet's room; Romeo's seeking refuge in Friar Laurence's cell, etc; all of which Shakspere secured from the poem but whose wording he changed more than he did that of the examples we have before noticed.

The treatment of the different characters is, on the whole the same as that found in the original. We notice a marked
exception to this in the character of Mercutio. In the poem Mercutio occupies a comparatively insignificant position, taking no active part except in one instance. When at the feast, after dancing with Juliet, he takes her hand in his, he affords her a reason for her remark to Romeo as that his holding her hand gave her pleasure for Mercutio having "a gift that Nature gave him that mountain ice was never half so cold as his hand", had made her hand cold also.

While in the poem he is "a courtier that everywhere was highly had in price", Shakspere makes him a most zealous friend of Romeo, fighting and dying in his cause.

The death of Mercutio is important as it is the turning point in the play, it arouses Romeo to action which action decides the fate of the lovers.

Of the changes in the other characters little need be said. The difference lies not so much in the different words and thoughts he has them express, as in the deeper meaning and feeling with which these same expressions are invested when used by him.

The nurse is, to a certain extent, the same garrulous old woman in the poem and play, but in the latter she loses a great
deal of her vulgar language and offensive insinuations. Her
tendencies toward aping her superiors and indulging in long
disconnected speeches are the same in both.

The remaining characters are treated similarly in the
poem and play, only being clothed with that personality which
Shakespeare alone could give them.