

## LUIGI GROTO

Let us now return for a moment to Italy where the blind poet and actor, Luigi Groto, known also as the "Cieco d'Hadria," composed in 1578 a blank verse tragedy entitled *La Hadriana*.<sup>1</sup> While following in essential respects the earlier versions of the Romeo and Juliet story, Groto changed the scene from Verona to Hadria and transformed the names of the characters. Hatrio, King of the city of Hadria, replaced Antonio Cappelletti. His wife was Queen Orontea. His daughter, the Infanta Hadriana, was substituted for Giulietta. Instead of Romeo, Groto introduced Prince Latino, son of Mezentio, King of Latium, who was besieging Hadria. Fra Lorenzo gave way to "Mago," a priest of the Moon.

The earlier critics were almost unanimous in designating Luigi da Porto as Groto's principal source.<sup>2</sup> J. J. Munro, while holding a different view, nevertheless says:

*La Hadriana* possesses in common with Da Porto and with no other Italian work: (1) The ironical statement that the heroine might rather wed their family enemy (a Montague or Latino) than him who has been chosen by her parents (Paris or the Sabine prince). (2) The heroine's asking for water in the night to quench her thirst, but really to mix her potion, (3) her drinking it in the presence of the servant, and (4) her statement before the servant that her father (Capulet or Mezentio) should not wed her that day. (5) The gift by the hero of his cloak to the messenger who brought the news of the heroine's supposed death.<sup>3</sup>

Munro might have noted also that a most important exclusive

<sup>1</sup> Groto, Luigi. *La Hadriana Tragedia Nova di Luigi Groto Cieco d'Hadria*. Venice, 1586. On fo. 5<sup>v</sup> is the dedication: "Di Hadria, il dì 29 di Nouembre 1578."

<sup>2</sup> G. Chiarini writes: "L'autore evidentemente trasse l'argomento dai novellieri, cioè dal Da Porto e dal Bandello, più particolarmente, credo dal primo . . ."—Chiarini, Giuseppe. "Romeo e Giulietta." *Nuova Antologia*, XCIV (July-August, 1887), p. 22. Cf. Arthur Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, P. A. Daniel, ed., New Shakespeare Society, Series III, No. 1, London: Trübner and Co., 1875, p. xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Munro, J. J. *Brooke's 'Romeus and Juliet'*. London: Chatto and Windus; New York: Duffield and Co., 1908, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii. For the gift of the hero's cloak to the messenger, cf. Romeo's gift of a gold chain he wore about his neck to Pietro, in Clizia's poem.

agreement between Groto and Da Porto lies in the common omission of the ladder and balcony scenes, which were notable features of the story with most of our writers beginning with Bandello. Groto seems to follow Da Porto exclusively also in his account of the experiences of Mago's messenger, who is unable to deliver a letter to Latino, not because of a plague epidemic, as in Bandello's *novella*, but merely from inability to find the young prince.<sup>4</sup>

Munro continues: "In common with Bandello, *La Hadriana* possesses: (1) The character of the Nurse as confidante and go-between. (2) The parting of the lovers at the heroine's house, where the hero arrives by stealth."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, Groto seems to have profited in other respects from his reading of later Italian versions of the Romeo and Juliet story. In the first place, he makes Prince Latino kill Hadriana's brother in self-defense. He thus rejects the revenge motive introduced by Da Porto, and coincides with Clizia and Bandello, who represent Tebaldo as the aggressor in the fatal duel with Romeo.<sup>6</sup> Groto also agrees with Da Porto's imitators in his account of the grief of Hadriana, who pretends to mourn for the death of her brother. It has already been remarked that Da Porto makes no reference to Giulietta's sorrow for the loss of Tebaldo, a feature found in Clizia and adopted by Bandello.<sup>7</sup>

In some respects, Groto seems to agree exclusively with Boaiustau. As Munro observes: "The conclusion in *La Hadriana* is different from that in both Da Porto and Bandello; in Groto's tragedy, the heroine stabs herself, and the hero dies before the Mago arrives. This is precisely the ending in Boaiustau."<sup>8</sup>

It should be added that one of Boaiustau's principal inventions was the noise which frightens Frere Laurens and Pierre while they are in Juliette's tomb. Groto parallels this scene by making Mago enter the tomb, accompanied by a "Ministro." They are frightened by the stealthy approach of two unknown persons.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act V, Sc. 2, fo. 61<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Matteo Bandello, *Le Novelle*, Gioachino Brognoligo, ed., "Scrittori d'Italia" series, Bari: Gius. Laterza e figli, 1910, II, p. 397, and Luigi da Porto, "Giulietta e Romeo," second edition, 1535, reprinted by Cino Chiarini in his *Romeo e Giulietta*, Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1906, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>6</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act I, Sc. 3, fo. 18<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Chap. IX, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act III, Sc. 1, fo. 39<sup>r</sup>; cf. Act I, Sc. 3, fo. 22<sup>v</sup>; Chap. IX, 5 and Chap. VIII, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Munro, *loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act V, Sc. 2, fo. 61<sup>v</sup>. Cf. Chap. X, 1.

Despite these similarities to Boaiustuau, Groto leaves out the famous character of the apothecary, thus reverting to the versions of Da Porto and Bandello.

Several passages in *La Hadriana* have given rise to the surmise either that Shakespeare must have been directly influenced by Groto or, more probably, that both poets had access to a lost source.<sup>10</sup> One bit of evidence concerns the letter which Mago sends by a messenger to Latino, advising him of the true fate of Hadriana. Here Groto, at variance with Bandello and Boaiustuau, makes the "Ministro" return the undelivered letter to Mago. Let it be repeated, however, that this feature of *La Hadriana* seems to be due simply to imitation of Luigi da Porto, according to whom the messenger of Frate Lorenzo, unable to find Romeo at Mantua, keeps the letter in his hand. By an easy inference, apparently, Groto says that the "Ministro" brings the letter back with him.<sup>11</sup>

Another argument for a connection between Groto and Shakespeare has been "the hero's talk of his readiness to die in the parting scene with the heroine."<sup>12</sup> After killing Hadriana's brother, Latino offers her his sword so that she may take vengeance upon him, if she desires. She prefers to exchange with him vows of eternal love.<sup>13</sup> The same conventional scene occurs later, as we shall see, in Lope de Vega's "Castelvines y Monteses," and earlier in *Ippolito e Leonora*, where the heroine, declining the hero's proffered dagger, chooses rather to be married to him, without priest or witnesses.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Shakespeare's Romeo merely tells Juliet:

Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death.

I am content, so thou wilt have it so.<sup>15</sup>

These words are little more than an echo of the chivalrous code which required a knight to risk his life at his lady's caprice:

Je fais ce que sa fantaisie

Veut m'ordonner,

Et je puis, s'il lui faut ma vie,

La lui donner.

<sup>10</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. xli.

<sup>11</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act V, Sc. 2, fo. 61<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Chap. VI, *r*.

<sup>12</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>13</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act II, Sc. 2, fos. 30<sup>r</sup>-30<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> "Istoriotta Amorosa fra Leonora de' Bardi e Ippolito Buondelmonte," in Leon Battista Alberti, "Opere Minori," Anicio Bonucci, ed., Florence, 1845, III, p. 286.

<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Act III, Sc. 5, vv. 17-18.

If an Italian parallel for Shakespeare's lines is sought, it would be from Da Porto's "Giulietta e Romeo" rather than from *La Hadriana* and *Ippolito e Leonora*, for Da Porto's hero vows that he has no fear of capture or death, provided Giulietta is satisfied to reciprocate his love.<sup>18</sup>

Still another argument listed by Munro is "the mention of both poisoning and stabbing at the heroine's death,—in Grotto's play, Hadriana tells the Mago she has poisoned herself, and afterwards stabs herself; in Shakspeare Juliet chides dead Romeo for leaving none of the poison, and also afterwards stabs herself."<sup>17</sup> But here again we probably have only another instance of direct imitation of Luigi da Porto, whose Giulietta, in a somewhat earlier scene, also mentions both poisoning and stabbing. As will be recalled, she begs Frate Lorenzo for enough poison not only to kill herself, but also to liberate Romeo from disgrace. In case her request is denied, she threatens to slash her throat.<sup>18</sup> In the tomb, however, Giulietta offers the friar a slightly different alternative: He is to leave her to die shut up in the vault, or furnish her with a knife with which she may slash her breast.<sup>19</sup>

Munro stresses also another point of resemblance between Grotto and Shakespeare, namely "the ironical words, in one case by the mother to the daughter and in the other by the daughter to the mother, that the daughter might rather wed the enemy who has slain her kinsman (Romeo or Latino) than her father's choice."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this scene, too, obviously goes back to Luigi da Porto, whose Madonna Giovanna assures Giulietta that a satisfactory husband will be provided for her, even in the improbable event that she wishes to marry one of the Montecchi.<sup>21</sup> Without giving his reasons, Munro refuses to admit the possibility of a direct connection between Da Porto and Shakespeare.<sup>22</sup>

Grotto, like Shakespeare, greatly expands the role of the Nurse, and agrees exclusively with Shakespeare in two passages dealing with the Nurse: (a) her "entry . . . at the conclusion of the parting scene"; (b) "her interference in the arranging of the sec-

<sup>18</sup> Da Porto, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Chap. VI, *m.*

<sup>19</sup> Da Porto, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Munro, *loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> "Vedi, figliuola mia dolcissima, non piangere oramai più, chè marito a tua posta ti si darà, se quasi uno dei Montecchi volessi, il che sono certa che tu non vorrai . . ."—Da Porto, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix, note 4.

ond wedding (with Paris or the Sabine prince).<sup>23</sup> In general, it may be observed that the prominence given by Groto to the character of the Nurse may plausibly be explained by the influence of Bandello and Boaistuau, as well as by the exigencies of the construction of his play, which is after the classical manner. With the expansion of the role in question, the mathematical probability of coincidence with Shakespeare is naturally increased.

Another resemblance between Groto and Shakespeare lies in the consolation offered the father upon the supposed death of his daughter. In *La Hadriana*, the comforter is the "Consigliere"; in Shakespeare's tragedy, it is the Friar. Condolences, which were really reproaches for mourning, had of course been a literary convention for centuries. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, for instance, the maid consoles the widow Laudine as follows on the loss of her husband:

Cuidiez vos ore recoverer  
Vostre seignor por feire duel?<sup>24</sup>

In Boaistuau's *Histoire troisieme*, Juliette is not only consoled by her mother for the loss of Thibault, but told to rejoice because God has called him:

. . . parquoy moderez vous pour l'aduenir, & mettez peine de vous resiouyr sans plus penser à la mort de vostre cousin Thibault, lequel s'il a pleu à Dieu de l'appeller, le pensez vous reuoyer par vos larmes et contreuenir à sa volonté?<sup>25</sup>

Groto goes slightly further than Boaistuau: the bereaved relatives should rejoice because the loved ones are actually better off dead than alive:

Se amate i figli, habbiate estrema gioia,  
Che siano fuor de le miserie humane.  
Se gli odiate allegrateui altrettanto,  
Che leuati ui sian dinanzi a gli occhi.<sup>26</sup>

Groto and his model Boaistuau are thus in a sense precursors not only of Shakespeare, but also of Malherbe, author of the famous *Consolation de Monsieur du Périer sur la mort de sa fille*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

<sup>24</sup> Chrétien de Troyes. *Kristian von Troyes Yvain*. W. Foerster, ed., Halle a.S.: M. Niemeyer, 1906, vv. 1600-1.

<sup>25</sup> Boaistuau, Pierre. *XVIII histoires extraites des oeuvres italiennes de Bandel, et mises en langue françoise . . . Les six premières par Pierre Boisteau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne. Les douze suiuaus par Franc. de Belle Forest, Comingeois*, Lyon, 1578, fo. 58<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act IV, Sc. 3, fo. 53<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Daniel, ed., *op. cit.*, p. xxix, and Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Sc. 5, vv. 65-83.

The consolations offered by Juliette's mother and by Groto's *Consigliere* bear nevertheless only a very general resemblance to the comforting words spoken by Shakespeare's Friar to bereaved Capulet. On the other hand, some of the older critics have fancied that a close verbal similarity exists between the scene where Latino beholds the approach of dawn, and the second balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Groto writes:

LAT . . .

E (s'io non erro) è presso il far del giorno.  
 Vdite il Rossignuol che con noi desto,  
 Con noi geme fra i spini, e la rugiada  
 Col pianto nostro bagna l'herbe. Ahi lasso,  
 Riuolgete la faccia a l'Oriente.  
 Ecco incomincia a spuntar l'alba fuori  
 Portando un altro Sol sopra la terra,  
 Che però dal mio Sol resterà uinto.

HAD . . .

Ahimè, ch'io geio. Ahimè ch'io tremo tutta.  
 Questa è quell'hora, che ogni mia dolcezza  
 Affatto stempra. Ahimè, quest'è quell'hora,  
 Che m'insegna a saper, che cosa è affanno.  
 O del mio ben nimica auara notte,  
 Perchè sì ratto corri, fuggi, uoli.  
 A sommerger te stessa, e me nel mare  
 Te ne lo Ibero, e nel mar del pianto?<sup>27</sup>

Here, nevertheless, Groto will be found to coincide with Shakespeare only in the references to the lark, and to the approach of day—well-known commonplaces in the Mediaeval *aubes*.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the alleged influence of Groto on Shakespeare is that advanced by G. Chiarini—the almost impassable barrier of style which separates the two tragedians. Groto's play is written to fit a mode of acting ridiculed in *Hamlet*—with interminable monologues, couched in absurdly unnatural language. In place of a balcony scene, where Romeo woos Juliet in verses palpitating with emotion, Latino delivers to Hadriana an uninterrupted speech of 349 lines, followed by other

<sup>27</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act II, Sc. 3, fo. 34<sup>v</sup>; Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 5, vv. 1-16; Daniel, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. xxvi-xxviii; Giuseppe Chiarini, *Studi Shakespeareiani*, Livorno: Tip. di R. Giusti, 1897, pp. 260-62; and Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet." *A Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, sixth edition, Horace Howard Furness, ed., Philadelphia, 1899, I, p. 403.

monologues only less wearisome. Another example of the way in which Groto handles highly emotional scenes is found in the cold reply which Hatrio makes to the counselor who consoles him for the supposed death of Hadriana:

Duolmi di questo sfortunato Regno,  
Che dopo me restar de senza herede.<sup>28</sup>

Let us contrast this speech with the reply which Shakespeare's Capulet makes to the Friar who attempts to console him:

CAPULET: All things that we ordained festival  
Turn from their office to black funeral—  
Our instruments to melancholy bells,  
Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast;  
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change;  
Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse;  
And all things change them to the contrary.<sup>29</sup>

Everywhere in Groto's dreary tragedy are lacking the vivid speech and action which form the very essence of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

It is quite possible, therefore, that whatever apparent borrowings Shakespeare may have made from Groto may readily be explained as literary indebtedness—direct or indirect—to earlier Italian writers. By the same sign, there is no further logical necessity for the mysterious source which critics have proposed for Groto. The basic argument for the existence of such a version is that Groto "either made use of Da Porto, Bandello, and Boaiustauu, all three, or borrowed from some third Italian source a novel or play, now unknown, which led Boaiustauu to alter his ending, and which was based on, or similar to, Da Porto and Bandello."<sup>30</sup> Critics of the "lost document" school are opposed to the idea of multiple sources, and Munro says in particular that "it is highly improbable . . . that Groto made use of Boaiustauu."<sup>31</sup> Munro states no reason why Groto may not, like numerous other Italians, have been very familiar with French literature. Moreover, in literary history, multiple sources have been the rule rather than the exception, a matter discussed in Chapter XIV.

<sup>28</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act IV, Sc. 3, fo. 54<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, *Romeo and Juliet*. Act IV, Sc. 5, vv. 84-90.

<sup>30</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. xli.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

- (a) Ma per me ti darei qual ti piacesse,  
Quando fosse anco il figlio di Mezentio.  
(Benche so che nol uuoi che l'odij a morte) . . . <sup>82</sup>
- (b) La lettera, che uoi mi commetteste,  
Che non si desse ad altri, che a Latino  
(Perche spiegata, altrui non ispiegasse  
La uostra mente) altrui fidar non uolsi.  
Me la riportai meco, e ue la rendo,  
Verg(i) ne com'io l'hebbi la gran fretta  
Che mi deste al tornar, non mi diè tempo  
D'aspettarlo iui, o di cercarlo altroue.<sup>83</sup>
- (c) *Hadriana speaking to her mother Orontea:*  
Lasciate almen, ch'io mi rihabbia alquanto  
Dal dolor del fratel.<sup>84</sup>
- (d) *Advice of Nurse to Hadriana:*  
Nel perder de lo sposo hai questo bene,  
Che puoi dolerti almanco apertamente  
E sotto uista d'un pianger l'altro.<sup>85</sup>
- (e) MINI. Due persone in quà uengon si strette,  
E si celate, che (quantunque splenda  
Cinthia nel ciel) conoscer non si ponno.
- MAG. Il disegno m'è guasto, entriamo dentro,  
E passati costor, tornerem fuori.<sup>86</sup>
- (f) *Latino says to Hadriana:*  
Ecco la iniqua man, che 'l ferro strinse.  
Ecco la spada nuda. Ecco la spada,  
Empia ministra del dolente ufficio.  
Questa ui porgo, altissima Reina,  
Voi la pigliate. Onde dal uostro braccio.  
Alzata al fin, giu declinando poi  
Soua me, porti il flagel uostro seco.  
E'l colpo, che feci io faccia, e gastighi.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act III, Sc. 1, fo. 39<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Da Porto, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act V, Sc. 2, fo. 61<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Chap. VI, r.

<sup>84</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act III, Sc. 1, fo. 39<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Sc. 3, fo. 22<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Chap. IX, s.

<sup>86</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act I, Sc. 2, fo. 61<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Chap. X, l.

<sup>87</sup> Groto, *op. cit.*, Act II, Sc. 2, fo. 30<sup>r</sup>. Hadriana declines the sword (*ibid.*, fo. 30<sup>r</sup>).