

ROMEO AND JULIET

The Legend of Romeo and Juliet

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O. H. M.

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INTRODUCTION

The long and complicated history of the plot of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has fascinated numerous scholars. Perhaps the most valuable single contribution to the study of this plot development was made by John Dunlop. Among other contributors might be mentioned Giuseppe Todeschini, P. A. Daniel, Cino Chiarini, Gioachino Brognoligo, Robert Davidsohn, J. J. Munro, Cesare Foligno, Luigi Simeoni, Letterio di Francia, Fausto Ghisalberti and, last but not the least, Henri Hauvette.

After more than a century of progress, some of our leading investigators seem convinced that the end of the road has been reached. Even the indefatigable Henri Hauvette asserted that no further examination of the sources of *Romeo and Juliet* was needed, since J. J. Munro had already said the final word on that subject.¹ This statement was the more extraordinary in view of Munro's pronounced neglect of Sevin's *conte*,² the importance of which was demonstrated by Hauvette himself.³ I shall try to show that present studies of the sources of *Romeo and Juliet* require revision all along the line, but especially in the final and decisive stage—the transition from Brooke to Shakespeare. Indicative of the amount of work which remains to be done at this point is the frequency with which scholars, in need of an *x* to solve baffling problems, fall back upon the lost play mentioned by Brooke. We have also much to learn yet regarding the origins of the *Montecchi* (Montagues), the sources of Masuccio and even of Luigi da Porto, and the relations between Clizia and Bandello, not to mention certain curious features of Lope de Vega's version of the legend.

The general plan followed is chronological, and only summary notice is taken of the numerous and oft-cited legends vaguely

¹ "Au reste, l'étude des sources de la tragédie de *Romé et Juliette* a été faite avec le plus grand soin (1) : il n'y a plus à y revenir . . . "(1) En particulier par J-J Munro . . ."—Hauvette, Henri. *La "Morte Vivante."* Paris: Boivin et Cie, 1933, p. 191 and note 1.

² "Adrian Sevin's history . . . possesses little of interest for Shakespeare students."—Munro, J. J. *Brooke's 'Romeus and Juliet.'* London: Chatto and Windus; New York: Duffield and Co., 1908, Introduction, p. xxxi.

³ Hauvette, H. "Une variante française de la légende de Roméo et Juliette." *RLC*, 1, 3 (1921), p. 336.

resembling the *Romeo and Juliet* plot, but not demonstrably connected with it. Part of the material here offered has already appeared in the form of articles, which have been rewritten.⁴ In particular, the study on "The Origins of the Legend of Romeo and Juliet in Italy" has been much revised, taking into account the constructive criticisms of Fausto Ghisalberti.⁵ Changes have been introduced also in the discussion of Masuccio, Clizia and Shakespeare, and new sections have been added dealing with Boccaccio, Bandello, Sevin, Brooke, and Grotto. The versions of the legend by Struijs and by Lope de Vega are treated in Chapter XIV, on "Lost Documents."

For the convenience of folklorists, frequent references are made to Professor D. P. Rotunda's *Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose*, which follows the plan and classification of Professor Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. I hope to show, nevertheless, that the development of our legend is essentially a literary phenomenon, and is only remotely connected with folklore. In fact, so far as this legend is concerned, I am inclined to accept the general attitude of the late Joseph Bédier, and feel it especially necessary to question current theories of nebulous "lost documents," themselves supposedly based more or less vaguely on folk tales. Consequently, it is hoped that the reader will be patient regarding the tedious minutiae necessary as evidence to establish a long line of almost purely literary transmission. It will be found that the innovations by the authors involved are usually instances not of folklore, but sometimes of psychological analysis, or concern for dramatic exigencies; sometimes the result of ecclesiastical pride, or even of nationalistic tendencies.

⁴ See Bibliography under MOORE, OLIN H.

⁵ Ghisalberti, Fausto. Review of Moore, O. H. "The Origins of the Legend of Romeo and Juliet." *Studi Danteschi*, XVI (1932), pp. 199-200; "Monticoli e Capelletti," in *Giornale Dantesco*, XXXVI, Nuova Serie, VI (1933), pp. 27-69, especially pp. 30-31, 35, and 65.

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