VI

LUIGI DA PORTO'S "GIULIETTA E ROMEO"

That Masuccio's tale of the adventures of Mariotto and Ganozza was the principal source for Luigi da Porto's "Giulietta e Romeo," a novella which agrees rather closely in plot with Shakespeare's tragedy, is generally acknowledged. It is my purpose to show that many of Da Porto's deviations from Masuccio are due to neglected literary influences rather than, as has commonly been supposed, to Da Porto's originality.

We may estimate the general extent to which Da Porto has diverged from his model by comparing the plot of his novella with that of the Thirty-Third Tale of Masuccio's Novellino. Here is a summary of the story of Giulietta and Romeo:

At the time of Bartolommeo della Scala, according to the narrative, two noble but hostile families resided in Verona—the Cappelletti and the Montecchi. Weary with fighting and somewhat intimidated by the threats of the rulers of the city, the quarrelsome factions had lately observed a kind of truce. One night Romeo Montecchi, disguised as a nymph, followed his indifferent lady to a masquerade ball given by Messer Antonio Cappelletti. When the desperate youth was finally obliged to unmask, all the guests were astonished not only at his beauty, which surpassed that of any of the ladies present, but also at his audacious entrance into his enemy's house. As soon as Giulietta,

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3 H. Hauvette writes: "Incontestablement Luigi da Porto a lu la nouvelle de Masuccio; il a reconnu, en véritable artiste, le grand parti qu'il était possible d'en tirer; il en a vu les défauts; il en a fait la critique, et s'est efforcé de combler certaines lacunes, de réparer certaines maladroitures, de réparer certaines maladroitures, mais surtout il s'est appliqué à donner l'illusion de la vérité . . . ; et il s'est . . . parfaitement acquitté de sa tâche"—Hauvette, Henri. La "Morte Vivante." Paris: Boivin et Cie, 1933, pp. 118-19. Cf. p. 158: "sur un point, il a été créateur." Cf. also p. 159: "mais Luigi da Porto a imaginé une complication nouvelle;"

4 The sovereignty of Bartolommeo della Scala lasted twenty-nine months, concluding March 7, 1304.
the only and supernaturally beautiful daughter of Antonio Cappelletti, caught sight of Romeo, she realized that she no longer belonged to herself.

The entertainment concluded some time after midnight with the sorcio or cappello, a circular dance in which partners were exchanged. Romeo soon found himself by chance at the right side of Giulietta. At her left was Marcuccio Guercio ("Squint-Eyed"), an awkward but noble youth whose hands were always cold, in July as well as in January. When Giulietta took Romeo’s hand, in accordance with the custom, she remarked that she was happy at his arrival, because of the warmth of his hand. Romeo boldly replied that her eyes warmed his heart. Giulietta, who was fearful that she would be observed in company with Romeo, managed to assure him nevertheless that he appeared to her more beautiful than any of the ladies present.

On his way home Romeo, after reflecting on the coolness of his first lady, resolved to devote himself to the second. Giulietta, in a soliloquy, at first upbraided herself for falling in love so uselessly. She declared that Romeo did not love her, and sought only to humiliate her for revenge upon the Cappelletti family. Upon reflection, she later admitted that perhaps she might marry him to reconcile the rival houses.

The youthful lovers promptly took advantage of their meager opportunities to see each other. At church, and through windows, they exchanged fond, clandestine glances. Heedless of the danger to his life, Romeo would often stand before Giulietta’s house. He would even climb up to her window sometimes, and sit unobserved while he listened to her speak.

One moonlight night, as Romeo was about to climb to her balcony, Giulietta opened the window. Fearing the presence of an enemy, Romeo started to flee. Giulietta halted him, and asked an explanation of his conduct. He replied that he was following the dictates of love. "And if you were caught here," she objected, "would you not run great risk of being killed?" Romeo replied that he preferred to die as near her as possible. She answered him that she would willingly be united with him in honorable marriage.

One evening when the snowfall was exceptionally heavy;^ Romeo

^*"una sera che molta neve cadea..."—Da Porto, op. cit., p. 11.*

The traditional date for the story of Giulietta e Romeo, as recorded by the chronicler Girolamo dalla Corte, is 1301. It is barely possible that Luigi da Porto may have had in mind the year 1300, in which the snowfall seems to have been exceptional:


An error of one year in the date would not be an unusual matter among chroniclers of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.
requested Giulietta to permit him to enter her chamber, so that they could converse more freely. She declined, but urged that they be married secretly before her confessor, Friar Lorenzo da San Francesco. This friar, described as a great experimenter in natural phenomena as well as in magic, had already made Romeo his confidant, and had confessed to him his occult interests which were scarcely in harmony with his reputation for orthodoxy. He would not have dared therefore to refuse Romeo the favor of performing the wedding ceremony. Like Giulietta, he hoped that such a step might result in the pacification of the hostile houses. Accordingly Giulietta visited the monastery during Lent under the pretext of confession, and was married to Romeo in the presence of the friar, but without other witnesses.

The secret wedding bliss of Romeo and Giulietta lasted for a few nights only. Unfortunately the Montecchi and the Cappelletti soon came to blows again in the “Corso,” or main thoroughfare of Verona. Romeo, who was unavoidably involved in the fracas, at first took care not to strike any of the Cappelletti, out of regard for Giulietta. When he observed finally that most of his own party were either wounded or dispersed, he attacked and slew Tebaldo Cappelletti, the fiercest of his antagonists who, we are told later in the story, was a cousin of Giulietta. The Cappelletti charged Romeo with homicide, with the result that he was perpetually banished from Verona.

Giulietta, who never betrayed signs of grief for her lost relative, was greatly agitated about the fate of Romeo. As she was unable to discuss matters freely with her parents, she resolved to consult the friar, and sent Pietro to arrange the interview. She met Romeo at the confessional, and suggested that she accompany him to Mantua, disguised as a page. For reasons of prudence, Romeo decided to go alone, leaving Pietro to inform him of events in Verona.  

When Romeo departed, Giulietta wept so bitterly that her beauty was marred. Her anxious mother, Madonna Giovanna Cappelletti, after a vain attempt to extract a confession from her, confided to Messer Antonio Cappelletti her own opinion that Giulietta desired to get married and was ashamed to mention the matter. The father then entered into matrimonial negotiations with the Count of Lodrone. In the meantime the mother, by way of consolation, promised Giulietta that she should promptly be married to a great gentleman. As Giulietta still remained dissatisfied, Madonna Giovanna asked her what she desired. Giulietta replied: “To die, nothing else.”

Messer Antonio now attempted without result to force Giulietta to confess. Giulietta confided to Pietro that she would take poison rather

*The status of Pietro seems peculiar, as he was not only one of the servants of Messer Antonio Cappelletti, but also a loyal friend of Romeo’s. His primary role corresponds to that of Mariotto’s brother, in the novella of Masuccio.
than give up her husband—a decision which was promptly communicated to Romeo.

In view of Giulietta's distress, the Cappelletti family decided to hasten the wedding. Giulietta induced her mother to take her directly to San Francesco, ostensibly for the purpose of confession. As soon as she was alone with the friar, Giulietta informed him that the wedding was to take place in a palace belonging to her father, some two miles from Verona in the direction of Mantua. She declared that unless he would give her poison, she would stab herself. The friar protested that as he was confessor to half the city of Verona, he did not desire to allow his name to be involved in a scandal. Instead of poison, he provided her with a powder which would cause her to sleep, apparently dead, for a space of forty-eight hours. He promised that after her burial in the vault of the Cappelletti, in the Franciscan cemetery, he would remove her to his cell. Thence he would take her, disguised as a friar, to Mantua. When he inquired whether she would be afraid of the corpse of Tebaldo, who was buried in the Cappelletti vault, she replied that she would not hesitate to pass through Hell in order to reach Romeo. After cautioning her to warn Romeo by letter of her project, the friar produced a small jar of powder, which she was to drink with water about three or four o'clock in the morning. The powder would take effect about two hours later.

After her departure from the confessional, Giulietta spoke enthusiastically to her mother about the good qualities of the friar. Her parents, who were quick to observe that her mood had become more cheerful, would readily have suspended matrimonial negotiations, had not matters already gone too far. Giulietta was sent to the Cappelletti country house, accompanied by two aunts, in order that she might meet there members of her fiancé's family.

Giulietta now decided to lose no time. Towards four o'clock in the morning, feigning thirst, she had her maid bring a cup of cold water. She remarked, in the presence of this servant, as well as of her aunts: "My father certainly will not give me a husband against my will, if I can help it." Thereupon she put the powder in the water, ostensibly to refresh herself. The women present, who suspected nothing, went back to sleep. After drinking the mixture, Giulietta arose and dressed. Then crossing her hands over her chest, she awaited the effects of the beverage.

When she was later discovered apparently dead, her maid and her aunts quickly recalled her strange words of the preceding night. The maid went into paroxysms of grief and embraced the still form of her young mistress. Messer Antonio Cappelletti, all trembling, sent for a physician, who pronounced Giulietta dead. The news finally traveled from mouth to mouth to Madonna Giovanna Cappelletti, who fell in
a faint. On recovering consciousness, she berated Giulietta for leaving her without a last farewell.

Giulietta was buried with great pomp in the Cappelletti vault. Meanwhile Friar Lorenzo had entrusted the explanatory letter to another friar who was on his way to Mantua. After a futile attempt to find Romeo at home, this messenger kept the letter, rather than deliver it to a stranger.

Pietro, who naturally believed that Giulietta was dead, tearfully related to Romeo the story of her burial. Romeo turned pale, and drew his sword to kill himself, but was restrained by Pietro. Disguised as a peasant, Romeo then started for Verona, taking along a vial of “serpent’s poison,” which he habitually kept in a chest for emergency use.

Romeo reached Verona undetected, and betook himself after nightfall to the vault, which he entered and closed behind him. When he beheld the apparently lifeless body of Giulietta, by the light of a lantern, he broke into laments and repeatedly kissed her. Finally he drank his poison, and again embraced Giulietta.

At this juncture, Giulietta awoke, and feared at first that the friar had attempted to betray her. As soon as she recognized Romeo, she kissed him a thousand times, while he explained to her his fatal error. She begged leave to die with him, but he entreated her to live on so that she might remember him.

About an hour before dawn, Friar Lorenzo opened the sepulcher, with the aid of a companion, and saw that Giulietta was all disheveled. He called on Romeo to look at her. At the sound of her name, Romeo raised languid eyes, then died, with a sigh.

In vain, the friar begged Giulietta to leave the vault, promising to have her secluded in a convent. She had resolved to die, and her only request was that the secret of her death be not divulged, so that she might remain buried with Romeo. Then she held her breath for a long time and expelled it with a loud cry, falling dead on Romeo’s body.

The constabulary of the Podesta, in pursuit of a robber, surprised the friar and his companion at the tomb. When the friar was arrested, the Cappelletti, aware of his confidential relations with Romeo, demanded that he be put on the rack and made to explain his strange actions at the vault. He replied that he had gone to say prayers over Giulietta’s body, in order to liberate her soul from Purgatory.

Unfortunately for the friar, some hostile brethren opened the tomb and found the bodies. Thereupon Friar Lorenzo, who was obliged to confess that he had lied in order to keep faith with the dead lovers, related their story. Bartolommeo della Scala was moved to great pity. The parents of the young couple became reconciled at the graves, and ordered a beautiful monument erected.

Let us consider first the conclusion of “Giulietta e Romeo,”
where the widest divergence from Masuccio’s plot is manifest.’ Even so reliable a scholar as the late Henri Hauvette felt that Da Porto’s dénouement represented an entirely new departure from all previous versions of the legend, including the story of Hero and Leander, as well as the Pyramus and Thisbe tragedy. According to Hauvette, Da Porto differed from his precursors in allowing to the lovers a brief moment of heart-rending mutual recognition, when Giulietta awakens before the expiring Romeo’s eyes. Yet a textual comparison will show that this alleged invention of Da Porto’s is taken, so far as its essential elements are concerned, from Ovid’s Metamorphoses.

It will be recalled that according to Ovid Pyramus, who sees the torn veil which Thisbe has left behind in her panic, concludes that she is dead. In despair he presses a dagger into his heart. Thisbe, returning, obtains one look of recognition from the dying Pyramus, and then kills herself. Before committing suicide, however, she pleads with her lover to answer her:

Pyrame, . . . quis te mihi casus ademit?
Pyrame, responde: tua te carissima Thisbe
Nominat; exaudi, vultusque attolle iacentes!

According to Da Porto, as we have seen, Romeo supposes that Giulietta is dead, and drinks poison. In the name of Giulietta, Friar Lorenzo begs the dying Romeo to reply: “O Romeo! vedi la tua carissima Giulietta, che ti prega che la miri! perché non rispondi, almeno a lei, nel cui grembo ti giaci?”


8“sur un point, il a été créateur, en ce sens qu’il a inventé un motif profondément tragique, celui qui constitue le dénouement. Il ne manque certes pas d’aventures célèbres, depuis Héro et Léandre ou Pyrame et Thisbé, où l’on voit des amoureux incapables de se survivre l’un à l’autre; mais Luigi da Porto a imaginé une complication qui crée une situation nouvelle.”—Hauvette, op. cit., p. 158.

9Hauvette writes: “Parmi les moyens ingénieux auxquels les romanciers ont eu recours pour ordre les nefs de leurs héros—ou par contre ceux de leurs lecteurs et lectrices—celui-ci est assurément un des plus remarquables.”—Ibid.


11Da Porto, op. cit., p. 35.
Thisbe's name produces such a powerful effect on Pyramus, that for one brief moment he raises his drooping eyes:

Ad nomen Thisbes oculos iam morte gravatos
Pyramus erexit, visaque reconditid illa.\(^{13}\)

The mention of Giulietta's name produces an identical effect upon Roméo:

Romeo al caro nome della sua donna alzò alquanto i languidi occhi dalla vicina morte gravati, e, vedutala, li rinchiusi; e poco dappoi tutto torcendosi, fatto un breve sospiro, si mori.\(^{14}\)

Note the following expressions which Da Porto translates more or less literally from Ovid: The Latin tua . . . carissima Thisbe reappears as the Italian la tua carissima Giulietta. Pyrame, responde becomes O Romeo! . . . perché non rispondi? Ad nomen Thisbes is rendered by al caro nome della sua donna. Oculos iam morte gravatos . . . erexit is given as alzò . . . i languidi occhi dalla vicina morte gravati. In this last clause, Da Porto has added the adjective languidi which, however, may readily have been suggested by Ovid's vultusque . . . iacentes.

The message which Giulietta sends to her parents by Friar Lorenzo is a free translation of the unheard dying words of Thisbe. Giulietta says: "... vi prego, che i nostri miseri padri in nome di ambo noi vogliate pregare, che quelli, i quali amore in uno stesso fuoco arse e ad una stessa morte condusse, non sia loro grave in uno stesso sepolcro lasciare."\(^{15}\) Thisbe's prayer is likewise addressed, in the name of her lover as well as of herself, to all their parents. Like Giulietta, she begs that just as love has joined them in death, they may be buried in the same tomb:

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\text{o multum miserì, meus illiusque parentes,}
\text{ut quos certus amor, quos hora novissima iunxit,}
\text{componi tumulo non invidèatis eodem.}^{16}\]

Giulietta addressing the dead Romeo says that only death can separate her from him, and that she is determined that even death cannot separate her; "... acciocchè da te, dal qual solo la morte mi potea separare, la stessa morte separare non mi possa."\(^{17}\)

\(^{13}\) Ovid, op. cit., IV, vv. 145-46.
\(^{14}\) Da Porto, loc. cit.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 36.
\(^{16}\) Ovid, op. cit., IV, vv. 155-57.
\(^{17}\) Da Porto, loc. cit.
Thisbe’s language is almost identical, even to the wistful repetition of the word *morte*:

\[ \ldots \text{quique a me morte revelli} \]
\[ \text{heu sola poteras, poteris nec morte revelli.}^{18} \]

It may be objected that Thisbe *comes back* to the dying Pyramus, whereas Giulietta *awakens* in the presence of the expiring Romeo. This apparently original touch, nevertheless, is also traceable in part to Ovid, by Da Porto’s own admission. Romeo, as he kisses the deathlike Giulietta, and marveling, feels the warmth of life returning to her veins, is consciously like Pygmalion as he kisses the ivory statue of the virgin which, to his amazement, warms under his lips.\(^{20}\) At the same time, some of Romeo’s words recall those of Boccaccio’s Gentil de’ Carisendi.\(^{21}\) For the passage in question, we may conclude that Da Porto’s originality consists principally in the prolongation of the recognition scene found in Ovid, for Romeo is allowed sufficient time before expiring to learn of Giulietta’s sleeping potion, and to discover that her letters have gone astray.\(^{22}\)

So far as I am aware, there are no more cases of word for word borrowing from Ovid by Da Porto. Yet it is perhaps in order to list a few instances where Da Porto diverges from Masuccio, but in a general manner agrees with Ovid.

1. The tale of “Giulietta e Romeo,” like that of Pyramus and

\(^{18}\) Ovid, *op. cit.*, IV, vv. 152–53.


\(^{20}\) Ovid describes the scene thus: “Ut redivit, simulacra suae petuit ille puellae, /incumbensque toro dedit oscaula; visa tepere est” —Ovid, *op. cit.*, X, vv. 280–81. For Ovid’s account of Pygmalion’s amazement, see line 287: “Dum stupebit,” et cetera.

\(^{21}\) The story of Alcyone who, while she was being transformed into a kingfisher, kissed with her newly grown beak the senseless body of her shipwrecked husband Ceyx, and restored him to life. Husband and wife although transformed into birds, continued their conjugal relations:

\[ \text{Ut vero terigit mutum et sine sanguine corpus,} \]
\[ \text{dilectos artus amplexa recentibus alis,} \]
\[ \text{frigida nequiquam duro dedit oscaula rostro.} \]
\[ \text{Senserit hoc Ceyx, an vulturn motibus undae} \]
\[ \text{tollere sit visus, populus dubitabat; at ille} \]
\[ \text{senserat, et taudem, saperis miserantibus, abhorsi} \]
\[ \text{alio mutantur. Fatis obnoxius isdem} \]
\[ \text{tunc quoque manus amor, nec coniugale solutum} \]
\[ \text{foedus in alibis; coeunt, frioneque parentes, . . .} \]

—*ibid.*, XI, vv. 736–44.

Thisbe, is related. For Ovid, the narrator is one of the daughters of Minyas; for Da Porto, it is the Veronese archer Pellegrino.

2. For Da Porto, as for Ovid, the lovers have the handicap of parental opposition. By way of contrast, in Masuccio’s narrative the reasons for the secret wedding of Mariotto and Ganozza remain unexplained.

3. Giulietta, like Thisbe, commits suicide. On the other hand Masuccio, in two different versions, makes Ganozza die of grief. According to Masuccio’s dénouement, as we have seen, Ganozza obtains admission to a convent and dies within a short time, lamenting the loss of her lover. In the Argomento prefixed to Masuccio’s novella, Ganozza finds Mariotto beheaded and falls upon his body, dead from grief. Da Porto retains Masuccio’s ending only to the extent that he has Friar Lorenzo propose in vain to Giulietta that she retire to a convent.

4. For Da Porto, as for Ovid, the death of the lovers results in a post-mortem parental blessing, a feature which is completely lacking in Masuccio’s version. According to Ovid, the cremated bodies of Pyramus and Thisbe repose, with parental consent, in the same urn. In Da Porto’s novella, the hostile Montecchi and Cappelletti families order a common monument for the deceased Romeo and Giulietta.

We may therefore conclude that there were two main sources of “Giulietta e Romeo”; namely, Masuccio and Ovid. If we assume the sleeping potion to be the basic element of our novella, then we may perhaps suppose that Da Porto began by imitating Masuccio, and added as an afterthought features from Ovid’s

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25 According to the well-known version of Ovid, Pyramus and Thisbe are neighbors (Metamorphoses, IV, v. 57), who are smitten with mutual love, in spite of parental opposition (ibid., IV, v. 61). As H. Hauvette notes, Paolo and Daria, the hero and heroine of the poem Di Paolo e Daria amanti (1495), are separated by reasons of family. Daria is descended from a legitimate branch of the Visconti family, while Paolo, who is also a Visconti, but with the baton of illegitimacy, is of course no proper suitor for her. During the absence of Paolo, Daria is buried, apparently dead. Paolo, on his return, forces open the tomb. Suspecting that Daria is still alive, he summons a doctor, who heals her. The poem has many points of resemblance to the chaste-fable of Ausassin et Nicolette, the roles of the lovers being to some extent reversed.—Cf. Hauvette, op. cit., pp. 57–60; and Rodolfo Renier, “Gaspare Visconti,” in Archivio Storico Lombardo, XIII (1886), p. 526. Cf. Rotunda, op. cit., T95.


28 Ibid., p. 270.

29 Da Porto, op. cit., p. 35.


31 “Ed ordinato un bel monimento, sopra il quale la cagione della lor morte scolpita fosse, i due amanti con pompa grandissima e solenne, dal signore, da’ lor parenti e da tutta la città pianiti ed accompagnati, seppelletti furono . . .”—Da Porto, op. cit., p. 40.
Metamorphoses. If, on the other hand, we consider as basic the false report of, or belief in, the heroine’s death, resulting in the suicide of both hero and heroine, then we may suppose that Ovid furnished to Da Porto his first model, and that the borrowing from Masuccio came later.

A very tenuous support for the second theory is found in the apparently subjective character of Da Porto’s inspiration. It is well known that he served in the imperial Venetian army against Udine and that he left an important record of his military career in his Lettere storiche. On the basis of these letters, C. Foligno has conjectured that Da Porto was in love with la Ginevra, of the anti-imperial faction at Udine, and that she discouraged his advances for political reasons.

Such a case of frustrated love, if authentic, would seem to lend to the tale of “Giulietta e Romeo” the semblance of an autobiographical setting. In the introduction to his novella the author represents himself as following a military career during his youth, as traveling, disconsolate and lovesick, towards Udine, and as accompanied by a faithful companion, the Venetian archer Pellegrino. By way of warning to the author, Pellegrino is supposed to relate en route the tale of Giulietta and Romeo, whose love was blighted by political strife.

Thus if we were to judge simply from the framework which Da Porto furnished for “Giulietta e Romeo,” and forget how artificial Renaissance literary settings were likely to be, we might suppose that the basic idea from which our novella sprang was a personal experience of love brought to nought through factional strife. Granted such an assumption, we might possibly conjecture that our author, in quest of literary parallels to his situation, would be more likely to turn first to Ovid, with his tale of love thwarted by the harsh opposition of neighboring parents, rather
than to Masuccio who, as has been noted, assigns no motive for
the secret marriage of Mariotto and Ganozza. To be sure, Da
Porto could not be absolutely certain from Ovid’s words, *sed
vetuere patres*, that the families of Pyramus and Thisbe were
hostile to each other, but such would probably have seemed a
natural inference to the chronicler of the civil strife in Friuli
between the Guelf chief Antonio Savorgnano and his relentless
neighbor across the street, Messer Alvise dalla Torre, head of the
Ghibelline faction. Da Porto’s natural interest in warring fac-
tions would account too for his early garbled citations from *alcune
vecchie croniche*, which were in reality taken from the Dante
commentator Benvenuto da Imola, or more likely, from the
abridgment by Christoforo Landino.

Whatever Da Porto’s starting point may have been, his prin-
cipal contribution lies in his adaptation of Masuccio’s narrative to
the Ovidian framework. Such an adaptation involves the aban-
donment of Ovid’s gory-mouthed lion, which apparently killed
Thisbe, and the substitution of Masuccio’s *motif* of the premature
burial of the heroine. Once this feature has been altered, how-
ever, the two narratives have been joined with such skill that it is
rarely possible to discover seams. Let us take, for example, the
case of Masuccio’s hero Mariotto who, as has been seen, during
a quarrel and for no assigned reason, strikes his unnamed adver-
sary a fatal blow with a club. Da Porto, who insists always on
precision for the sake of realism, gives a name to this unknown
adversary. He becomes Tebaldo, a cousin of Giulietta. Thus, at
one stroke Da Porto supplies a motive for Romeo’s quarrel and
welds Masuccio’s *novella* with the Ovidian story of apparently
hostile families.

Where perfect assimilation is impossible, Da Porto usually

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30 Luigi da Porto seems familiar with the commentaries of both Christoforo Landino
(cf. Brognoligo, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74) and Francesco da Buti. In the opening paragraph
of his *novella*, he writes:

> “E avvegnaché io alcune vecchie croniche leggendo abbia trovato, come queste due
famiglie unite cacciarono Azzo da Esti governator della detta terra, il quale poscia col
favore de’ Sambonifazi vi ritornò; . . .

> Here he agrees perfectly with Benvenuto da Imola and Christoforo Landino, and
with no known chronicler.

> For the story of the hostility of the two “families,” he perhaps follows da Buti.

> Apparently he has also read the *Cronaca MS Udinese* already referred to. (Cf. Chap-
ter I, note 30, of the present study.)
accepts Ovid’s version, and rejects Masuccio’s. Such is notably the case in the dénouement, although even there the author contrives, while reversing the roles of certain characters chiefly for the sake of verisimilitude, to preserve at the same time a portion of the conclusion found in Masuccio’s novella.

As a first example of such a reversal, it will be recalled that Masuccio’s Ganozza, on awakening, encounters the corrupt Augustinian friar, who according to prearranged schedule comes to take her away from the tomb. Here Da Porto agrees with Masuccio only so far as the heroine’s original design is concerned. His Giulietta plans to be attended by Friar Lorenzo, but on recovering consciousness unexpectedly finds herself in the embrace of Romeo, whom she at first mistakes for the Franciscan brother. By the dramatic substitution of Romeo for Friar Lorenzo, Da Porto accomplishes the double purpose of welding Masuccio’s narrative with the Pygmalion theme, and of emphasizing the churchman’s weakness of character. By a second reversal of roles, Da Porto puts into Friar Lorenzo’s mouth the words of Thisbe: tua te carissima Thisbe . . . nominat, et cetera, this time fusing Masuccio’s narrative with the Ovidian tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. By a third reversal of roles, Da Porto sheds further light on the dubious character of Friar Lorenzo when he represents him as being arrested for grave robbing, and making a miserable defense of himself, thus playing, with greater plausibility, a part which belonged in Masuccio’s novella to the hero Mariotto. At the same time, by this substitution still another reconciliation is effected between the versions of Masuccio and of Ovid, making it possible for Romeo to commit suicide in the Ovidian manner, and not be hanged, according to the dénouement of Masuccio.

It might be remarked that Da Porto, following always the same technique, assimilates not only Ovid’s story of Pyramus and Thisbe, as well as Masuccio’s Thirty-Third Tale, but also bits of novelle by other authors. For example, let us revert a moment to Da Porto’s account of the death of Giulietta which, as has been observed, agrees generally with Ovid’s story of the fate of Thisbe. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that while Thisbe kills herself with the bloody dagger of Pyramus, Giulietta, on the other hand, holds her breath until she expires, precisely after the manner of

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57 Ibid., p. 36. See Hauvette, op. cit., p. 156; Brognoligo, op. cit., p. 71.
Boccaccio's hero Girolamo, the lover of Salvestra. It will be recalled also that unfortunately for Da Porto, Boccaccio's heroine Salvestra, like the Ganozza of Masuccio's *Argomento*, does not commit suicide in the Ovidian manner, but falls dead upon the lifeless body of her suitor. To reconcile his own narrative with that of Boccaccio, Da Porto is thus obliged to resort to a particularly violent reversal of roles, substituting his heroine, Giulietta, for Boccaccio's hero, Girolamo.

Possibly Da Porto incorporated also into his *novella* elements from *Ippolito e Leonora*, a tale which had in common with "Giulietta e Romeo" the themes of love thwarted because of factional rivalry, and of a marriage resulting in the healing of party strife. In particular, the following features of *Ippolito e Leonora* reappear in "Giulietta e Romeo": the leaders of both factions go about accompanied by armed bands; the hero and heroine meet at a *festa*, and fall in love immediately; the heroine laments because fate has made her love an enemy of her house; and the hero is guilty of eavesdropping, not on the balcony, as in Da Porto and Shakespeare, but in the heroine's bedchamber. If Da Porto utilized the tale of *Ippolito e Leonora*, we are confronted with at least one more instance of the substitution of the heroine for the hero. Ippolito, not unlike Giulietta, loses sleep, appetite, and handsome looks because of his passion. He alarms his mother, with whom he has relations strikingly similar to those existing between Giulietta and her mother Madonna Giovanna. Ippolito's mother, like Giulietta's, attempts to elicit a confession from him. Such a reversal of roles would have been necessary to amalgamate the *Ippolito e Leonora* story with Masuccio's narrative, because in Masuccio's version only the heroine can possibly be subjected to such parental criticism, since she remains at home, while the hero is in exile.

In spite of his extensive borrowing, it must be admitted, however, that Luigi da Porto's originality goes far beyond the mere

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58 Da Porto uses indifferently the words *finestra* and *balcone*. Shakespeare refers only to a "window." Da Porto, "Giulietta e Romeo," *op. cit.*, p. 9. Cf. Chap. IV, f.


reconciliation of more or less conflicting sources. He apparently invents the names of Romeo and Giulietta, characters of Mar­cuccio, Tebaldo and the Count of Lodrone, and the fante, or maid. He is even quite fertile in the matter of plot construction. To him we owe such episodes as the following: Romeo ventures to attend the Cappelletti ball, in pursuit of his disdainful mistress. When, during an outbreak of hostilities between the rival factions, Romeo kills Tebaldo, Giulietta weeps because of Romeo's banishment, not because of her relative's death. Obliged to accept the Count as her husband, Giulietta asks the friar for poison, threatening to stab herself in case of refusal. She takes the sleeping potion while she is on a visit to the Cappelletti country place, near Verona, whither she has been accompanied by two aunts, but not by her mother. The friar fails to deliver the letter sent by Giulietta, because he can not find Romeo.

Notable advances are made in the psychology of some of the characters. The actions of the elder Cappelletti are vividly portrayed. More especially the phases of the love of Romeo and Giulietta, their poetic if slightly euphuistic dialogue, are given a permanent form which often has been mistaken for historic fact.

For his psychological analyses, Da Porto repeatedly resorts to the technique later known as the préparation du dénouement, which was dear to the dramatic school of Scribe. Da Porto's Giulietta, for example, unlike Ganozza, threatens in the presence of Friar Lorenzo to kill herself, thus giving the reader a fore­taste of the heroine's final suicide before the corpse of Romeo. Furthermore, Da Porto's Romeo who, unlike Mariotto, has to be restrained by the servant Pietro from stabbing himself, forecasts the Romeo who takes poison beside the funeral couch of Giulietta.

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44 Brognoligo, op. cit., p. 74. Brognoligo associates the name of Giulia (Giulietta) with Giulio Cesare, and connects Romeo with pilgrimages to Rome.
46 Ibid., p. 15 and passim.
47 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
48 Ibid., p. 28.
49 Cf. especially the untrustworthy Girolamo dalla Corte, the only Italian chronicler who mentions Romeo and Giulietta. A pertinent extract from his "Istorie di Verona" which first appeared in 1594 was reproduced by Alessandro Torri in his Giulietta e Romeo, Pisa, 1831, pp. 123-28. Torri used the edition of Verona, 1596. Torri himself was convinced that the story of Romeo and Juliet was a historic fact. Even as late as 1907, Alethea Wiel wrote: "The enmity between the houses of Montagu and Capulet was indeed a fact historically true, . . . "—Wiel, A. The Story of Verona. London, 1907, p. 264.
50 Da Porto, "Giulietta e Romeo," op. cit., p. 22.
51 Ibid., p. 29.
Virtually along the same lines is Da Porto's treatment of the friar, whose actions remain unaccountable in Masuccio's *novella*. Da Porto gives us an early hint of Friar Lorenzo's future conduct by introducing him as a sort of necromancer, bound to Rome by confidential relations, yet careful of his reputation in the community.

To summarize: Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, as well as his Pygmalion story, were important direct sources for Luigi da Porto's "Giulietta e Romeo." It is indeed conceivable that they were Da Porto's original model, and that the use of Masuccio's Thirty-Third *novella* was an afterthought. Among Da Porto's minor sources may certainly be mentioned Boccaccio, and possibly also the author of *Ippolito e Leonora*. Da Porto's literary sources seem to have been utilized directly, and not through folk transmission. Usually Da Porto has welded his materials skillfully, resorting frequently to the expedient of reversing the roles of important characters. In case of conflict between Masuccio and Ovid, however, he has generally preferred Ovid as his guide, the one important exception being the abandonment of Ovid's gory-mouthed lion which apparently killed Thisbe and the substitution of Masuccio's *motif* of the premature burial of the heroine. Despite the extensiveness of his borrowings, however, Da Porto possessed much originality, both in the invention of plots and in the creation of characters. His psychological analysis represents a remarkable advance over Masuccio, and particularly notable is the technique by which he carefully prepares the reader for the final tragic actions of the protagonists.

For convenience, the principal passages in "Giulietta e Romeo" to which reference has been made are here placed together.

(a) E avvegnachè io alcune vecchie chroniche leggendo abbia trovato, come queste due famiglie unite cacciarono Azzo da Esti governator della detta terra, il quale poscia col favore de' Sambonifazi vi ritornò; . . .

(b) . . . avvenne un carnevale che in casa di messer Antonio Cappelletti, . . .

(c) . . . un giovane de' Montecchi, una sua crudel donna seguendo, . . .

(d) E passando la mezza notte e il fine del festeggiare venendo, il

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57 Luigi da Porto

Ibid., p. 5.


Da Porto, "Giulietta e Romeo," loc. cit.
ballo del torchio o del cappello, che dire il vogliamo, e che tutto di nel finir delle feste vogliamo usare, s’incominciò; nel quale in cerchio stanzosi, l’uomo la donna, e la donna, l’uomo a sua voglia permutando si piglia . . . e come in tal ballo si usa di fare, la bella sua mano in mano presa, . . .

(e) Onde fra due pensieri di continuo vivendo, a sè stessa più volte disse: O sciocca me, a quale vaghezza mi lascio io in così strano labirinto guidare, ove, senza scorta restando, uscire a mia posta non ne potrò? giacchè Romeo Montecchi non m’ama, perciocchè per la nimistà che ha co’ miei, altro che la mia vergogna non può cercare; e posto che per isposa egli me volesse, il padre mio darmegli non consentirebbe giammai. Dappoi nell’altro pensiero venendo, dicea: Chi sa? forse che per meglio rappacificarsi insieme queste due case, le quali già stanche e sazie sono di farsi tra loro più guerra, mi potrebbe ancor venir fatto d’averlo in quella guisa ch’io lo disio.

(f) . . . ed ora sopra la finestra della sua camera per forza tiratosi, ivi, senza ch’ella o altri il sapesse, ad udirla parlare si sedea, . . .

(g) Era questo frate dell’Ordine Minore, filosofo grande, e sperimentatore di molte cose così naturali come magiche; ed in tanta amistà con Romeo era, che la più stretta forse in que’ tempi tra due non si sarebbe trovata.

(h) Allora in presenza del frate, che il tutto in confessione diceva accettare, per parola di presente Romeo la bella giovane sposò; . . .

(i) . . . nè Montecchi a Cappelletti, nè Cappelletti a Montecchi ceder volendo, nella via del corso si attaccarono una volta insieme; ove combattendo Romeo, e alla sua donna rispetto avendo, di percuotere alcuno della sua casa si guardava. Pure alla fine essendo molti de’ suoi feriti, e quasi tutti della strada cacciati, vinto dall’ira, sopra Tebaldo Cappelletti corso, che il più fiero de’ suoi nemici parea, d’un solo colpo in terra morto lo distese; e gli altri, che già per la morte di costui erano come smarriti, in grandissima fuga rivolse.

(j) Pure alla fine diss’ella a lui: Che farò io senza di voi? certo di più poter vivere non mi dà il cuore; meglio sarebbe che io con voi, ovunque ne andaste, mi venissi: io m’accorderè queste chiusi, e come servo vi verrò dietro, ne da altri meglio, o più fedelmente che da me, potrete esser servito.

(k) Partito da molti giorni Romeo, e la giovane sempre lagrimosa mostrandosi (il che la sua gran bellezza faceva mancare), fu più fiate
dalla madre, che teneramente l’amava, con lusinghevoli parole addi­mandata, onde questo suo pianto derivasse, . . .

(f) . . . io sento preparare le mie nozze ad un palagio di mio padre, il quale è fuori di questa terra da due miglia verso Mantova, ove menare mi debbono, acciocchè io men baldanza di rifiutare il nuovo marito abbia, . . .

(m) . . . datemi tanto veleno che in un punto possa me da tal doglia e Romeo da tanta vergogna liberare; se no, con maggior mio incarico e suo dolore, un coltello in me stessa insanguinerò.

(n) . . . io ti darò una polvere, la quale, bevendola, per quarantotto ore, ovver poco più o meno, ti farà in guisa dormire, che ogni uomo, per gran medico ch’egli sia, non ti giudicherà mai altro che morta.

(o) Onde volendo il conte di Lodrone, che alcuno suo la donna vedesse, essendo madonna Giovanna alquanto cagionevole della persona, fu ordinato, che la giovane accompagnata da due zie a quel luogo del padre, che avem nominato, poco fuori della città andar dovesse; al che ella niuna resistenza fece, ed andovvi.

(p) . . . chiamata una sua fante, che seco allevata s’era e che quasi come sorella tenea.

(q) Messer Antonio . . . prestamente per un suo medico, che molto dotto e pratico reputava, a Verona mandò. Il quale venuto, e veduta ed alquanto tocca la giovane, disse, lei essere già più ore per lo bevuto veleno di questa vita passata; . . .

(r) Aveva frate Lorenzo . . . la lettera che la Giulietta scrisse, e che egli a Romeo doveva mandare, data a un frate che a Mantova andava; il quale giunto nella città, ed essendo due o tre volte alla casa di Romeo stato, nè per sua gran sciagura trovatolo mai in casa, e non volendo la lettera ad altri che a lui proprio dare, ancora in mano l’avea; . . .

(s) Romeo . . . tirata fuori la spada si voile ferire per uccidersi; pure da Pietro ritenuto, . . .

(u) O Romeo! quale sciagura mi ti toglie? parlami alquanto; trizza a me un poco gli occhi tuoi. O Romeo! vedi la tua carissima Giulietta, che ti prega che la miri! perché non rispondi, almeno a lei, nel cui grembo ti giaci? Romeo al caro nome della sua donna alzò alquanto i languidi occhi dalla vicina morte gravati, e, vedutala, li rinchiusse; e poco dappoi tutto torcendosi, fatto un breve sospiro, si morì.72

(v) Esci fuori, chè quantunque io non sappia che farmi di te, pur non ti mancherà il racchiuderti in qualche santo monistero, . . . 73

(w) . . . deliberando di più non vivere, raccolto a sè il fiato e per buon spazio tenutolo, e poscia con un gran grido fuori mandandolo, sopra il morto corpo morta ricadde.74

(x) Quand'ecco la famiglia del Potestà che dietro alcun ladro correva, vi sopraggiunse; e trovatigli piangere sopra questo avello, nel quale una lucerna vedevano, quasi tutti là corsono, e tolto fra lor i due frati, dissero: Che fate qui, domini, a quest'ora? Fareste forse qualche malia sopra questo sopolcro? . . . e se non ch'io conosco voi, frate Lorenzo, uomo di buona condizione, io direi che a spogliare i morti foste qui venuti.75

(y) Ed ordinato un bel monumento, sopra il quale la cagione della lor morte scolpita fosse, i due amanti con pomp a grandissima e solenne, dal signore, da' lor parenti e da tutta la città pianti ed accompagnati, seppelliti furono.76

72 Ibid., p. 35.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 36.
75 Ibid., p. 37.
76 Ibid., p. 40.