Adrien Sevin published, in 1542, a translation of Boccaccio’s *Filocolo*. Included in the preface was a *conte*, based on Luigi da Porto’s “Giulietta e Romeo” and dedicated “A haulte, excellente et illustre dame, madame Claude de Rohan, Comtesse de saint Aignan.”

Sevin attempts to disguise his Italian source by a pseudo-Greek setting; the action of the story takes place in Courron, a city in Morea, or the ancient peninsula of Peloponnesus. The author also essays to select Greek names for his principal characters, with incongruous results. Romeo is Halquadrich, son of Malechipo Phorhiach. Giulietta is Burglipha, daughter of Karilio Humdrum. Tebaldo, who is made a brother of the heroine, is Bruhachin, while Pietro is Bostruch.

The Phorhiach and Humdrum families are on excellent terms, and their children are reared together, Karilio Humdrum loving Halquadrich Phorhiach as his own son. Karilio Humdrum and Malechipo Phorhiach fall victims to the plague, and leave the care of the children to their wives, Kalzandra and Harriaquach. At this time, Bruhachin is twelve years of age. Halquadrich and Burglipha, who are both eleven years old, already love each other with a growing flame, which gradually arouses the jealousy of Bruhachin. One day Bruhachin abruptly warns Halquadrich that he must discontinue his visits to Burglipha, for reasons of propriety. Otherwise a scandal may result which will render it impossible to marry Burglipha to a man in her station in life. Furious at this insult, Halquadrich challenges Bruhachin to a duel, with the declaration that he will give up Burglipha only at the cost of his life. The next day, Halquadrich returns after donning his coat of mail. As he enters Burglipha’s room by an open door, he finds that she is dressing beside her brother. A duel immediately ensues, with fatal results for Bruhachin, because Halquadrich is
rendered invincible by love. In the inevitable tumult which results, Halquadrich escapes with difficulty. He finally contrives to take refuge on a small brigantine, which bears him to safety in a castle situated on a lonely rock.

Burglipha is torn between two feelings: her genuine grief for her brother’s death, and the resentment which she is obliged by the proprieties to harbor against Halquadrich. Two days after the duel, Halquadrich sends her a letter by his faithful servant Bostruch. In this message, Halquadrich attempts to excuse himself for slaying Bruhachin and declares that he will surely die if she ceases to love him. For reply, she calls him “the world’s greatest traitor” and asserts that she desires to see him strangled according to his deserts. She burns the letter in the presence of Bostruch and affirms that she wishes that she had seen Halquadrich suffer a similar fate. Then she dismisses Bostruch, whom she forbids ever to return. When Halquadrich hears the response of Burglipha, he falls, like Dante, in a dead faint.

Through the persistent intercession of Bostruch, Burglipha is persuaded to receive Halquadrich again as a suitor. In fact, she is even more ardent than he, and takes the initiative by confiding her troubles to an old priest, in whose presence she threatens to commit suicide unless he aids her. The priest points out the difficulties which threaten her. He argues that her mother and other relatives will refuse to see her again if she marries her brother’s murderer. When Burglipha remains obdurate, he gives her a powder to drink dissolved in white wine, which will cause her to remain apparently dead for twenty-four hours. According to the custom of the country, she will be delivered to the priest for burial. He will then take her secretly to his chamber, disguise her and transfer her to a brigantine sailing for the château of Halquadrich.

The next morning Burglipha takes the powder in accordance with the directions of the priest, and falls into a profound stupor which resembles death. Towards seven o’clock in the morning a maid draws the bed curtain, with the intention of inquiring about Burglipha’s health. On finding Burglipha unconscious, she cries out in a loud voice and attracts the attention of the other servants, as well as of the girl’s mother.

Unfortunately Bostruch soon appears, bearing salutations from his master to whom, naturally, he now reports the supposed death of Burglipha. Halquadrich determines to kill himself. Less foresighted...
than Romeo, who kept on hand a constant supply of serpent’s venom for emergency purposes, Halquadrich visits an apothecary, who sells him a stick of poison four fingers long. Before dying, however, Halquadrich resolves to see Burglipha for the last time. Consequently, he boldly returns to Courron, albeit he has been banished from that city on pain of death—not to mention the fact that the friends of Bruhachin are awaiting him there, eager to wreak vengeance upon him. On arrival at the grave, he eats half the poison. Burglipha awakens and learns that Halquadrich is committing suicide for her sake. A final scene between the lovers takes place, in which many words and long kisses are exchanged, all in the most proper manner, as Sevin carefully assures us. Halquadrich grants Burglipha’s request for the unused half of his poison stick, so that she is enabled to die simultaneously with her lover. Halquadrich and Burglipha are buried together in a beautiful tomb.

The sources of Sevin’s conte have given rise to much discussion. Ludwig Fränkel conjectured that the model used by both Sevin and Da Porto was a lost redaction of Masuccio’s Thirty-Third novella. Admittedly for Sevin, as for Masuccio, no initial hostility divided the families of the lovers. Nevertheless, such a divergence from Luigi da Porto’s narrative seems correctly explained by H. Hauvette as imitation of Boccaccio’s Filocolo, of which Sevin made a readable translation.

Hauvette might have added that Sevin’s conte contains reminiscences also of the Filostrato, or Troilus and Cressida story. Let us consider first the role of Burglipha, who at times acts more like Boccaccio’s Griseida (Cressida) than she does like Giulietta. Burglipha, unlike Da Porto’s heroine, has such a great regard for the pundonor that she refuses to see her lover Halquadrich after he has slain her brother. The widow Griseida also insists on the convenances. She avoids a meeting with Troilo, alleging that she is still in mourning for her late husband. Admittedly such a parallel, if there were no complications, might have been accidental, because Sevin, the contemporary of Rabelais and Marguerite de Navarre though he is, never loses an opportunity to

---

9 “la longueur de quatre doitz de poyson . . .”—Sevin, op. cit., Feuillet V.  
7 “rint justement la moytié de la masse de poyson qu’il mangea . . .”—Ibid.  
8 “apres longs baisers, entretiens, & avoir totalement accomplish ce qui est decent & permis en honnesté & sincere amour . . .”—Ibid.  
stress the proprieties. The author's predilection for la décence would not explain, however, the closely related case of Bostruch, who recalls Boccaccio's famous character of Pandaro far more than he does Luigi da Porto's Pietro. To be sure, both Bostruch and Pietro are servants, but there the resemblance almost stops. Moreover, even in their domestic capacities, the roles of Bostruch and Pietro are reversed. Pietro is attached to the Cappelletti household, although well acquainted with Romeo. Bostruch is in the employ of Halquadrich, but is well acquainted with Burglipha. Thus, despite the difference in social status involved, Bostruch's duties are brought in line with those of Pandaro, who is the loyal friend of Troilo, but also has the ear of his cousin Griseida. Bostruch, like Pandaro, is a go-between, and is so efficient at his task that the reader soon forgets his humble official status. Bostruch, for instance, bringing a letter from his master Halquadrich to the recalcitrant Burglipha, is on the level of Pandaro attempting to deliver poor Troilo's letter to Griseida. Like Pandaro, Bostruch is rebuffed, but never dismayed. Bostruch sees Burglipha indignantly burn the letter in his presence, but undauntedly notes that she has taken the precaution first to read the missive. In the same way, Pandaro watches his cousin Griseida, as she more coyly refuses at first to receive Troilo's letter, but he probably observes with satisfaction that she eventually puts it safely in her bosom. The efforts of Bostruch and Pandaro are crowned with success, although the second-rate Sevin lacks Boccaccio's finesse in describing the details of the winning technique.

The scene apparently imitated from the Filostrato was carried over into Boaistuau's adaptation of Bandello's version, and eventually found its way into Shakespeare's tragedy.

Most important of the contributions of Sevin to the development of our legend is the apothecary scene. Unfortunately, Sevin's narrative lacks the description of the scene where, according to Shakespeare, the desperate Romeo enters the apothecary shop.

---


13 Sevin says, insisting always on the proprieties: "Et par tant de fois & avec lettres de Halquadrich, telles que bien sauez estre licites en amours, Bostruch s'en alla vers Burglipha, & la poursuyut si vivement qu'elle s'acorda faire entièrement sa volonté, oubliant l'homicide en son frere."—Sevin, op. cit., Feuillet V.
Missing also is the portrayal of the gaunt vendor of poison, whose "sharp misery had worn him to the bones." Yet Sevin's bald account of Halquadrich's visit to "vng Appothicaire qui luy bailla la longueur de quatre doitz de poysin" is the germ of one of the most dramatic episodes in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, as Henri Hauvette pointed out.

It would seem, however, that Hauvette probably went too far in making Sevin a precursor of Shakespeare for the scene where the heroine attempts to take the same poison as her lover. Sevin is here probably imitating Luigi da Porto, whose Giulietta asks Friar Lorenzo for enough poison to end her sufferings, and at the same time to "liberate Romeo from such great shame."  

(a) Lequel Bostruch qui estoit fort ancien familier & cogneu de Burglipha, semblablement de sa mere & serviteurs de leyns (aussi qu'ilz ignoroient sa demeure avec Halquadrich) present ayesment la lettre. Et feit tresbien son message, & icelle leue de Burglipha, & ayant bien entendu les paroles de Bostruch, ne les voulant declairer a sa mere ny a autres (craignant ce qui en fut aduenu) elle luy dist. Bostruch, ie m'esmerueille quelle hardiesse t'a maintenant conduict en ce lieu, pour faire servuice au plusgrand traistre du monde: ne quelle audace t'a meu la langue de me requerir faire mercy a celly que (pour avoir exterminé l'honneur de ceans) ie desire selon son merite veoir estranger. Pource va & luy diz que is brusle (toy present) sa lettre, . . .

(b) Et par tant de foiz & avec lettres de Halquadrich, telles que bien sçauez estre licites en amours, Bostruch s'en alla vers Burglipha & la poursuyuit si viuement qu'elle s'accorda faire entierement sa volunté, oubliant l'homicide en son frere: . . .

(c) . . . & s'en alla vers un vieul prèbstre de la loy qui auoit lors la cure des ceremonies, . . .

(d) . . . s'adressa a vng Appothicaire qui luy bailla en masse la longueur de quatre doitz de poysin.

(e) Et en maudissant & despitant le Ciel, Soleil, Lune, Etoilles, & Elemens, confessant des sa naissance auoir tousjours esté nourry en

---


15 Sevin, op. cit., Feuillets IV & V.

16 Ibid., Feuillet V.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., Feuillet V.
pleurs & gemissemens, qui encore luy renforceoient à cesuy mal-
heureux & dangereux paz, print iustement la moytie de la masse de
poyson qu'il mangea . . . 19

(f) . . . voyant prochaine la fin de son amy, le requist luy
ectroyer par vraye amytié l'autre moytie de son poyson, ce que non sans
grand peine & ennuy il lui accorda. 20

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., Feuillets V and VI.