CLIZIA

In Italy, the first important imitator of Luigi da Porto’s masterpiece was the Cavaliere Gerardo (or Gherardo) Boldieri, who adopted the feminine pseudonym of “Clizia.” Boldieri’s narrative took the form of a versified novella, which appeared in 1553—or twenty-four years after the death of Luigi da Porto and one year before the publication of Bandello’s tale of Romeo and Giulietta.

Boldieri makes a number of important innovations which reappear in later versions of the Romeo and Juliet story. These alterations relate principally to the character of the friar; the flowery speeches of the hero and his duel with Tebaldo; and the psychology of the heroine.

Let us consider first the case of the friar. Clizia seems determined to put the cleric Batto Tricastro’s relations with his accomplice Romeo into a more favorable light. Clizia describes the Franciscan’s association with Romeo as intimate, but not necessarily unorthodox. Moreover, in the dénouement, Clizia’s friar, who arrives at the Cappelletti vault after the death of Romeo, undergoes no humiliating arrest and public questioning on charges of necromancy and grave robbing.

This abbreviated dénouement involves changes in the farewell


3 Passing note may be made of the following minor features introduced by Clizia, which did not meet with public favor:

Giulietta is called Giulia. Frate Lorenzo’s name is altered to Frate Batto Tricastro. The Count of Lodrone is referred to as Francesco di Lodrone.

Some of Clizia’s changes in the episodes are in keeping with the almost flippant general tone of the poem. Thus, Romeo does not make a tragic attempt to commit suicide on hearing the news of Giulia’s supposed death. He merely removes a gold chain which he habitually wears about his neck, and presents it to Pietro. In return for this magnificent tip, Pietro is requested to inform Frate Batto Tricastro faithfully that Romeo will arrive that night in Verona. Pietro fails to carry out the commission, although presumably he keeps the chain.

4 Clizia, op. cit., I, 66, and I, 67.
speeches of Romeo, whose role it is now time to consider. No place is left for the touching scene—borrowed from Ovid—where after several hours of coma Romeo revives for a moment on hearing the name of Giulietta pronounced. Instead, a merciful death carries off the stricken youth before he can explain the cause of his fatal error.

If Clizia cuts short Romeo's dying words, however, he is more liberal in reporting the lyrical language employed by the lover while he was thoroughly alive. It will be recalled that in Da Porto's novella, the first advances are made by Giulietta, who feels that she no longer belongs to herself, from the instant that she sets eyes on Romeo. In fact, during the entire lovers' interview at the Cappelletti ball, Da Porto's Romeo has the opportunity to speak only one brief sentence, because of the greater fluency of Giulietta. At this point, Clizia develops Romeo's speeches—which were to become so important in Shakespeare's play—and even makes Romeo, instead of Giulia, declare that he no longer belongs to himself. Furthermore, Clizia's Romeo indulges in précieux rhetoric about the peril of Giulia's eyes, in a manner almost worthy of Shakespeare:

Mi dier' morte i vostri occhi, e mi privaro
Del cuor, quando pur dianzi gli mirai.

The new phraseology which Clizia introduces into Romeo's speeches, however, is probably less important than the modification of Da Porto's account of the duel between Romeo and Tebaldo. It will be recalled that, according to Da Porto, the battle between Romeo and Tebaldo begins as a general brawl, in which the Montecchi and Cappelletti appear equally at fault. The mêlée has narrowed down to a few individual hand-to-hand fights when Romeo, infuriated at the defeat of his comrades, impetuously assails Tebaldo and kills him. Clizia has the mêlée start with a deliberate attack on the Montecchi:


"Essi (Giulia's eyes) l'alma per sempre mi legaro,
Si che più mio so do non esser mai . . . ."

—Ibid., I, 34.


*Clizia, loc. cit. For these words, as well as for the rest of Romeo's speech, Da Porto has simply: "Se io a voi con la mia mano la vostra riscaldo, voi co' be' vostri occhi il mio cuore accendete."—Da Porto, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

*Cf. Chap. VI, i.
Dico ch'un di Tebaldo, ardito e forte
Giovin de' Cappelletti, in compagnia
Di molti altri, assai presso alle porte
Dei Borsari il gentil Romeo per via, . . . 8

It will be observed that in this passage Romeo is not alone, but is the leader of the Montecchi forces, just as Tebaldo is described as having many comrades. Romeo's followers are specifically mentioned in the second stanza below:

Eran già i suoi dalle ferite tutti
Tinti di sangue; . . . 8

At this stage of the combat, Romeo makes a vindictive attack upon the Cappelletti, exactly as in the Luigi da Porto version. However, for the hand-to-hand battle between Tebaldo and Romeo, which occurs only at the very end of the mêlée, Clizia introduces a new version. 10 His Romeo endeavors for Giulia's sake to spare Tebaldo. So vicious is the attack of the Cappelletti, however, that Romeo is compelled to kill him to save his own life.11

Clizia, in his description of the mêlée, introduces also a detail of localization which reappears in a later version of the story. According to Luigi da Porto, the battle between Romeo and Tebaldo begins in the "via del corso."12 Clizia, more precisely, has the struggle take place "alle porte dei Borsari," at the west end of the Corso dei Borsari.

Let us turn now to Clizia's treatment of the heroine, whom he attempts to make more natural and perhaps more feminine. In so doing, he assigns to her a more passive role than in any other Italian version of this story. She is content for the most part to make rather conventional—although encouraging—responses to the raptures of Romeo:

A Romeo chetamente fu con quella
Modesta e riverente cortesia
Risposto dalla nobile donzella,
Ch'al loco, al tempo, ed ad ambi convenìa.
Si mandavan del cuor certa novella
I lor occhi e le mani tuttavia . . . 18

8 Clizia, op. cit., II, 24.
9 Ibid., II, 26.
10 Ibid., II, 27.
11 Ibid.
13 Clizia, op. cit., I, 35.
Clizia’s effort to “feminize” Giulia’s character is especially manifest in his account of the heroine’s conduct after the death of her kinsman Tebaldo. At this stage of the narrative, the Giulietta of Luigi da Porto weeps copiously, without alleging any reasons for her tears. Against the cajoling and menacing of her parents, she preserves the most obstinate and heroic silence. Clizia’s less Spartan Giulia tries to escape the parental inquisition by inventing a plausible pretext for her laments: her pretended grief for the death of her cousin Tebaldo, whose relationship to the heroine is explained earlier and becomes much more important than in Da Porto’s version. So convincingly does Giulia lie, that she soon makes an ally of her mother, who in turn wins over Antonio Cappelletti.14

It should be noted that Clizia modifies also the monologue in “Giulietta e Romeo” where the heroine, in a soliloquy, wavers between two thoughts. First she believes that Romeo does not really love her, but seeks to humiliate her for revenge against the Cappelletti family. Then, without transition, she takes comfort in another idea, that perhaps by marrying Romeo she can bring about a reconciliation between the rival families.15

Clizia attempts to explain, with a semblance of feminine logic, Giulia’s sudden change of heart. He represents her as repenting because she cannot believe that a fair countenance can hide a villainous heart.16

The most obvious feature of Clizia’s “feminization” of the heroine, however, is his insistence on the proprieties. It will be remembered that in Da Porto’s novella Giulietta is able to go to the confessional the first time unaccompanied by Madonna Giovanna, who is not even introduced until after the secret marriage of her daughter to Romeo.17 According to Clizia, the mother accompanies her daughter to the confessional the first as well as the second time.18

Clizia also tries to conventionalize somewhat the highly irregular marriage of the hero and heroine. Da Porto says simply that in the presence of the friar, Romeo married the fair young lady

14 Ibid., II, 41, and II, 43.
15 Cf. Chap. VI, e.
16 Clizia, op. cit., I, 42.
17 Da Porto, op. cit., p. 18.
18 Clizia, op. cit., II, 9.
“per parola di presente.” Clizia retains the significant word *presente*, and goes on to specify that the Christian ritual was followed, with Romeo placing the ring upon Giulietta’s finger.

Moreover, Clizia does not like Da Porto’s account of Giulietta’s stay in the Cappelletti country house, near Verona, chaperoned only by a couple of aunts. He remedies this impropriety by having Madonna Giovanna also accompany her daughter. In this way, as it turns out, the mother is one of the first to discover the apparent death of Giulietta, instead of hearing the news after a lengthy delay, as in Da Porto’s *novella*.

I have reserved for final mention a few miscellaneous innovations by Clizia which were widely adopted. He starts the fashion for a more detailed description of the *torchio*, or circular dance, at the Cappelletti house. He informs us that the sleeping potion contains distilled simples, and was a liquor rather than a powder. He describes the sunrise, observable as Giulia drank the potion. He says that when Giulia was discovered, apparently dead, she was reproached at first for being a sleepyhead, and that later, not one, but many famous doctors were sent for.

Clizia was the first poet to deal with the story of Romeo and Juliet. The tendency towards a lyrical treatment of this theme may be said to have its beginnings with his *ottava rima*. But Clizia’s most important contributions to the development of the legend, aside from a few minor details, consisted of his favorable treatment of the character of the friar, and his analysis of the psychology of the hero and of the heroine.

(a) **Nel mezzo della nobil compagnia**

Primo usci con un torchio acceso in mano
Un giovin, che con vaga leggiadria
Una donna gentil prese per mano,
A cui con riverente cortesia
Dopo un breve girar sciolta la mano,
Consegнатole il torchio, il cerchio aperse,
E rinchiudendol poi fra duo s’offerse.

Quella un altro pigliò, del qual già amore
Nell’anima le avea l’effigie impressa:

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Così nutriva l'un dell'altro il core
Un fuoco, un duolo, un'allegranza istessa;...

(b) E perché in nodo d'amicizia stretto
È seco si dispon di contentarlo;...

(c) E (Iddio) sa quanto è ver voi l'obbligo mio.

(d) Fuggita la vil turba e quasi spenta,
Tra i padron si ridusse la battaglia.
Tutto schiumoso il fier Tebaldo tenta
Di mille solo un colpo far che vaglia:
Fa l'amor della moglie a Romeo lenta
La man; ma si 'l nimico lo travaglia,
Che al fin per dar a se medesma aita
Con una punta a lui tolsè la vita.

(e) Chi dirà 'l gaudio estremo ch'ei sentiéro?
Chi le soavi lor parole rotte
Or da questo or da quel dolce sospiro?
Ch'è baci spessi, dal cuj mel condotte
L'alme alle labbra fuor quasi n'uscirò?
E chi l'alta dolcezza che la notte
Congiunti in un gustarò ambi egualmente?
Dillo, Amor, tu ch'a ciò fusi presente.

(f) Chè non le par che inganno o indegno affetto
Possa capir sotto sì dolce aspetto.

(g) Ma perchè il sempre lagrimar scemava
Più a Giulia la beltà di giorno in giorno,
Che del morto cugino si scusava
Vedersi ognora il tristo spirto intorno;

(h) Se lei il morto Tebaldo attristi, o segno
Di qualche suo desir sia che l'affanni,
Non so;...

(i) Onde lieta oltra modo con la madre
Dopo 'l prandio la Giulia entra in cammino,
E tosto fur presenti al santo padre.

Clizia, op. cit., I, 67.
ibid., II, 27. Cf. Chap. VI, i.
Clizia, op. cit., II, 27.
ibid., I, 42.
Clizia, op. cit., II, 43.
ibid., II, 9. For this, Luigi da Porto has simply: "Ed essendo la quadragesima, la giovane un giorno fingendo di volersi confessare, al monisterio di Santo Francesco andata, ...
CLIZIA
Romeo seguendo la cristiana norma,
Come si suol con assentir presente,
Or quella il dito d'aureo cerchio informa...  

... Io ho un liquor, che se da te bevuto
Fia, duo di quasi ti farà dormire; ...
È mio parer che nella prima notte
Che giugnerai di fuora al tuo giardino,
Sendo voi donne in camera ridette,
L'acqua, che dentro un vaso piccolino
Darotti, uscita da sacre erbe e cotte
Con temperato fuoco di verzino, ...

Nel digerir del cibo proverai
Cosa maravigliosa; ...

Quando le par che già s'approssi l'ora
Che dar devese principio e fine all'opra,
Ascendendo già il sol verso l'aurora,
Forza è che 'l fuoco interior discopra:
Onde in fuor quasi di senso fuora,
Pigliato il vaso e voltolo sozzopra,
Tutto il liquor, che l'ultima bevanda,
Lassa! le fu, nel ventre ardita manda.  

Si ch'ella e la sorella curiose
Più dell'altre, in la stanza prime entraro,
E in voci dolcemente corrucciose
Si lungo sonno a Giulia improveraro.  

... a questo con maggiore
Impeto dietro grida, ch'ivi tutti
Sieno i medici saggi a lui condutti.

E perchè un miglio a pena lontan era
L'effetto rio della città successo,
Trovossene in tempo ivi una schiera
Che non avrebbe ad Esculapio cesso.  

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4) Ibid., III, 26. For this, Luigi da Porto has simply: “la notte vicino alle quattr'ore
fattasi dare una coppa d'acqua fredda, postole dentro la virtuosissima polvere,
tutta la si bebbe; ...”—Da Porto, op. cit., p. 25.  