The only known source of *Romeo and Juliet* is Arthur Brooke's poem on *Romeus and Iuliet*.¹ It is the general opinion that Shakespeare's few deviations from his original concern the minor characters almost exclusively.² My purpose is to call attention to seven changes in the roles of important characters, and to compare these changes with the original version of Luigi da Porto.

1. Let us consider first Romeo's object in attending the Capulet ball. According to Luigi da Porto, Romeo goes to this festivity because he hopes to see his lady there.³ Bandello alters this motive, it will be recalled. He invents a counselor who advises Romeo to attend social functions for the opposite purpose of forgetting his first love. Bandello's version is adopted by Boaistuau, and developed in a long passage by Brooke.⁴ Shakespeare follows the Bandello-Boaistuau-Brooke account to the extent that he retains the counselor of Romeo, to whom he gives the name of Benvolio. For his psychological analysis of Romeo, he agrees with Luigi da Porto, making the hero remain faith-

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³ Professor Law observes on p. 87: "So far as I am able to perceive, the only important action by either one of the lovers not found in Brooke is Romeo's slaying of Paris in the final scene. With the minor characters it is generally different."

⁴ Cf. Chap. VI, c.

Daniel, ed., *op. cit.*, vv. 53-150. Cf. especially vv. 137-48:

Ere long the townishe dames / together will resort:
Some one of bewty, favour, shape, / and of so lovely porte:
With so fast fixed eye, / perhaps thou mayst beholds:
That thou shalt quite forget thy loue, / and passions past of olde.
The yong mans lystning ear / receiue the hoselome sounde,
And reasons trueth yplanted so, / within his head bad grounde:
That now with healthy coole / ytempered is the heate:
And pieceresme weares away the greefe / that erst his heart dyd freate.
To his approued frend, / a solemnhe othe he plight:
At every feast ykept by day, / and banquet made by night:
At parlians in the churche, / at games in open streate:
And every where he would ressort / where Ladies wont to meete.
ful to his first lady until he actually catches sight of Juliet. Benvolio urges:

At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Sups the fair Rosaline whom thou so lov'st;
With all the admired beauties of Verona.⁵

Loyal Romeo, who is not yet interested in the other "admired beauties of Verona," replies: "I'll go along, no such sight to be shown, / But to rejoice in splendour of my own."⁶ In thus apparently following the version of Luigi da Porto, rather than that of Brooke, Shakespeare represents Romeo as being far less fickle than he appears to be in Brooke's poem.

2. Shakespeare differs even more sharply from Brooke in the first balcony scene. Shakespeare's Juliet, in a soliloquy, avows her love for Romeo. Romeo at length intervenes, and Juliet, startled at the interruption of the unseen visitor, answers:

What man art thou that, thus bescreen'd in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?⁷

By way of contrast, it should be noted that in Brooke's poem Iuliet's soliloquy is finished at dawn, when Romeo is just getting out of bed.⁸ The hero arises after a night's slumber, passes his lady's house in broad daylight, and is promptly espied by her.⁹ A little further on Brooke introduces a moonlight scene,¹⁰ but here again Iuliet sees

⁵ Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, op. cit., I, ii, vv. 86—88.
⁶ Ibid., vv. 104-5.
⁷ Ibid., II, ii, vv. 52—53.
⁸ Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, op. cit., II, ii, vv. 70—73.
⁹ Ibid., vv. 493-94.
Romeus without the slightest difficulty. According to Luigi da Porto, however, Romeo frequently climbs upon Giulietta’s balcony at night, and sits listening to her talk, while she remains unaware of his proximity. For the time and eavesdropping of the first balcony scene, therefore, Shakespeare is in accord with the original Italian tale, rather than with Brooke’s poem.

3. Shakespeare, unlike Brooke, allows Juliet to go to the wedding unaccompanied by the Nurse. It is perhaps noteworthy that also in the novella of Luigi da Porto, Giulietta goes unescorted on her way to be married at the monastery of Santo Francesco. In Clizia’s poem,

Romeus replies (vv. 499-516) merely that he is willing to lay down his life for his lady. There is no hint that his chief danger lies in unrequited love, or that, once freed from this danger, he need no longer fear his enemies. Luigi da Porto, who is again much closer to Shakespeare than Brooke, seems clear on these points:

"E se voi ci foste colo, disse la donna, non potreste voi morire di lasservi?


Critics have generally overlooked the alteration made by Shakespeare in the Nurse’s part in the scene where Juliet, learning of the death of her kinsman Tybalt at the hand of Romeo, flames into fury against her husband, then relents. Her sudden transition from an abusive to a sympathetic attitude remains unexplained in Brooke’s poem. (Daniel, éd., *op. cit.*, vv. 1113-58. Cf. Pierre Boaistuau. *XVIII Histoires extraictes des oeuvres italiennes de Bandel, et mises en langue francoise...* Les six premières par Pierre Boaistau, surnommé Lannay, natif de Bretaigne. Les douze suivans par Fran. de Belle Forest, Comegeois. Lyon, 1578, fos. 54r-54v.)

Shakespeare applies better psychology than Brooke, and at the same time amplifies the role of the Nurse. At first Juliet rails against Romeo (*Romeo and Juliet*, op. cit., III, ii, vv. 73-74). Presently the Nurse interrupts, criticizing all men in general, and Romeo in particular. She concludes: "Shame come to Romeo!" (v. 89). Immediately Juliet rushers to her lover’s defense, replying: "Blister’d be thy tongue / For such a wish! He was not born to shame:" (vv. 90-91). In this manner, what in Brooke’s poem is merely a soliloquy of Juliet with a capricious change of mood, becomes in Shakespeare’s play the natural reaction of the heroine to the criticism of the Nurse.

In Brooke’s poem there is an earlier soliloquy of Juliet which occurs shortly after her first meeting with Romeos. First she fears that he does not really love her. Then she changes her mind because of his handsome looks:

*That where such perfet shape / with pleasant bewty restes, There crooked craft and trayson blacke / should be appoynted gestes. —Daniel, ed., *op. cit.*, vv. 406-8.

Shakespeare seems to have had this earlier scene in mind when he has Juliet say to the Nurse: "Upon his brow shame is asham’d to sit;"—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, op. cit., III, ii, v. 92.

Giulia goes to the monastery with her mother. Bandello's Giulietta, with even greater propriety, is escorted not only by her mother, but also by her maids. Boaistuau dispenses with the chaperonage of the mother and specifies two contrasting companions, “la bonne vieille,” and “une jeune demoiselle.” Brooke identifies “la bonne vieille” as the “nurse,” while “une jeune demoiselle” is indefinitely translated as a “mayde.” Consequently, when Shakespeare has Juliet go alone to the cell of Friar Laurence, he is brushing aside the variants favored by Clizia, Bandello, Boaistuau, and Brooke, and is reverting to the original account of Luigi da Porto. At the same time, it should be noted, Shakespeare completely rejects Brooke’s conception of the heroine as a “wily wench.” In so doing, he is probably influenced also by Marlowe’s Hero and Leander.

4. One of the capital scenes in Shakespeare’s play is the combat between Mercutio and Tybalt, in which Mercutio is slain, whereupon Romeo revengefully kills Tybalt. In Luigi da Porto’s “Giulietta e Romeo,” as we have observed, the hero, in order to avenge the wounding of his companions, attacks and kills Tebaldo. Bandello, followed by Boaistuau and Brooke, has Romeo try to separate the combatants, only to be assaulted by Tebaldo for his interference. Finally Romeo is forced to defend himself because of a treacherous blow aimed at him by his adversary. Shakespeare virtually restores the version of Da Porto to the extent that he makes Romeo fight Tybalt not for self-defense, but to avenge the death of a friend. With greater vividness, he has a single ill-starred duelist, Mercutio, personify the company of badly wounded Montecchi avenged by Da Porto’s Romeo.

24 Cf. Chap. VIII, i.
25 Cf. Chap. IX, i.
26 Boaistuau, op. cit., fo. 48v.
29 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, op. cit., III, i.
30 Cf. Chap. VI, i.
31 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, op. cit., I, v., 517, 527, and 528.
32 And then at Romeus hed, / a blow he strake so hard,
That might haue close him to the brayne/ but for his cunning ward.

In v. 1030 Brooke says: “When he him shewe, of wrong receaude / tauenge himselfe by fight.” Here the idea, however, is personal revenge, amounting to self-defense; not vengeance for fallen comrades, as in Luigi da Porto’s novella.

5. Luigi da Porto says rather vaguely that the combat between Romeo and Tebaldo begins in the "via del corso."24 We have seen that Clizia and Bandello add a more detailed reference to the "porta dei Borsari,"25 called by Boaistuau the "porte de Boursari,"26 which Brooke translates as "Pursers gate."27 Shakespeare agrees with Da Porto in omitting all mention of this gate.28

6. Let us consider now the fateful scene where Lady Capulet brings word that her husband "hath sorted out a sudden day of joy"29 for his sorrowing daughter. The mother explains that lucky Juliet is to be married the following "Thursday morn" at Saint Peter's church to the County Paris, a "gallant, young and noble gentleman."30 But Juliet flatly rejects the proposed happiness:

I pray you tell my lord and father, madam,
I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear
It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
Rather than Paris.31

For this passage, Shakespeare agrees exclusively with Da Porto, and with Da Porto’s imitator, Grotto. We have already noted that in "Giulietta e Romeo" Madonna Giovanna declares that Giulietta shall marry according to her inclinations, even though, contrary to all probability, she decides to wed one of the Montecchi.32 The only important deviation by Shakespeare is to put into the mouth of the daughter approximately the words originally ascribed to the mother.

7. As already observed,33 Shakespeare agrees exclusively with Da Porto and Grotto in "the mention of both poisoning and stabbing at the heroine's death."

A discussion of the minor characters lies beyond the scope of this investigation. Suffice it to note that events which in earlier versions were relegated to the middle or end of the story are often foreshadowed in the first act of Shakespeare’s play, with a corresponding development of minor roles. For instance, the character of Tybalt appears in Brooke’s poem only once—at the time of his last and fatal battle. Shakespeare introduces him in the first act, giving us a foretaste of the young man’s prowess by his duel with Benvolio, and by his threatened brawl with Romeo at the Capulet ball. The projected marriage of Juliet to the County

24 Cf. Chap. VI, i.
26 Boaistuau, op. cit., fo. 51r.
28 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, op. cit., III, i, stage directions.
29 Ibid., III, v. 110.
32 Cf. Chap. XII, note 21.
33 Ibid., notes 17, 18, and 19.
Paris, which in earlier versions is discussed only towards the end of the story, is forecast by Shakespeare in two scenes of the first act. Here are introduced also the elder Capulets and Montagues. In earlier versions, the Montagues appear for the first time after the death of Romeo, while the Capulets can scarcely be said to be introduced before the time of Juliet's marriage. The County Paris himself, whom Brooke mentions by name only late in the narrative, has a speaking role in the first act of Shakespeare's play. It may be significant, however, that Shakespeare, reverting to the version of Luigi da Porto, makes Peter a servant of Juliet's household; Bandello, Boaistuau, and Brooke far more logically make him Romeo's man. Passing mention will be made, moreover, of one instance in which Shakespeare deviates from Brooke in the treatment of the character of Friar Laurence. According to Brooke, the "gostly syre" is at first very reluctant to marry Romeo to Juliet:

A thousand doutes and moe / in thold mans hed arose:
A thousand daugners like to come, / the olde man doth disclose,
And from the spousall rites / he readeth him refrayne:
Perhaps he shalbe bet aduisde / within a weeke or twayne.  

Shakespeare's Friar Laurence merely chides Romeo "for doting, not for loving," and makes not the slightest attempt to dissuade the young man from marrying Juliet. In fact, he rather welcomes the opportunity to "turn your households' rancour to pure love." Thus Shakespeare is once more in accord with Luigi da Porto, whose Frate Lorenzo, far from objecting to the wedding plans of Romeo, is delighted at the prospect of reconciling the warring Cappelletti and Montecchi.

We are confronted with the problem: Did Shakespeare read Luigi da Porto's "Giulietta e Romeo," of which no known English or French translation existed in the sixteenth century, just as he apparently used in his *Merchant of Venice* the untranslated

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35 Daniel, ed. op. cit., vv. 597-600.
36 Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, op. cit., II, iii, vv. 82 and 92. Brooke's "fryer" finally comes to the conclusion that "both the housholdes wrath / this manage might appease." (Daniel, ed., op. cit., v. 609.) The conclusion is reached, however, only after a long argument and much "earnest sute" (v. 607) and is not spontaneous as in Shakespeare's play.
37 "Il frate di cio contento fu, si perché a Rome o niuna cosa avrebbe senza suo gran danno potuta negare, si anco perché pensava, che forse per mezzo suo sarebbe questa cosa succeduta a bene; il che a lui di molto onore sarebbe stato presso il signore ed ogni altro, che avesse desiderato queste due case veder in pace."—Da Porto, op. cit., pp. 12-13.
Pecorone of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino and Novellino of Masuccio? The standard observation in such cases, that at most Shakespeare could have done no more than resort to long-lost vernacular translations, is becoming decidedly shopworn, if not actually threadbare. Why could not Shakespeare, like that other great actor-dramatist Molière, have been influenced directly by Italian literature? We must bear in mind the extraordinary exactness, even in the sequence of events, with which Shakespeare has usually followed Brooke, and the notoriously servile fidelity with which Bandello has regularly copied Luigi da Porto. Yet, in spite of mathematical probability, Shakespeare agrees in at least six or seven instances exclusively with Luigi da Porto. In each case an important scene is concerned, such as the significant passing of Romeo “from the sphere of fancy to the sphere of imagination”; the duel with Tybalt, where Shakespeare ties “the central knot of his play”; Juliet’s wedding; the first of the celebrated balcony scenes; the fateful news of the proposed marriage to Paris; and the heroine’s suicide.

Three solutions for the puzzle present themselves. We can ignore the remarkable coincidence that in practically every important divergence from Brooke, when dealing with the lovers, Shakespeare finds himself in agreement with Luigi da Porto, and explain all changes involved as the result of psychological analysis by the poet. We can invoke the long-lost tragedy, witnessed by Brooke, and presumably also by Shakespeare, and overlook the fact that the nature of this tragedy is even more conjectural than that of the Roméo et Juliette by Châteauvieux, first played at the courts of Charles IX and Henri III, and revived in Normandy in 1581. Or we may adopt the simplest and most natural expla-
nation, that Shakespeare had access, directly or indirectly, to the original Italian version of Luigi da Porto.\textsuperscript{44} We need only divorce ourselves from the reactionary logic of Richard Farmer's \textit{Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare}, and make proper allowance for "what he may have learnt through books and the visits of others, or through converse with some of the many Italians resident in London."\textsuperscript{45}


The real name of Châteauvieux was Côme de Gambe, and he was "valet de chambre du Roi et de Monsieur le duc de Nemours." The argument of his play was apparently taken from Bandello, and the last authenticated performances occurred, with musical accompaniment, at Neufchâtel-en-Bray, "les lundi et mardy gras de ladite année 1581," before a daily audience of more than 3000, who were permitted to enter or leave whenever they liked. An account of these performances is given by Adrien Miton, citizen of Neufchâtel, in his \textit{Mémoire}, a bad eighteenth-century copy of which was edited by F. Bouquet in 1884 for the Société de l'Histoire de Normandie: \textit{Documents concernant l'Histoire de Neufchâtel-en-Bray et ses environs}.

\textsuperscript{44} We need not necessarily side with those unorthodox investigators who contend that Shakespeare traveled in Italy some time during the period 1592–94. Moreover, it is of course possible that friends of Shakespeare who knew Italian translated or outlined the Italian originals.