LOST DOCUMENTS, WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE “ROMEO EN JULIETTE” OF JACOB STRUIJS AND THE “CASTELVINES Y MONTESES” OF LOPE DE VEGA

It is now time to assay if possible the numerous “lost documents” which scholars have proposed in connection with the Romeo and Juliet legend. Ever since Leverrier, basing his calculations upon the perturbations of Uranus, was able to predict the discovery of the remote planet Neptune, it has been the ambition of many scholars, using as evidence the variants of known stories, to prove the existence of unknown novelle and plays. Two important differences are observable, unfortunately. On the one hand, the discovery by Leverrier remains after a century—with one possible exception—unique in the field of astronomy, whereas impatient literary scholars insist on prognosticating the discovery of scores and hundreds of lost documents. On the other hand, Leverrier stuck to his calculus, while literary scholars have too often adopted methods which a mathematician would abhor.

Generally investigators of the “lost document” school make two basic assumptions: (a) multiple sources are impossible; (b) no author can possess any considerable degree of originality, so that all discoverable deviations in his work from what has been considered a known source call for an explanation by a single unknown source. In rare instances, an argument for a “lost source” is made without the first assumption. On the other hand, a few scholars are inclined to waive the second assumption in the case of authors of rare genius, such as Shakespeare and Lope de Vega.

As a good example of the combined assumptions (a) and (b), let us consider again J. J. Munro’s theory regarding Luigi Groto’s sources. It will be recalled that Munro, arguing for an unknown precursor of Groto, says:

Groto either made use of Da Porto, Bandello, and Boaistuau, all three, or borrowed from some third Italian source a novel or play, now unknown, which led Boaistuau to alter his ending, and which was based on, or similar to, Da Porto and Bandello. . . . the play (= *la Hadriana*) seems to be too distantly removed from the story of the
Italian novels to warrant the assumption of immediate connexion with them; and it is highly improbable, too, that Grotto made use of Boaistuau. If then, as seems likely, there was a third Italian version of the Romeo story, other than Clitia, it must have been some adaptation or translation of this, which apart from Brooke, influenced Shakspeare.

It will be observed that Munro assumes that: (a) multiple sources being impossible, Grotto could not have known Boaistuau, in spite of the well-known Italian predilection for French literature; (b) Grotto could not possibly have been endowed with sufficient originality to account for a play so “distantly removed from . . . Italian novels.” By taking for granted these two fundamental “principles,” Munro is able to hypothesize two lost sources: (a) a lost novel or play; (b) “some adaptation or translation of this . . . apart from Brooke . . .”

It should be remarked, however, that Munro apparently regards assumption (b) alone as nearly sufficient basis for hypothesizing a lost source. In a note concerning the duration of Juliet’s sleep, he says: “In Sh. L. says the trance shall last forty-two hours, IV. i. 105. In Boaistuau, p. 69, and in Struijs he says at least forty hours. Painter followed Boaistuau. It may be that Sh. got his forty-two hours from the old play(?) . . .” To be sure, the proof for a missing document is here so tenuous that Munro queries it. Nevertheless, it may be interesting to see to what extremes Munro’s suggested line of reasoning would lead us. Let it be recalled that Masuccio, following Boccaccio exactly, says that the narcotic is to be effective for three full days. However, Boccaccio’s abbot could regulate the dose, so that the victim Ferondo would sleep about four hours only, if desired. Sermini’s heroine la Montanina lost consciousness for only a few hours; the Giulietta of Da Porto, about forty-eight hours; Bandello’s heroine, forty hours; and the Iuliette of Loys Guyon, more than thirty hours. If each difference of duration of stupor is evidence of a lost document, how many such documents shall we have to conjure up to explain the varying figures above cited?

In a slightly different category is Harold de Wolf Fuller who, although accepting whole-heartedly assumption (a), is inclined to modify somewhat assumption (b). Fuller maintains that the

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Romeo en Juliette of Jacob Struijs was not based on Shakespeare's play, but upon a common source, "perhaps indeed the play referred to by Brooke." Fuller observes, in support of his own contention, that Struijs agrees in turn exclusively with Boaistuau, with Brooke and with Shakespeare, whose Romeo and Juliet had appeared nearly forty years before. Fuller believes it unlikely that Struijs made use of all three of these works, and thinks consequently that he must have consulted a lost document which was also accessible to Shakespeare. As J. J. Munro remarks: "Here, again, we are presented with the same alternatives as in the case of Luigi Groto and the Italian novelists, either that Struijs used Boaistuau and Brooke and Shakspere, or that he used Boaistuau for basis and some now lost composition which influenced Brooke's poem and Shakspere's play."

At this point we may pause to inquire whether it is not the common practice of authors to use many different sources. It might be instructive, for instance, to peer for a moment into the workshop of a more modern writer, and see what deductions can be reached from the author's own notes. To cite a typical example: Victor Hugo, in Notre-Dame de Paris, demonstrably interweaves the basic Preciosa and Cinderella themes with an extremely large number of passages borrowed here and there, without benefit of a single "lost play" or "lost novel." Numerous other modern novelists have likewise adopted the principle of a fagotage de tant de diverses pièces advocated by Montaigne, who to some extent shared the ambition of numerous other Renaissance writers to produce works which were veritable mosaics of literary allusions, usually but not always classical. Something similar seems to have happened in the development of the legend of Romeo and Juliet. Boaistuau draws from Sevin, as well as from Bandello. Bandello is indebted to Luigi da Porto, but also to the author of Ippolito e Leonora, and probably also to Clizia. Luigi da Porto draws materials from Masuccio, from Ovid, from the Cronaca MS Udinese, from one or two Dante commentators, as well as from his own life. Masuccio shows by a surprising self-contradiction that he is trying unsuccessfully to reconcile at least

2 Fuller, loc. cit.
3 Munro, op. cit., pp. xliii–xliv.
two different narratives by Boccaccio. Unless we are to hypothesize an extraordinary number of “lost documents” all along the line, it would seem that so far as the legend of Romeo and Juliet is concerned, multiple sources are the rule—that the single source advocated by so many scholars is distinctly open to question.

Regarding assumption (b), H. de Wolf Fuller’s position is extreme. He differs from other critics of his school by allowing even less originality to the average author, and far more originality to the superior author. Let us observe first one of his arguments regarding Struijs, an average writer: Fuller asks why, if Struijs was “pilfering” Shakespeare, “did he choose to obliterate the important feature of Paris’ visit to the tomb, and to conform thereby to the older versions?” He adds: “What better proof could there be that an English source of D (= Struijs) served as a link somewhere between Bastaiau and S (= Shakespeare)!”

Apparently Fuller considered Struijs as so pitifully devoid of initiative that not only what he wrote, but even what he chose to omit, had to be explained by a “lost” English source. If we carry this argument to the logical extreme, we shall have to invent a great many other “lost” Continental sources, to supplement the “lost” English source. Otherwise, how can we understand why Luigi Groto rejects the second balcony scene, although frequently following Bandello elsewhere; and why he omits the important character of the apothecary? We must conjure up lost documents also to account for the strange case of Bastaiau, who leaves out the touching farewell of Rhomeo and Juliete in the tomb, and is thus indirectly responsible for what some critics consider the greatest flaw in Shakespeare’s play. In fact, we shall need an infinite number of lost documents to explain why authors have ever been as erratic as publishers—or let us say critics—in their judgments. Struijs, leaving out Paris’ visit to the tomb, is no more extraordinary than Petrarch repenting of writing his Rime.

We pass now to the consideration of Fuller’s opinions regarding the greater originality of superior authors. These views he introduces in connection with a discussion of the close parallelism between Shakespeare and Struijs, which Fuller regards as evidence not that Struijs copied Shakespeare, but that he followed an unknown “English” source with very slight alteration. Fuller adds: “Let the unconvincing but place side by side the Romeo and

*Fuljter, op. cit., p. 94.
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Juliet of Shakspere and Lope de Vega’s dramatization of this fable. The absolute dissimilarity of the two plays is proof of what results when playwrights of imagination attack the same story. On these grounds, therefore, it seems highly probable that Struijs did not bother to make many changes."

As a matter of fact, Lope de Vega agrees exclusively with Shakespeare in one or two important passages, a matter which will be discussed presently. As for the rest, it is pertinent to inquire: Is it at all safe to rate an author by the number of changes which he makes from his original? On that basis, Sevin and Grotto, not to mention poor Ducis, would rank far ahead of Shakespeare.

We find, then, that the “lost sources” proposed by scholars for the Romeo and Juliet legend remain in a nebulous state. On the other hand, there can be little doubt regarding the very real origins of the “lost document” school of critics. As is well known, “lost documents” were a favorite device of German scholars who, to cite one notable instance, stoutly favored the theory of a large number of hypothetical short ballads, long ballads and Zeitgedichte as the forerunners of the Chanson de Roland. The German argumentation, which was sehr tief und sehr dunkel, found universal acceptance until a challenge was made by the late Joseph Bédier. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ludwig Fränkel lists one compatriot, Stiefel, who maintained that Lope de Vega’s “Castelvines y Monteses,” a tragicomedy with farcical elements, on the Romeo and Juliet theme, was based on a lost Italian version. Fränkel mentions another German scholar, Schulze, who thought that both Masuccio and Da Porto used a lost source. Fränkel adds that Cohn also was convinced that Sevin copied a suppositional earlier Italian model. Fränkel himself seems to favor a lost source used by Da Porto but apparently not by Masuccio. He observes also that both the Merchant of Venice and Measure for Measure represent an abundance of mysterious sources—uns verdeckte Kanäle! Obviously, this literary nebular hypothesis means that all Shakespeare’s works were little more than a dramatization of myriads of undiscovered novelle and plays.


The alleged “lost sources” for Luigi da Porto and Adrien Sevin have already been discussed in Chapter VII. There remains for final consideration the question of Stiefel’s theory of the origins of Lope de Vega’s “Castelvines y Monteses.”

In the first place, it should be noted that in Lope de Vega’s tragicomedy, the names of the principal characters are confused. To be sure, Giulietta is Julia; Romeo is recognizable as Roselo; while Antonio and Paris are actually unchanged. On the other hand, Fra Lorenzo becomes Fray Aurelio; Marcuccio is altered to Otavio, a cousin and suitor of Julia; while Teobaldo is made the father of Otavio. This muddling has been explained by Hauvette as an indication that the author was trusting to a hazy memory, rather than copying directly from a written source.

Now, if Lope de Vega had been using an older version, dimly recollected, it must apparently have been the same as that supposedly used by Shakespeare. According to J. J. Munro, one of Shakespeare’s seven main deviations from Brooke was “Tybalt’s outcry against Romeo at the feast.” Munro explains that Shakespeare probably got this incident from the “older version” where “there was probably some reference to, or representation of, Tybalt’s storm at the feast.” However, as Hauvette has pointed out, the same incident is also found in “Castelvines y Monteses,” Antonio replacing Tybalt. Especially notable here is the apology

\[\text{Munro, op. cit., p. lviii.}\]
which Teobaldo makes for Roselo, which is quite comparable to that made for Romeo by Capulet.

The difficulty is that Lope de Vega’s “lost document” had to be not only the one allegedly used by Shakespeare, but at the same time the one which supposedly inspired Groto. According to Lope de Vega, after the duel Julia comes to see Roselo, who offers her his sword so that she may kill him in case she desires to avenge the death of Otavio. She declines, professing greater loyalty to her husband than to her relatives. Here Lope de Vega agrees exclusively with Groto, whose Latino, in the same situation, offers his sword to Hadriana so that she may take vengeance upon him. As we have seen, J. J. Munro uses this scene to prove a close agreement between Groto and Shakespeare, explainable only by a lost “third Italian version.” Let it be repeated, however, that the resemblance between Groto and Shakespeare is very superficial, and not at all comparable to the identical situation found in Groto and Lope de Vega. Are we then to conclude that Lope de Vega consulted a very special “lost document,” which conveniently agreed exclusively with Shakespeare for “Tybalt’s storm at the feast,” and equally exclusively with Groto for the episode of the sword heroically proffered by the hero to the heroine? Even if we discover such a document, however, we shall still have to explain what lost novella was consulted by the author of Ippolito e Leonora, where the hero offers the heroine a dagger with which to kill him if she so desires, not to mention Victor Hugo, who uses similar episodes both in Bug-Jargal and in Notre-Dame de Paris.

Manifestly, the case for a “lost source” for Lope de Vega is no better and no worse than for Luigi da Porto, Sevin, Boaistuau, Struijs, and the others for whom such theories have been so

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Teobaldo

Antes me parece honor.

Antonio

Yo lo juzgo de otra suerte,

Y le quisiera matar.

—Vega Carpio, op. cit., Act I, p. 318. (Cf. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Sc. v, vv. 56–83, especially Capulet’s speech, vv. 68–76.)

16 Vega Carpio, op. cit., Act II, p. 337.
17 Munro, op. cit., pp. xxxviii–xxxix.
18 Ibid., p. xii.
19 Cf. Chap. XII, notes 15 and 16.
20 See my article on Notre-Dame de Paris, op. cit., p. 256.
abundantly and so ingeniously devised by critics. In fact, the case is exactly the same as for Shakespeare and for Groto, with each of whom Lope de Vega strangely coincides in at least one instance, as we have just seen. It might be added that even if one of the numerous “lost documents” so freely proposed should be unearthed, it might easily prove to be a great disappointment. Let it be repeated: So far there is authentic evidence of just one lost play on the Romeo and Juliet theme witnessed by a writer on the subject. This play was witnessed by Arthur Brooke, who gives little or no evidence of being influenced thereby.