WOMEN IN LOVE HISTORIES

Carmen Sierra Banderas

Fabulous Love Stories over the Centuries. From Romeo and Juliet to Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour

ffeat. William Shakespeare, Romeo Montague, Juliet Capulet, Masuccio Salernitano, Luigi da Porto, Christopher Marlowe, Taj Mahal, Dante Alighieri, Beatrice Portinari, Francesco Petrarca, Laura de Noves, Louis XV, Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour

... and Its Intriguing Dangerous Splendour

INTEGRAL

WOMEN IN LOVE

#2

Fabulous Love Stories over the Centuries

From Romeo and Juliet to Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour

feat. William Shakespeare, Romeo Montague, Juliet Capulet, Masuccio Salernitano, Luigi da Porto, Christopher Marlowe, Taj Mahal, Dante Alighieri, Beatrice Portinari, Francesco Petrarca, Laura de Noves, Louis XV, Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour

Carmen Sierra Banderas

INTEGRAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Real Romeo and Juliet—A Story with Multiple Versions, from Dante to Manga

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

(*Prologue* of *Romeo and Juliet,* by William Shakespeare)

William Shakespeare's world renowned *Romeo and Juliet* (written sometime between 1591 and 1595) stands in the historical record as one of the greatest love stories ever written. It has been retold many times in playhouses and theaters and has a wealth of film adaptations of both traditional and modern interpretations. It is most interesting to discover then, that *Romeo and Juliet* was not, in fact, truly of his own creation, but rather a variation on a story told many times from the fourteen hundreds onwards. Centered on the theme of star-crossed lovers, borrowed from poets as far back as ancient Greece, Romeo and Juliet's tale was told at least a century before Shakespeare actually wrote it.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* borrows from a tradition of tragic love stories dating back to Antiquity. One of these is Pyramus and Thisbe, from Publius Ovidius Naso's *Metamorphoses*, which contains parallels to Shakespeare's story: the lovers' parents despise each other, and Pyramus falsely believes his lover Thisbe is dead. The *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus, written in the 3rd century, also contains several similarities to the play, including the separation of the lovers, and a potion that induces a deathlike sleep.

One of the earliest references to the names Montague and Capulet is from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, who mentions the Montecchi (Montagues) and the Cappelletti (Capulets) in Canto Six of *Purgatorio*:

Come and see, you who are negligent,
Montagues and Capulets, Monaldi and Filippeschi
One lot already grieving, the other in fear.

However, the reference is part of a polemic against the moral decay of Florence, Lombardy, and the Italian Peninsula as a whole; Dante, through his characters, chastises German King Albert I for neglecting his responsibilities towards Italy ("you who are negligent"), and successive popes for their encroachment from purely spiritual affairs, thus leading to a climate of incessant bickering and warfare between rival political parties in Lombardy. History records the name of the family *Montague* as being lent to such a political party in Verona, but that of the *Capulets* as from a Cremonese family, both of whom play out their conflict in Lombardy as a whole rather than within the confines of Verona. Allied to rival political factions, the parties are grieving ("One lot already grieving") because their endless

warfare has led to the destruction of both parties, rather than a grief from the loss of their ill-fated offspring as the play sets forth, which appears to be a solely poetic creation within this context.

Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet* stems from both a true account of history and a legend. It is known that dating all the way back to the 12th century and persisting into the 14th century, two factions of warring families arose in Verona. The families are known as the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The Guelphs were wealthy merchants who supported the reign of the Pope, while the Ghibelline were a family of dukes who felt that the Holy Roman Emperor would best protect their land, wealth, and interests. The Guelphs also became known as the Montecchi, or Montagues, while the Ghibellines became known as the Cappellini, or Capulets, as we know from several historical sources, and Dante even mentions them in *The Divine Comedy*. Thus, these are the two warring families that Shakespeare depicts in *Romeo and Juliet*.

The first certain tale of the woes of Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet descends from Italian author Masuccio Salernitano (1410-1475). Published a year after his death, Salernitano's 33rd chapter of his *Il Novellino* tells of Mariotto and Giannoza, a pair of lovers who come from the feuding families of Maganelli and Saraceni respectively. In this account, their love affair takes place in Siena, Italy rather than in Verona and is believed to have occurred contemporary with Salernitano's time. Much like Shakespeare's version, Mariotto and Giannoza fall in love and marry secretly with the aid of and Augustine friar. Shortly thereafter, Mariotto has words with another noble citizen—in this case, not his love's own cousin—and kills the nobleman, resulting in his fleeing the city to avoid capital punishment. Giannoza, distraught, is comforted only by the fact that Mariotto has family in Alexandria, Egypt and makes a good home for himself there. However, her own father—unaware of her wedding—decides it is time for her to take a husband, putting her in a terrible position. With the aid of the friar who had wed her and Mariotto, Giannoza drinks a sleeping potion to make her appear dead, so she can be smuggled out of Siena to reunite in Alexandria with her husband. Of course, this plan goes terribly awry, and her letter to explain their plan to Mariotto never reaches him, though news of her death quickly does. While she flees to Alexandria to finally reunite with him, Mariotto returns to Siena at risk for his own life to see her corpse one final time. It is then he is captured and taken to be executed for his previous crimes, beheaded three days before Giannoza's own return to the city. Giannoza then, heartbroken, wastes away of a broken heart, supposedly to be finally reunited with her husband in Heaven.

As one can see, there are many similar elements between Shakespeare's tale and Salernitano's. The themes of feuding families, the forbidden love, the sleeping potion, and the terrible communication mishap all lead to the parallel ending of mutual death. Writing only a hundred years apart, Shakespeare could well have come across Salernitano's work, or one of the many other variations that were written before the story reached the Bard's desk. Luigi da Porta in the 1530s wrote a similar compilation of Romeo Montechhi and Giulietta Cappelleti, moving the setting of their lives from Siena to the Verona from where Shakespeare would write it. The pair again wed in secret with the aid of a friar only to be torn apart by Romeo's accidental killing of Giulietta's cousin and their subsequent deaths—Romeo by Giulietta's sleeping potion, and Giulietta by holding her breath so she could die with him.

Luigi da Porto (1485–1529) adapted the story as *Giulietta e Romeo* and included it in his *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due Nobili Amanti*, written in 1524 and published posthumously, seven years after, in 1531 in Venice. Da Porto drew on *Pyramus and Thisbe*, Giovanni Boccaccio's famous *Decameron*, and Salernitano's *Mariotto e Ganozza*, but it is likely that his story is also autobiographical: present as a soldier at a ball on February 26, 1511, at a residence of the Savorgnan clan in Udine, following a peace ceremony with the opposite Strumieri, Da Porto fell in love with Lucina, the daughter

of the house, but relationships of their mentors prevented advances. The next morning, the Savorgnans led an attack on the city, and many members of the Strumieri were murdered. When years later, half-paralyzed from a battle-wound, he wrote *Giulietta e Romeo* in Montorso Vicentino (from where he could see the "castles" of Verona), he dedicated the *novella* to *bellisima e leggiadra madonna* Lucina Savorgnan. Da Porto presented his tale as historically true and claimed it took place at least a century earlier than Salernitano had it, in the days Verona was ruled by Bartolomeo della Scala (anglicized as Prince Escalus).

Da Porto gave *Romeo and Juliet* most of its modern form, including the names of the lovers, the rival families of Montecchi and Capuleti, and the location in Verona. He named the friar Laurence (*frate Lorenzo*) and introduced the characters Mercutio (*Marcuccio Guertio*), Tybalt (*Tebaldo Cappelleti*), Count Paris (*conti (Paride) di Lodrone*), the faithful servant, and Giulietta's nurse. Da Porto originated the remaining basic elements of the story: the feuding families, Romeo—left by his mistress—meeting Giulietta at a dance at her house, the love scenes (including the balcony scene), the periods of despair, Romeo killing Giulietta's cousin (Tebaldo), and the families' reconciliation after the lovers' suicides. In da Porto's version, Romeo takes poison and Giulietta stabs herself with his dagger.

In 1554, Matteo Bandello published the second volume of his *Novelle*, which included his version of *Giuletta e Romeo*, probably written between 1531 and 1545. Bandello lengthened and weighed down the plot while leaving the storyline basically unchanged (though he did introduce Benvolio). Bandello's story was translated into French by Pierre Boaistuau in 1559 in the first volume of his *Histories Tragiques*. Boaistuau adds much moralising and sentiment, and the characters indulge in rhetorical outbursts.

In his 1562 narrative poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, Arthur Brooke translated Boaistuau faithfully but adjusted it to reflect parts of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. There was a trend among writers and playwrights to publish works based on Italian *novelle*—Italian tales were very popular among theatre-goers—and Shakespeare may well have been familiar with William Painter's 1567 collection of Italian tales titled *Palace of Pleasure*. This collection included a version in prose of the *Romeo and Juliet* story named *The goodly History of the true and constant love of Romeo and Juliett*. Shakespeare took advantage of this popularity: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Romeo and Juliet* are all from Italian *novelle*. *Romeo and Juliet* is a dramatisation of Brooke's translation and Shakespeare follows the poem closely but adds extra detail to both major and minor characters (in particular the Nurse and Mercutio).

Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, both similar stories written in Shakespeare's day, are thought to be less of a direct influence, although they may have helped create an atmosphere in which tragic love stories could thrive.

It is unknown when exactly Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. Juliet's nurse refers to an earthquake she says occurred 11 years ago. This may refer to the Dover Straits earthquake of 1580, which would date that particular line to 1591. Other earthquakes—both in England and in Verona—have been proposed in support of the different dates. But the play's stylistic similarities with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and other plays conventionally dated around 1594–1595, place its composition sometime between 1591 and 1595. One conjecture is that Shakespeare may have begun a draft in 1591, which he completed in 1595.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was published in two quarto editions prior to the publication of the First Folio of 1623. These are referred to as Q1 and Q2. The first printed edition, Q1, appeared in early 1597, printed by John Danter. Because its text contains numerous differences from the later

editions, it is labelled a so-called "bad quarto"; the 20th-century editor T. J. B. Spencer described it as "a detestable text, probably a reconstruction of the play from the imperfect memories of one or two of the actors", suggesting that it had been pirated for publication. An alternative explanation for Q1's shortcomings is that the play (like many others of the time) may have been heavily edited before performance by the playing company. However, "the theory, formulated by [Alfred] Pollard", that the "bad quarto" was "reconstructed from memory by some of the actors is now under attack. Alternative theories are that some or all of 'the bad quartos' are early versions by Shakespeare or abbreviations made either for Shakespeare's company or for other companies". In any event, its appearance in early 1597 makes 1596 the latest possible date for the play's composition.

The superior Q2 called the play *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet*. It was printed in 1599 by Thomas Creede and published by Cuthbert Burby. Q2 is about 800 lines longer than Q1. Its title page describes it as "Newly corrected, augmented and amended". Scholars believe that Q2 was based on Shakespeare's pre-performance draft (called his foul papers) since there are textual oddities such as variable tags for characters and "false starts" for speeches that were presumably struck through by the author but erroneously preserved by the typesetter. It is a much more complete and reliable text and was reprinted in 1609 (Q3), 1622 (Q4) and 1637 (Q5). In effect, all later Quartos and Folios of *Romeo and Juliet* are based on Q2, as are all modern editions since editors believe that any deviations from Q2 in the later editions (whether good or bad) are likely to have arisen from editors or compositors, not from Shakespeare.

The First Folio text of 1623 was based primarily on Q3, with clarifications and corrections possibly coming from a theatrical prompt book or Q1. Other Folio editions of the play were printed in 1632 (F2), 1664 (F3) and 1685 (F4). Modern versions—that take into account several of the Folios and Quartos—first appeared with Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition, followed by Alexander Pope's 1723 version. Pope began a tradition of editing the play to add information such as stage directions missing in Q2 by locating them in Q1. This tradition continued late into the Romantic period. Fully annotated editions first appeared in the Victorian period and continue to be produced today, printing the text of the play with footnotes describing the sources and culture behind the play.

Many Shakespearean scholars, well informed of these previous literary treasures, also have collected evidence that the Bard might have drawn the characters of Romeo and Juliet from his own life. A patron of Shakespeare's, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, is thought to have inspired Shakespeare's Romeo in character, further implicated because his stepmother descended from the Viscount Montagu. Henry Wriothesley also had an unapproved relationship with the woman Elizabeth Vernon, as when news of their marriage reached the ears of Queen Elizabeth I, the queen put them both in jail as their union was a political threat to her reign. Unlike the real Romeo and Juliet—in every story—the Earl and Vernon were later able to live "happily ever after" outside the prison walls, yet this undesirable political union is highly considered to have also influenced the Shakespeare's writings.

Despite the numerous versions of Romeo and Juliet's story that preceded William Shakespeare, it cannot be denied that it was his work that transformed their love affair into one of the greatest stories ever known. The Bard might have borrowed heavily from Salernitano, Bandello and Brooke, but the audience which his play was presented to took the text into their hearts and spread it throughout Elizabethan England until the titular characters' names became interchangeable with the mantra "meant to be". Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet's undying affection and subsequent suicides have made the passionate story immortal, and it remains one of the foremost inspirations for modern romantic literature, says Ryan Stone.

The play, set in Verona, Italy, begins with a street brawl between Montague and Capulet servants who, like their masters, are sworn enemies. Prince Escalus of Verona intervenes and declares that further breach of the peace will be punishable by death. Later, Count Paris talks to Capulet about marrying his daughter Juliet, but Capulet asks Paris to wait another two years and invites him to attend a planned Capulet ball. Lady Capulet and Juliet's nurse try to persuade Juliet to accept Paris's courtship.

Meanwhile, Benvolio talks with his cousin Romeo, Montague's son, about Romeo's recent depression. Benvolio discovers that it stems from unrequited infatuation for a girl named Rosaline, one of Capulet's nieces. Persuaded by Benvolio and Mercutio, Romeo attends the ball at the Capulet house in hopes of meeting Rosaline. However, Romeo instead meets and falls in love with Juliet. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, is enraged at Romeo for sneaking into the ball but is only stopped from killing Romeo by Juliet's father, who does not wish to shed blood in his house. After the ball, in what is now called the "balcony scene", Romeo sneaks into the Capulet orchard and overhears Juliet at her window vowing her love to him in spite of her family's hatred of the Montagues. Romeo makes himself known to her, and they agree to be married. With the help of Friar Laurence, who hopes to reconcile the two families through their children's union, they are secretly married the next day.

Tybalt, meanwhile, still incensed that Romeo had sneaked into the Capulet ball, challenges him to a duel. Romeo, now considering Tybalt his kinsman, refuses to fight. Mercutio is offended by Tybalt's insolence, as well as Romeo's "vile submission", and accepts the duel on Romeo's behalf. Mercutio is fatally wounded when Romeo attempts to break up the fight. Grief-stricken and wracked with guilt, Romeo confronts and slays Tybalt.

Benvolio argues that Romeo has justly executed Tybalt for the murder of Mercutio. The Prince, now having lost a kinsman in the warring families' feud, exiles Romeo from Verona, under penalty of death if he ever returns. Romeo secretly spends the night in Juliet's chamber, where they consummate their marriage. Capulet, misinterpreting Juliet's grief, agrees to marry her to Count Paris and threatens to disown her when she refuses to become Paris's "joyful bride". When she then pleads for the marriage to be delayed, her mother rejects her.

Juliet visits Friar Laurence for help, and he offers her a potion that will put her into a deathlike coma for "two and forty hours". The Friar promises to send a messenger to inform Romeo of the plan so that he can rejoin her when she awakens. On the night before the wedding, she takes the drug and, when discovered apparently dead, she is laid in the family crypt.

The messenger, however, does not reach Romeo and, instead, Romeo learns of Juliet's apparent death from his servant, Balthasar. Heartbroken, Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and goes to the Capulet crypt. He encounters Paris who has come to mourn Juliet privately. Believing Romeo to be a vandal, Paris confronts him and, in the ensuing battle, Romeo kills Paris. Still believing Juliet to be dead, he drinks the poison. Juliet then awakens and, discovering that Romeo is dead, stabs herself with his dagger and joins him in death. The feuding families and the Prince meet at the tomb to find all three dead. Friar Laurence recounts the story of the two "star-cross'd lovers". The families are reconciled by their children's deaths and agree to end their violent feud. The play ends with the Prince's elegy for the lovers: "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo".

Scholars have found it extremely difficult to assign one specific, overarching theme to the play. Proposals for a main theme include a discovery by the characters that human beings are neither wholly good nor wholly evil, but instead are more or less alike, awaking out of a dream and into reality, the danger of hasty action, or the power of tragic fate. None of these have widespread support. However, even if an overall theme cannot be found it is clear that the play is full of several small, thematic elements that intertwine in complex ways.