



EVERYMAN

ROMEO AND JULIET

William Shakespeare

Edited by John F. Andrews
former editor of the *Shakespeare Quarterly*
Foreword by Julie Harris

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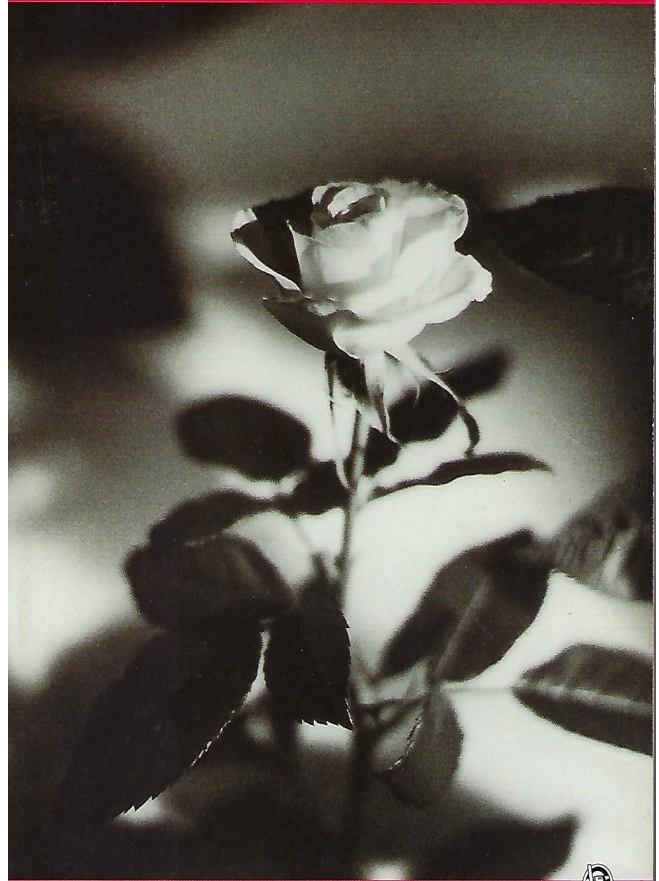
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ROMEO AND JULIET



THE EVERYMAN SHAKESPEARE

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FOREWORD BY JULIE HARRIS

I grew up in Michigan, and never saw a production of *Romeo and Juliet* on stage when I was young. I did see the movie starring Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard with John Barrymore as Mercutio. Those actors were not in their teens when they acted in the film, and I supposed that the roles should always be played by grown-ups. Later I saw a production of the play in England; it was in the early 1950s when I first visited London and travelled to Stratford-upon-Avon to see Shakespeare's home and the theatre where his plays are produced. Romeo was Laurence Harvey, and Zena Walker was Juliet. But for me it was still a play about older young people.

When Michael Langham asked me to play Juliet in 1960 at the Stratford Festival Theatre founded by Tyrone Guthrie in Stratford, Canada, I was terrified. Other than playing the Third Witch in the 'Scottish' play (a production of *Macbeth* starring Michael Redgrave and Flora Robson), I had no experience acting in Shakespeare's plays.

Michael Langham came to New York City where I lived, and with great sensitivity and patience he guided me through the play scene by scene. He gave me a copy of the old Italian legend of Romeo and Juliet by Luigi da Porto. The legend found its way to England and to Shakespeare, for *Romeo and Juliet* was based on an English reworking of da Porto's story.

No matter how frightened I was of playing Juliet, I was challenged too: by the part, by the miraculous play itself, by the genius of the poetry, and by the uniqueness of the feelings expressed by a girl not yet fourteen – and I was thirty-five years old!

With Michael leading me through the play, my understanding increased and my terrors fell away – well, a little way away. But I did wonder how I could ever play the scene in which Juliet's Nurse comes to Juliet and tells her that her kinsman Tybalt is dead. And killed by Romeo. And Romeo banished! Juliet must go from shock at the news of Tybalt's death, to relief that Romeo is alive, to despair at knowing that Romeo has been banished and she has lost him! All these feelings tumble out in a cascade of emotion.

After the period of rehearsals at Stratford I was prepared to play Juliet, and I longed to be able to fill every moment with truth. But I didn't really realize what strength it would take to carry those three hours. Fortunately I had so much help: Kate Reid as the Nurse, Christopher Plummer as Mercutio, Douglas Rain as Tybalt, Eric Christmas as Peter, Bruno Gerussi as my Romeo, Jack Creley as my father, and Leo Ciceri as Paris. We were all helped by a brilliant vocal coach, Iris Warren.

I will always remember that season in Canada: my mountaineering expedition, my ascent to Mount Everest. I hardly ever reached the summit, but when I did, Oh, Glory! And even to try was a rich experience.

I had a lovely English friend, Caroline D. Hewitt, who was the headteacher of a girl's school in New York City and a great Shakespearean scholar. When 'Miss Hew' learned I was to play Juliet that season of 1960, she told me about the great Ellen Terry's performance of Juliet long ago. In the final scene, when Juliet wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she holds Romeo for the last time, kisses him, and says 'Thy lips are warm!' Miss Hew told me that when Ellen Terry spoke those words she whispered them; they went right to your heart as you realized that if Juliet had woken a few moments earlier she would have found her Romeo alive. In the old Italian legend, she *does* wake before Romeo dies – but he has already drunk the poison, and so there is between them the terror that Romeo knows that he must die and Juliet must witness her lover's death!

I wondered why Shakespeare didn't use that part of the story

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in his play. I spoke about it to Michael Langham when we were in rehearsal, and he decided that we would use a moment of that part of the old legend. As Romeo raised the vial of poison to his lips to drink, my fingers trembled and my arms moved ever so slightly. Bruno (Romeo) was looking away from me as he drank and didn't see that I had moved. It became an exciting moment.

Eventually, I did see two *young* actors, Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, portray Romeo and Juliet in Franco Zeffirelli's film. I also saw the glorious work of the great choreographer John Cranko, when he produced *Romeo and Juliet* for the Stuttgart Ballet with Marcia Haydée and Richard Cragun – heartbreaking beautiful that work is.

So my dream has come true. I have seen the play done perfectly and had the great good fortune myself to work with an inspired director who gave me the opportunity to play one of the greatest parts ever written.

... when he [Romeo] shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little Stars,
And he will make the Face of Heav'n so fine
That all the World will be in love with Night
And pay no Worship to the garish Sun.

Has language ever been used more beautifully?

JULIE HARRIS has performed such diverse roles as Emily Dickinson in *The Belle of Amherst*, Blanche du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Mary Lincoln in *The Last of Mrs Lincoln*, for which she won the Tony Award in 1972. Her Shakespearean roles include Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Blanche in *King John*, Ophelia in *Hamlet*, and the Third Witch in *Macbeth*.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO
Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet was the first drama in English to confer full tragic dignity on the agonies of youthful love. The lyricism that enshrines their death-marked devotion has made the lovers legendary in every language that possesses a literature.

From all indications, Shakespeare's portrayal of 'Juliet and her Romeo' moved audiences in his own theatre. Within a decade the play was being presented not only in London but on the Continent, and it has maintained a prominent position in the repertory from Shakespeare's time to our own.

Not surprisingly, it has produced many offshoots, among them evocative scene-paintings by William Blake and Henry Fuseli, soul-stirring ballets by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky and Sergei Prokofiev, a romantic opera by Hector Berlioz, a pulsating *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, Jerome Robbins, and Stephen Sondheim, an affecting Sixties film by Franco Zeffirelli, and a sentimental novel (later made into a Seventies film) by Erich Segal.

Today *Romeo and Juliet* is a title that everyone is expected to know, or at least know about. Its central figures are household names. But distorted impressions of them, and of their 'fearful Passage', are so indelibly fixed in our collective consciousness that many of us are astonished to discover how profoundly their 'Woe' can still touch the sympathies of a modern theatregoer.

Background

Romeo and Juliet is generally thought to date from the years 1594–96. Its rich imagery and its formal verse patterns link it to a period when Shakespeare was writing and publishing his major narrative poems – *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594 – and when he was probably composing many if not all of the *Sonnets* that first saw print in a 1609 quarto.

By the time he turned to *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare had almost certainly completed four of his ten history plays: *Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2 and 3, and *Richard III*. No doubt he'd also written *King John*, and at least begun work on *Richard II*. Meanwhile he'd finished *Titus Andronicus*, the earliest of the four tragedies he based on the history and politics of ancient Rome. And he'd evidently produced three of his comedies: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*.

In all likelihood he conceived of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a paired set. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* echoes *Romeo and Juliet* in numerous respects, and its treatment of 'Pyramus and Thisby' was almost certainly devised as a burlesque of his own 'Lamentable Tragedie'.

Both plays dramatize the conflict between the demands of Eros and the decrees of insensitive elders. Both compare the onset of love to a flash of lightning in the 'collied Night'. And both draw inspiration from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whether in the original Latin or in the 1567 translation by Arthur Golding.

Although *Romeo and Juliet* were fictional, with their antecedents in ancient folklore, they had been regarded as historical or quasi-historical figures since 1476, when Masuccio Salernitano (in a collection bearing the title *Cinquante Nouvelle*) referred to them as contemporaries.

Half a century later, in his *Istoria novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti* (1530), Luigi da Porto placed the tragedy in Verona during the time of Bartolommeo della Scala (the Prince Escalus of Shakespeare's play). Da Porto identified the unfortunate lovers as members of the quarrelling Montecchi and Capelletti families,

and it was he who gave them the names *Romeo* and *Giulietta*. Da Porto also created several of the other characters who would eventually find their way into Shakespeare's drama, among them *Marcuccio* (*Mercutio*), *Theobaldo* (*Tybalt*), *Friar Lorenzo* (*Friar Lawrence*), and the *Conti de Lodrone* (the *County Paris*).

From da Porto the tale passed through the hands of *Matteo Bandello*, whose *Novelle* (1554) included both a Nurse and a young man who would evolve into the *Benvolio* of *Romeo and Juliet*. *Pierre Boaistuau* translated *Bandello's* narrative into French and augmented it in a number of details for the *Histoires Tragiques* (1559) of *François de Belleforest*. From there the story made its way to the two English versions available to Shakespeare: *Arthur Brooke's Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet* (1562) and *William Painter's 'Rhomeo and Julietta'* in the *Palace of Pleasure* anthology of 1567.

Although Shakespeare derived some of his material from *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385) and from an assortment of lesser sources, his primary debt for the plot of his tragedy was to *Arthur Brooke's Romeo and Juliet*. Like *Brooke*, Shakespeare treated the lovers compassionately, and like *Brooke* he prefaced the action with a sonnet. But unlike *Brooke*, he avoided the kind of overt moralizing that had led the earlier author to describe the protagonists as

thralling themselves to dishonest desire, neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends, conferring their principal counsels with drunken gossips, and superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity) attempting all adventures of peril, for th' attaining of their wished lust, using aricular confession (the key of whoredome, and treason) for furtherance of ther purpose, abusing the honourable name of lawefull marriage to cloak the shame of stolen contracts, finally, by all means of dishonest life, hastening to most unhappy death.

Shakespeare made scores of alterations to *Brooke's* narrative. For example, he reduced *Juliet's* age from sixteen to thirteen. He turned her Nurse into a more endearing, if still somewhat amoral, confidante for the 'young Lady'. He made the Friar a more conscientious, considerate counsellor than his predecessor in

Brooke. He compressed the time-frame of the story from several months to less than a week. He set the play in the hottest part of the summer. He emphasized the omnipresence of the feud by opening the action with a 'Mutiny' that would require the Prince's intervention. He inserted the fiery *Tybalt* into both the opening scene and the scene in which *Romeo* falls in love with *Juliet*. He developed *Benvolio* into the play's good-will ambassador, a peacemaker who can serve as foil both for the irascible *Tybalt* and for the volatile *Mercutio*. He virtually invented *Mercutio*, taking a character who was little more than a hint in *Brooke* and transforming him into one of the most vivid personalities in the history of drama. He gave much more prominence to *Paris*, introducing him to us as a suitor for *Capulet's* daughter before we even hear *Juliet's* name, and then keeping him before us in later scenes as an unwitting, ineffectual, and ultimately tragic rival to *Romeo*.

Comment on the Play

Before we see *Romeo and Juliet* together for the first time, we learn something about the social contexts that will constrain their freedom of movement. We observe that *Romeo* belongs to a hot-blooded male world that lives by the *code duello*. In this environment tempers are always near boiling point, and even placid gentlemen like the law-abiding *Benvolio* must be prepared to defend their 'honour', and by extension their lives, at the slightest provocation.

At the same time we note that *Juliet*, who is probably to be thought of as a few years younger than *Romeo*, has led a sheltered life under the tutelage of an earthy Nurse who functions as a buffer between the child she has reared and an older generation of *Capulets* whose primary objective is to use their daughter to advance the family 'Hopes'.

Fittingly, the words *Romeo and Juliet* employ at their initial 'Greeting' comprise a love sonnet. By now *Romeo* has established himself as a devotee of *Petrarchan* melancholy, and *Juliet* takes to

'the Book' with an alacrity that shows her to be comparably adept at *Cupid's* courtesy. After their initial exchange the lovers quickly launch into a second sonnet. But in what will turn out to be a prophetic intrusion, their dialogue is interrupted by the Nurse with a call from *Juliet's* mother. Meanwhile, in what will prove to be another ominous development, *Tybalt* has recognized *Romeo's* voice as that of a *Mountague* and has vowed revenge for what he regards as a scornful encroachment on *Capulet's* 'Solemnity'.

In this scene Shakespeare plants the seeds of a denouement in which 'violent Delights' will bear fruit in 'violent Ends'. The quoted words are *Friar Lawrence's*, and he plays a role in the tragedy that is perhaps best described as equivocal. On the one hand, he speaks sincerely and eloquently for a tradition of 'Learning' and 'Philosophy' that is several times invoked to remind the protagonists that they must use their heads if they hope to foster the desires of their hearts. On the other hand, he acts in ways that encourage precisely the behaviour he warns against. In an effort to forge an 'Alliance' that will turn their 'Households' Rancour to pure Love', he agrees to marry the lovers secretly and, when things go awry, to assist them with expedients that will buy time until they can live openly as husband and wife. At the end of the play it can be said of the Friar, as of *Romeo* in his intervention to stop the duel between *Mercutio* and *Tybalt*, that he 'meant all for the best'. But if some of the Friar's wise 'Sentences' inform the way we view the calamities that close the tragedy, many of those same sentences seem applicable to the part 'good Counsel' has played in bringing the sad events to pass.

What most of us recall most vividly from *Romeo and Juliet* is the scene in *Capulet's* orchard when *Romeo* looks up to *Juliet's* window and the two lovers exchange the most poetic vows in the annals of courtship. This tableau is mirrored in a later scene when *Romeo* descends from their one night together and *Juliet* has a premonition of him standing in a grave. But it is a more public image between these two scenes that we should register as the fulcrum of the drama. This is the moment when *Romeo* draws his

sword to repay Tybalt for the death of Mercutio.

A few minutes earlier Romeo has turned the other cheek in response to the insults of his new cousin. Now, however, with Mercutio's 'Plague' ringing in his ears, he can hear only the promptings of 'Fire' and 'Fury'. We're surely meant to identify with Romeo's plight. But as soon as he makes his fatal decision and the deed is done, we recognize, with him, that he has reacted impulsively and is now 'Fortune's Fool'.

From this point on, the course of the action is downward. Once Romeo learns that he is banished, he becomes suicidal. Meanwhile, Juliet's parents resolve to cure her supposed grief over the death of Tybalt by wedding her to Paris. Shortly thereafter the Nurse, who has been so comically loquacious and in her own way so supportive of Juliet, displays a stunning incapacity to understand her dilemma. Suddenly Juliet finds herself completely alone, and the fortitude she displays in her own crisis, both now and later in the Capulet tomb, is one of the most gripping displays of character in all of Shakespeare.

In the last words he speaks in the play Capulet refers to Romeo and Juliet as 'Poor Sacrifices of our Enmity'. Juliet's father is surely correct to acknowledge the 'damned Hate' between the feuding families as the underlying cause of 'their Children's End'. But whether he is also correct to portray Verona's pride as 'Sacrifices' in the theological sense is another question. If the Prince's final speech is to be credited, an Elizabethan audience would probably have judged the play's concluding mood as, at best, a 'glooming Peace'.

John F. Andrews, 1993

THE TEXT OF THE EVERYMAN SHAKESPEARE

Background

THE EARLY PRINTINGS OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

Many of us enjoy our first encounter with Shakespeare when we're introduced to *Julius Caesar* or *Macbeth* at school. It may therefore surprise us that neither of these tragedies could ever have been read, let alone studied, by most of the playwright's contemporaries. They began as scripts for performance and, along with seventeen other titles that never saw print during Shakespeare's lifetime, they made their inaugural appearance as 'literary' works seven years after his death, in the 1623 collection we know today as the First Folio.

The Folio contained thirty-six titles in all. Of these, half had been issued previously in the small paperbacks we now refer to as quartos.* Like several of the plays first published in the Folio, the most trustworthy of the quarto printings appear to have been set either from Shakespeare's own manuscripts or from faithful copies of them. It's not impossible that the poet himself prepared some of these works for the press, and it's intriguing to imagine him reviewing proof-pages as the words he'd written for actors to speak and embody were being transposed into the type that readers would filter through their eyes, minds, and imaginations. But, alas, there's no indisputable evidence that Shakespeare had any direct involvement with the publication of these early editions of his plays.

* Quartos derived their name from the four-leaf units of which these small books were comprised: large sheets of paper that had been folded twice after printing to yield four leaves, or eight pages. Folios, volumes with twice the page-size of quartos, were put together from two-leaf units: sheets that had been folded once after printing to yield four pages.