INTRODUCTION

The date

The date of composition for *Romeo and Juliet* is uncertain, and dates ranging from 1591 to 1596 have been proposed. A terminal date is set by the publication of the first quarto (Q1) in 1597,[1] but a *terminus a quo* is more difficult to establish, since much of the external and internal evidence is ambiguous.

External evidence, though meagre, seems to point to a later rather than an earlier date. On the strength of Q1's reference to performance by 'the L. of *Hunsdon* his Servants', Malone confidently dated the play (in Boswell, 1821) as first produced between 22 July 1596 and 17 March 1597, the only period when Shakespeare's company could properly have been called Lord Hunsdon's.[2] But the reference may be only a publisher's device to capitalise on the most recent performances and does not prove that the play was not acted earlier when Shakespeare's company was known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Although two probable echoes of *Romeo and Juliet* may be found in works appearing in 1597, no direct allusions to the play appear until 1598.[3] In that year, Francis Meres included it among Shakespeare's tragedies in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) and John Marston commented on it in his *Scourge of Villanie* (1598). The Meres reference for the first time affirms Shakespeare's authorship, but throws no light on the dating problem. Marston's reference, however, is perhaps more significant than has been allowed. In Satire XI ('Humours'), seven lines after an echo of *Romeo and Juliet* (1.5.25: 'A hall, a hall') and a reference to Will Kemp, who acted Peter, Marston continues (lines 37–48):

> *Luscus* what's playd to day? faith now I know
> I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow
> Naught but pure *Iuliat* and *Romio*.
> Say, who acts best? *Drusus* [? Burbage], or *Roscio* [? Alleyn]?
> Now I have him, that nere of ought did speake
> But when of playes or Plaiers he did treate.
> H'ath made a common-place booke out of plaies,
> And speaks in print, at least what ere he sayes

[1] See Textual Analysis, pp. 222–4 below.

[2] See Textual Analysis, p. 223.

[3] See Commentary, 2.2.33–42. A sudden rash of echoes from *Rom.*, mostly unnoticed, appeared in four plays written in 1598 (Porter's *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* and Munday and Chettle's *Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* and *Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon*); these echoes are noted in the Commentary. From 1598 to 1642 allusions to (or lines and passages imitated from) *Rom.* are outnumbered only by those to *Ham.*, *Venus and Adonis* and *1H4* (see *Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse*, ed. L. T. Smith, 1879, and *Some* 300 *Fresh Allusions to Shakespere*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, 1886).

> Is warranted by Curtaine *plaudeties*,
> If ere you heard him courting *Lesbias* eyes;
> Say (Curteous Sir) speakes he not movingly
> From out some new pathetique Tragedie?[1]

Apart from attesting to the popularity of *Romeo and Juliet* on the stage in 1598, Marston here appears to be linking it with 'some new pathetique Tragedie', which Luscus pilfers in wooing his lady. No other known play which might have been considered 'new' in 1598 fits the description so well,[2] and this suggests that *Romeo and Juliet* was comparatively new in 1598.

Internal evidence for dating rests on (a) possible references to topical events and conditions; (b) Shakespeare's apparent dependence on datable published (and unpublished) works by other writers; and (c) the interrelations between *Romeo and Juliet* and Shakespeare's other plays and poems written before 1597.

Of the topical events to which the play may be thought to refer, the most discussed has been the earthquake recalled by the Nurse in 1.3.24–36. She twice insists that this had occurred eleven years earlier on the day Juliet was weaned, just before her third birthday. Thomas Tyrwhitt was the first to suggest that Shakespeare was referring to an actual earth tremor which was felt strongly in England on 6 April 1580, and he extrapolated a date of composition, at least for this part of the play, between 7 April and the middle of July 1591, because, as the Nurse tells us, Juliet was born on Lammas Eve (31 July) and her fourteenth birthday is now only 'A fortnight and odd days' away.[3] Other earthquakes have been canvassed since Tyrwhitt wrote. Sidney Thomas[4] has called attention to another 'terrible earthquake' on 1 March 1584/5, alluded to in William Covell's *Polimanteia*, published in 1595, a book perhaps known to Shakespeare since Covell makes an appreciative sidenote reference to '*All praise worthy. Lucrecia Sweet Shakspeare*' (sig. R2^{v}). The allusion, made by an interlocutor called 'England', who includes the 1584/5 earthquake among 'Threatnings of God against my subjects lives', seems definitely to imply that this earthquake had been felt in England. If this is the Nurse's earthquake, a date for the play of 1595/6 might be indicated. Similar speculative computations, however, can be made on the basis of landslips at Blackmore, Dorset, on 13 January 1583, and at Mottingham, Kent, just eight miles from London, on 4 August 1585.[5] In other words, the supposed earthquake clue, even if it represents anything more significant than an imaginative detail thrown in for dramatic effect, can be adjusted to fit almost any year between 1591 and 1596.[6]

[1] *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport, 1961, p. 168.
[2] This interpretation finds some support in *The Return from Parnassus, Part I* (performed between Christmas 1598 and Christmas 1601 at St John's College, Cambridge), where, in a passage apparently inspired by Marston, as Davenport points out (*Poems of Marston*, p. 359), Gullio, accused in his wooing of speaking 'nothing but pure Shakspeare', lets go with a version of *Rom.* 2.4.35–7.
[3] Cited in Furness, p. 43.
[4] 'The earthquake in *Romeo and Juliet*', *MLN* 64 (1949), 417–19.
[5] Sarah Dodson, 'Notes on the earthquake in *Romeo and Juliet*', *MLN* 65 (1950), 144.
[6] Joseph Hunter (1845; cited in Furness, p. 44) calls attention to a severe earthquake near Verona in 1570, another warning against interpreting the Nurse's reference too literally.

Two other possible topical references have been noted. In 1.4.82–8 Mercutio describes the soldier's dream of 'cutting foreign throats, / Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades, / Of healths five fathom deep'. It has been suggested that Shakespeare is here glancing at the Cadiz expedition of June 1596.[1] An examination of the phases of the moon and their relation to when Monday, the day after the Capulets' feast, fell on 12 or 14 July (O.S.) in the 1590s (i.e. 'A fortnight and odd days' before Lammas-tide) shows that the only Monday which fits the phases of the moon 'described' in the 'balcony scene' (2.2) is 12 July 1596. This date, like that of the Cadiz expedition, may be linked with Malone's hypothesis that *Romeo and Juliet* was first performed between 23 July 1596 and the following April,[2] but neither is much more than suggestive.

More solid evidence begins to emerge when we turn to literary influences. Two works have frequently been cited as having influenced *Romeo and Juliet*: Samuel Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592) and John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593). Since Daniel's *Complaint* has left its mark throughout the play[3] and furnishes one of its recurring images (Death as Juliet's lover and husband), Shakespeare's indebtedness to it seems to rule out any date earlier than 1592;[4] and the influence of Eliot's *Ortho-epia*, though confined to a single passage (3.5.1–7, 22), may fairly be taken as advancing the date another year, to 1593. Recently, however, J. J. M. Tobin has suggested Shakespeare's use of a third work, Thomas Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*. Although this was not published until after September 1596, parts of it must have been written before the end of 1595, and there is evidence that the last three-quarters, at least, circulated in manuscript among friends in May–June 1596, some three months before publication.[5] Tobin's evidence is of two kinds: (1) passages from which Shakespeare may have taken hints for the presentation of certain characters;[6] and (2) nine words or phrases scattered throughout *Romeo and Juliet*, which occur nowhere else in Shakespeare's work but which are to be found also in *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* – most of them employed there by Nashe for the first time in his own writing.[7] The nature and number of the parallels suggested are

[1] R. W. Babcock, '*Romeo and Juliet*, I.iv.86: an emendation', *PQ* 8 (1929), 407–8.
[2] J. W. Draper, 'The date of *Romeo and Juliet*', *RES* 25 (1949), 55–7.
[3] See Commentary, 1.1.206–7, 209–11; 1.4.109; 3.2.5; 5.1.61; 5.3.92–115.
[4] Against this statement must be set the possibility that Shakespeare was able to read Daniel's poem, as he did some other works, before publication.
[5] Nashe, *Works*, IV, 302. There is a reference to projected publication in Hilary Term (23 Jan. to 12 Feb.), but Hilary Term of what year is uncertain (see Nashe, *Works*, III, 133, and IV, 369). Nashe complains in the dedication to *The Terrors of the Night* (1594) that the 'Coppie [of his MS.] progressed from one scriveners shop to another, and at length grew so common, that it was readie to bee hung out for one of their signes, like a paire of indentures' (*Works*, I, 341).
[6] 'Nashe and the texture of *Romeo and Juliet*', *Aligarh Journal of English Studies* 5 (1980), 162–74. Tobin notes some suggestive hints in *Saffron-Walden* for the language and characters of Mercutio, Benvolio, the Nurse and the Capulet servants (1.1), and a reference to the 1580 earthquake (Nashe, *Works*, III, 69–70).
[7] 'Nashe and *Romeo and Juliet*', *N&Q* 27 (1980), 161–2. To these may be added the quite rare word 'coying' (2.2.101; Nashe, *Works*, III, 116). Tobin argues for adopting Q1's 'fantasticoes' for Q2's 'phantacies' (2.4.25) (see supplementary note) because it appears in *Saffron-Walden* (Nashe, *Works*, III, 31).

more than usually persuasive. Shakespeare's fascination with Nashe's rich, innovative and free-wheeling vocabulary is well attested[1] and is evidenced elsewhere in *Romeo and Juliet* by similar echoes from earlier works by Nashe.[2] It may be argued that Nashe, not Shakespeare, is the borrower, but a fair analysis of the evidence makes this view highly unlikely. If then we are willing to admit the probable influence of *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*, we may postulate a date of composition for substantial parts of *Romeo and Juliet* between May–June 1596 and the end of the year. This agrees well enough with some of the other external and internal evidence and is not ruled out by any definite evidence to the contrary.

How does this late date for *Romeo and Juliet* fit into the generally accepted chronology of Shakespeare's plays during the 1590s, particularly those most often associated with *Romeo and Juliet: The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1594), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594–5, revised 1597), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–6)? Although Meres (in *Palladis Tamia*) sets a terminal date of 1598 for these plays, including *Romeo*, the several dates assigned above are provisional, the problems involved being similar to those encountered with *Romeo*. But these three plays and *Romeo*, and, in certain respects, *Richard II*,[3] constitute a group which shares a common lyrical quality, evidenced by the high frequency of rhyme, a fondness (sometimes excessive and self-conscious) for the figures of rhetoric, a central concern with the vicissitudes of love and the materials of romance (characteristics that link the group to the poems and *Sonnets*), and a unity of comic tone, particularly, except perhaps in the *Dream*, in what may be called low comedy. In addition, various kinds of connections, thematic, rhetorical and verbal, echo and re-echo from play to play within the group. An examination of some of these echoes may help to place *Romeo* in relation to the other plays in this group.

Two Gentlemen, like *Romeo*, draws upon Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), particularly for aspects of the Valentine–Silvia plot, and is generally thought of as Shakespeare's earliest essay in romantic comedy; the question is, *how* early. Considering the usually assigned date of 1594 too late, Clifford Leech has argued for a preliminary and partial draft as early as 1592, reworked and completed in late 1593.[4] That the play was written earlier than *Romeo* is suggested by its groping and uncertain quality in style and structure and by what seems to be Shakespeare's merely general memory of Brooke's poem, drawing on plot situations more than on exact verbal echoes. This kind of indebtedness would be less likely had Shakespeare already written *Romeo*. An earlier date is also suggested by the connections between 3.1 of *Two Gentlemen* (particularly Valentine's lament on his banishment, lines 170–87), *2 Henry VI* 3.2.300–412 (Suffolk's parting from Queen Margaret following his banishment), and

[1] See Rupert Taylor, *The Date of 'Love's Labour's Lost'*, 1932 (Taylor does not allow for a later revision of the play); John Dover Wilson (ed.), *1H4*, 1946, pp. 191–6; G. B. Evans (ed.), 'Variorum "Supplement" to *1 Henry IV*', 1956, p. 53; G. B. Evans, *N&Q* 204 (1959), 250; J. J. M. Tobin, *English Studies* 61 (1980), 318–28, and *ELN* 18 (1980), 172–5.

[2] See Commentary, 4.5.96 (and supplementary note) and 99.

[3] Harold Brooks (ed.), *MND*, 1979, pp. xlv–li, examines in detail the rhetorical devices common to that play, *R2*, and *Rom. Rom.* also shows two interesting links with *John*; see Commentary, 1.3.82–95, 98.

[4] Leech (ed.), *TGV*, 1969, pp. xxii–xxxv.

3 Henry VI 5.4.37–8, a scene in which Shakespeare draws directly on both Brooke's *Romeus* and *2 Henry VI*.[1] The comparable passage in *Romeo* (3.3.12–70), in which, at Lawrence's cell, Romeo bewails his sentence of banishment, reads like an expanded version of Valentine's lament in *Two Gentlemen* but lacks any obvious verbal connections with *2* and *3 Henry VI*. That the direction of influence thus runs from *Two Gentlemen* to *Romeo* and not the other way is suggested by the close verbal links throughout 3.1 of *Two Gentlemen* and the admittedly earlier Henry VI plays, usually dated 1590–1, and by the absence of such early echoes from the Henry plays in *Romeo*.

Love's Labour's Lost, like *Two Gentlemen*, is a thesis play in the earlier tradition of Lyly's comedies. In both plays Shakespeare's involvement with character fails to break through the formal restraints of the overriding thesis. Such is not the case with the later comedies beginning with *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–7); and the slightly earlier *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–6), though strongly driven by an underlying theme, wears its thesis with a difference and a new complexity. Thus the intention and tone of *Love's Labour's Lost* associate it with Shakespeare's earlier work in comedy, and a date of 1594–5 in its unrevised form, following immediately after *Two Gentlemen*, is widely accepted. Assessment of the notable verbal connections between *Romeo* (particularly in 2.4) and *Love's Labour's Lost* is complicated, however, by a revision of the latter sometime between July–September and Christmas of 1597,[2] probably for a court performance. Hence, the cluster of close verbal echoes between *Love's Labour's Lost* and 2.4 of *Romeo*,[3] a scene which also contains several connections with Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* (1596),[4] may in fact be derived from *Romeo* rather than from the first version of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The position of the last of the group, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is open to greater question, though its most recent editor, Harold Brooks,[5] favours the view that *Romeo* is probably the earlier. He points out that Mercutio's Queen Mab speech seems more like an anticipation of the fairy world of the *Dream* than a recollection, and that the earlier parts of the *Dream* contain what seem to be echoes of *Romeo*, echoes that grow less obvious as the play progresses. C. L. Barber[6] has also noticed that the original casting (later altered) of the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play in 1.2, with its careful assignment of roles to Thisbe's mother and father and Pyramus's father, seems to look back to the Romeo and Juliet story rather than to Shakespeare's principal source for the Pyramus story in Golding's translation (1567) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Another small clue, which does not seem to have been noticed, appears in 5.1.148–9: 'And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade, / His dagger drew, and died.' In the play which follows, Thisbe, as in Ovid, kills herself with Pyramus's sword and no dagger is mentioned, but Quince's prologue lines exactly describe the death of Juliet in both Brooke (2772) and Shakespeare. Though not conclusive, the directional evidence is suggestive.

[1] A. S. Cairncross (ed.), *3H6*, 1964, seems first to have called attention to Shakespeare's direct use of Brooke's *Romeus* in this early play.
[2] See Richard David (ed.), *LLL*, rev. edn, 1956, pp. xxvi–xxxii. The probability of the July–September limit is indicated by Shakespeare's use of John Gerard's *Herbal* (1597).
[3] See Commentary, 2.4.13–14, 15, 22–3, 25, 53.
[4] See Commentary, 2.4.18, 25, 26, 56.
[5] Brooks, *MND*, pp. xliii–xlv.
[6] *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 1959, p. 152 n. 25.

Brooks's conclusion on the dating of the *Dream*, which he admits must remain hypothetical, is that it was probably written 'between autumn 1594 and spring 1596'.[1] In view of the tendency of our discussion to place *Romeo* late in 1596, such a date for the *Dream* would make *Romeo* the later play, a conclusion Brooks himself would query. Brooks's 'spring of 1596' arises from connecting the composition of the *Dream* with the bad weather of 1594, supposedly referred to in 2.1.88–114, and with the wedding on 19 February 1596 of Elizabeth Carey and Thomas Berkeley, but Sidney Thomas[2] has suggested that the weather described in the *Dream* fits the winter and spring of 1596 much more closely than that of 1594 and that we should therefore seriously consider the wedding involved to be that of Lady Elizabeth and Lady Katherine Somerset to Henry Guildford and William Petre on 18 November 1596, an occasion for which Spenser wrote his *Prothalamion*. As a double wedding this has some possible relevance to the doubling of the young lovers in the *Dream* (for which there is no definite suggestion in the sources); and its date is just late enough to allow *Romeo* to be considered the earlier play. Such an argument is, of course, just as hypothetical as Brooks's.

A date for *Romeo* later than May 1596 raises no serious difficulties in the usually accepted chronological order, except perhaps with *Romeo* and the *Dream*. Various kinds of evidence appear to favour such a date and even the publication of Q1 so soon afterwards, though unusual, may be paralleled by the appearance of the 'bad' quarto of *Henry V* (composed in 1599) in 1600. The strongest evidence is the proposed influence of Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*. Accept it, and the case for the composition or completion of *Romeo* in the latter half of 1596 is strong. Deny it, and the other evidence pointing to such a late date is either weak or ambiguous and would not seriously stand against a date as early as 1594. There the matter must rest until, if ever, new and conclusive evidence is discovered.

Sources and structure

The general type of story represented by *Romeo and Juliet* has its roots in folklore and mythology. Best described as a separation-romance, it shows obvious analogies with the stories of Hero and Leander, Pyramus and Thisbe, Tristan and Isolde, and with later medieval works like *Floris and Blanchefleur* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.[3] Chaucer's poem leaves its mark strongly on Shakespeare's principal source for the play, Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, and, independently perhaps, on Shakespeare's play itself.

The earlier history of the Romeo and Juliet story has been treated in detail by a number of critics,[4] but since there is no persuasive evidence that Shakespeare knew

[1] Brooks, *MND*, p. lvii.
[2] 'The bad weather in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *MLN* 64 (1949), 319–22.
[3] See J. J. Munro (ed.), *Brooke's 'Romeus and Juliet'*, 1908, pp. i–xxi; Stith Thompson (ed.), *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols., rev. edn, 1955, D 1364.7, K 1348, N 343, T 211.3.
[4] See Munro, *Romeus*, pp. xxv–lii; H. B. Charlton, 'France as chaperone of Romeo and Juliet', *Studies in French Language and Literature Presented to M. K. Pope*, 1939, pp. 43–59; Olin H. Moore, *The Legend of Romeo and Juliet*, 1950; Bullough, 1, 269–76.

the Italian or French versions at first hand,[1] we may limit our discussion to the two English versions:[2] Arthur Brooke's long poem, *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562); and William Painter's 'Rhomeo and Julietta' included in volume II (1567) of his widely known *Palace of Pleasure*, a collection of prose translations from classical sources and from Italian and French *novelle*.[3] Both Brooke and Painter used a French version of the story by Pierre Boaistuau, published in volume I of François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1559),[4] which in turn was based primarily on Matteo Bandello's 'Romeo e Giulietta' (1554) and, in some details, on Luigi da Porto's *Giuletta e Romeo* (about 1530), the immediate source of Bandello's version and the first to lay the action in Verona and to give the names Romeo and Juliet to the protagonists.[5]

Shakespeare worked directly with Brooke's *Romeus*, for verbal echoes resound throughout the play; that he knew Painter's prose version is highly probable, but, except for four or five suggestive and scattered details,[6] Painter's influence remains shadowy, though we may surmise that at least Shakespeare's use of 'Romeo' (instead of Brooke's 'Romeus') was due to Painter's title.[7] It is not surprising that Shakespeare concentrated his attention on Brooke. Painter's translation of Boaistuau's version is close and generally accurate, but Brooke's much longer verse narrative, 3020 lines in poulter's measure,[8] gives essentially everything in Boaistuau (and hence in Painter), and makes substantial additions and slighter alterations that considerably enhance the dramatic potentialities of the story.[9] The more important additions are the Nurse's interview with Romeo following the lovers' first meeting (631–73), the consequent

[1] Moore, *Legend* (pp. 111–18, 138), argues for direct influence from Luigi da Porto's *Giuletta e Romeo* (*c.* 1530), but the evidence is tenuous and has received little notice; see, however, Muir, p. 38. Muir (p. 39, following Charlton, 'France as chaperone', p. 50) notes that Shakespeare may have taken one detail directly from Boaistuau (Romeo's attending the Capulet feast in the hope of seeing Rosaline) which is omitted by Bandello, Painter and Brooke; but it is also omitted by Boaistuau. It is Da Porto who includes such a motive for Romeo. The proposed influence of Luigi Groto's *La Hadriana* (1578) and Lope de Vega's *Castelvines y Monteses* (not published until 1647) is now generally discounted.

[2] Brooke in 'To the Reader' reports that he had recently seen a play on the Romeo and Juliet story (see the excerpts from Brooke in the Appendix, p. 229–63 below). Formerly, many of Brooke's differences from Boaistuau, as well as Shakespeare's deviations from Brooke, were attributed to it. Recent criticism, however, barely mentions it (Muir, p. 38; Bullough, p. 275). The anonymous Latin tragedy *Romeus et Julietta*, preserved in the British Library (Sloane MS. 1775), is later than Shakespeare's play, probably early-seventeenth-century.

[3] The text of Painter's translation here used is that edited by P. A. Daniel (New Shakespeare Society, Ser. III, No. 1, 1875). Bullough does not include Painter. Painter appears to have made some slight use of Brooke's poem (Daniel, *Rhomeo*, p. xxi).

[4] *Histoires tragiques, extraites des œuvres italiennes de Bandel* (1559), Histoire troisieme. The edition here used was published at Turin in 1570.

[5] Following Da Porto, Bandello arranges the death scene so that Juliet awakes just after Romeo takes the poison and the lovers are allowed a few moments of recognition and reunion before Romeo dies. This handling of the situation influenced later adaptations of *Rom.* (see below, pp. 34–8).

[6] See Commentary, 1.1.93; 3.1.55–8, 61–5; 4.1.105; 4.5.104; 5.1.59.

[7] Brooke uses the form 'Romeo' once (253) as a rhyme for 'Mercutio'.

[8] Rhymed couplets, a six-stress line followed by a seven-stress line, the first line breaking three and three and the second line breaking four and three (and so printed in the three sixteenth-century editions of Brooke's poem).

[9] Brooke owes the inspiration for several of his additions and other changes to the influence of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. See Munro, *Romeus* (pp. lii–liv and Appendix II), for an analysis of his borrowings.

report to Juliet of the Nurse's arrangements for the marriage (674–704), Romeo's long and highly emotional interview with the Friar after Tybalt's death (1257–1510), the account of Romeo's sorrow in exile in Mantua (1740–80), and the Nurse's crass advice urging Juliet to marry Paris while she maintains a liaison with Romeo (2295–2312). In all of these additions, except the description of Romeo's sorrow in exile, Shakespeare found viable dramatic material, which he put to memorable use in parts of 2.4, 2.5, 3.3 and 3.5. Brooke also sometimes converts narrative statement in Boaistuau into direct speech, expands speeches already present, or adds extra bits of short dialogue (apart from the larger additions already noticed), which give the poem more life and movement. Finally, Brooke occasionally showed some flair for inventing new detail in description and character, particularly in his presentation of the Nurse, who under his hand emerges as the only character Shakespeare inherited from the source story that offered more than a romance stereotype. Despite Brooke's virtues, however, the poem is pedestrian, long-winded, overdecorated with 'poetic' commonplaces, and written in a lumbering pseudo-high style. The miracle is what Shakespeare was able to make from it.

Shakespeare's treatment of Brooke's poem has been discussed many times.[1] To convert it into a play, Brooke's leisurely narrative required tightening, focusing, and restructuring. The story as it existed in Brooke and in Painter already offered both a public and a private dimension: the blood-feud with its larger social implications in the life of a city state and the intimate, private love of two young people tragically caught in the web of a world inimical to their private vision. But unlike Brooke, Shakespeare establishes this important underlying duality in the first scene, opening with the cautious sparring of the Capulet and Montague servants – a comic beginning that quickly turns serious as they are joined first by Benvolio (a Montague), then by Tybalt (a Capulet), followed immediately by Officers of the Watch, Capulet and his wife, Montague and his wife, and finally by the Prince as the voice of authority. The play, then, begins on a note of threat and public discord, resolved for the moment by an imposed and uneasy truce. In contrast, Brooke, though mentioning the Capulet–Montague feud early in the poem (25–50) and suggesting that it is still smouldering, only allows it to erupt in violence after Romeus and Juliet's marriage (955–1034), thus losing the immediate potential conflict which Shakespeare sets up between the public and private worlds of the play.

The formal, almost mechanical patterning of the first scene (through line 94)[2] is essentially repeated twice more, at the crisis (3.1) and at the end (5.3), both scenes more formally patterned and concentrated than in Brooke (959–1046; 2809–3020), in each of which the outer world of the feud impinges on the inner world of Romeo and Juliet. This formality may be seen as Shakespeare's mode of distinguishing and

[1] Daniel, *Rhomeo*, pp. xii–xviii; Munro, *Romeus*, Appendix 1 (a detailed comparison of the poem and the play); R. A. Law, 'On Shakespeare's changes of his source material in *Romeo and Juliet*', *University of Texas Bulletin, Studies in English*, 1929, pp. 86–102; Moore, *Legend*, pp. 111–18; Bullough, 1, 274–83; Muir, pp. 40–2.

[2] G. K. Hunter ('Shakespeare's earliest tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*', *S.Sur.* 27 (1974), 3–4) compares the similarly patterned structure of the opening scene of *Titus Andronicus*.

distancing the public from the private voice, the characters here speaking less as individuals and more as spokesmen for the contending parties and the arbitration of law, a role from which the Prince never escapes. With the exit of the Prince in 1.1, however, the tone changes and we begin to hear the voice of personal involvement and concern in Romeo's parents and his friend Benvolio, as, ironically, they worry over the problem of Romeo's apparently anti-social behaviour. At this point the play moves onto a different level, one that sounds the note of personal emotion and establishes the emergence of individual character, catching us up into the smaller, more intimate and intense sphere of human relations. These dual modes, the public and the private, interrelated but carefully distinguished, set up the larger dimensions of the play, in which the concerns of individual lives (their love and hate, joy and grief) will be played out against the muted but inescapable demands of convention and society – 'Here's much to do with hate, but more with love' (1.1.166).

Other structural departures from Brooke's narrative are equally significant. Tybalt and Paris appear in Brooke only when events demand them. Tybalt is unheard of until he is needed as the ringleader of the Capulet faction in the street brawl, which breaks out some months after Romeus and Juliet have been secretly married (955–1034), and he no sooner appears than he is slain by Romeus. Shakespeare, however, introduces Tybalt in the first scene in his self-appointed role as leader of the younger Capulets and then underscores this by showing him as a troublemaker at the Capulet feast (1.5), a further foreshadowing of Tybalt's later decisive function that finds no place in Brooke. Shakespeare can thus draw on an already sharply defined character at the moment of crisis in 3.1, creating a sense of Tybalt's apparently strong personal hostility to Romeo and achieving a dramatically effective cause-and-effect relationship. In the same way, Shakespeare introduces Paris in 1.2, even before Romeo first meets Juliet, in order to suggest the potential conflict of a rival suitor and to lay the grounds for Capulet's later ill-advised, if well-intentioned, insistence on Juliet's immediate marriage with him. Brooke again delays any mention of Paris (1881 ff.) until the plot demands an eligible husband for Juliet to cure her seeming grief over Tybalt's death. As the final block in this expository structure Shakespeare also shows us Juliet with her mother and the Nurse in 1.3, when the marriage with Paris is first broached, a scene that again advances Brooke's narrative scheme, in which we learn nothing of any of these characters until after the beginning of the Capulet feast. With the opening of 1.4 and the sudden and unprepared appearance of Mercutio as one of the masking party, all the major characters, except Friar Lawrence, have been introduced and the lines of possible tension and future conflict suggested.

After 1.4, with a firmly established series of expository scenes behind him, Shakespeare essentially follows Brooke's narrative order, with one significant exception. Whereas Brooke describes first the consummation of Romeo and Juliet's marriage (827–918), followed by the killing of Tybalt a month or two later, with the resulting sentence of banishment (949–1046), and then the lovers' last night together (1527–1728), Shakespeare telescopes these meetings, reducing the lovers' period of happiness to a single night *after* the fateful killing of Tybalt. Not only does this heighten the sense of the overwhelming pressure of events and increase the emotional

tension by forcing the lovers to consummate their marriage under the shadow of immediate separation,[1] but, as Mark Rose notes,[2] it enables Shakespeare structurally to balance 'the two lovers' scenes [2.2 and 3.5] one on either side of the centerpiece [3.1]'. Even in this single example, we can glimpse how Shakespeare, by a slight rearrangement of Brooke, concentrates the time-scheme, establishes firmly the relations of the key points in the play's structure, and achieves a more powerful emotional impact.

This brings us to a consideration of the larger implications of Shakespeare's use of time in the play. Brooke's story develops slowly over a period of at least nine months.[3] After Romeus first meets Juliet at Capulet's Christmas feast, 'a weeke or two' (461) passes before he is able to speak to her again, and, after their secret marriage, they continue to meet clandestinely each night for 'a month or twayne' (949) before the fight with Tybalt.[4] But for Shakespeare time does not 'amble withal'. He turns it into a powerful dramatic instrument. Instead of Brooke's months, Shakespeare, setting the season around the middle of July, two weeks before Lammas-tide (1.3.15–16), packs the dramatic action into four days and nights (Sunday through Wednesday), ending early on the morning of the fifth day (Thursday):

Day I Sunday: 1.1–2.2 (from shortly before 9 a.m. to just before dawn of Monday)
Day II Monday: 2.3–3.4 (from dawn to bedtime)
Day III Tuesday: 3.5–4.3 (from dawn to after bedtime)
Day IV Wednesday: 4.4–5.2 (from early morning to very late Wednesday evening)
Day V Thursday: 5.3 (from very late Wednesday night to early Thursday morning)[5]

An intense and driving tension is thus set up that results in our heightened understanding of and sympathy for the headlong actions of the lovers. The audience, like Romeo and Juliet, is swept along by the apparently overwhelming rush and pressure of events, even though some of those events are, in fact, not beyond the lovers' rational control. Shakespeare achieves part of this effect not by ignoring actual (or clock) time, but by stressing it. The play is unusually full, perhaps more so than any other Shakespearean play, of words like *time, day, night, today, tomorrow, years, hours, minutes* and specific days of the week, giving us a sense of events moving steadily and inexorably in a tight temporal framework. But Shakespeare can also, when he wishes, concentrate and speed the action by annihilating time in favour of what

[1] Muir, p. 40.
[2] *Shakespearean Design*, 1972, p. 149.
[3] Munro, *Romeus*, p. 132. Brooke's story begins shortly before Christmas and seems to end sometime after 10 September (Brooke, 2072).
[4] These vague time references are generally typical of Brooke; unlike Painter (p. 127), who follows Boaistuau, Brooke gives no specific length of time for the working of the potion.
[5] Although Shakespeare carefully reinforces (with frequent temporal signposts) the time-scheme outlined above, he appears to trip himself when the Friar tells Juliet that the potion will take forty-two hours (4.1.105) to run its course. Since she drinks the potion shortly before 3 o'clock on Wednesday morning (4.4.4) and awakens shortly before dawn on Thursday (5.3), the time elapsed is around twenty-seven hours, not forty-two. If, on the other hand, Shakespeare inadvertently thought of the play as ending on the early morning of the sixth day (Friday), the forty-two hour period is not long enough.