Sonderdruck aus:

DEUTSCHE SHAKESPEARE-GESELLSCHAFT

SHAKESPEARE JAHRBUCH
BAND 147/2011

VERLAG UND DRUCKKONTOR KAMP GMBH
ROMIO UND JULIETA
A CASE STUDY OF AN EARLY GERMAN SHAKESPEARE ADAPTATION

BY
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A mischievous saying claims that the three German national poets are Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare. It is commonly assumed that the last of these three only became known in Germany in the mid-eighteenth century, when Wieland began translating his plays. Yet although Shakespeare’s name was not present on the German stage beforehand, his plays certainly were. In fact, from the 1580s onwards, English actors travelled to and performed on the Continent. Their repertoire consisted of English plays, Shakespeare’s among them. In the course of the seventeenth century, these plays were not only translated but also adapted for the needs of the German Wanderbühne (literally, ‘wandering stage’), and therefore travelled a long way from their originals. The texts that originated with these ‘English comedies’ currently have a low status in scholarly opinion, even lower than that of the so-called ‘bad’ quartos. Yet in the last few decades the “good news about the ‘bad’ quartos” has been propagated.¹ These developments throw new light on the German texts of the seventeenth century and make desirable a renewed analysis of these versions.

Comparing the early quartos and the German plays can be of interest since both bear a close connection to the theatrical world. I believe that these German texts need to be put back into the context of their oral, theatrical provenance, so that “[t]he relation of textual criticism to the realities of theatrical production” might be more than what D. F. McKenzie calls “one of embarrassed impotence.”² Using the play Romio und Julieta (an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet) as a case study, I would like to illustrate that these plays need to be read and analyzed in their specific contexts, that they are not just more ‘bad’ quartos in translation, as it were, but rather theatrical texts in their own right, whose interesting features can be high-

thus had to quickly adapt to different spaces and audiences; the plays in their repertoire would also be adapted as required.

The earliest surviving version of the Shakespearean Wanderbühne adaptations was printed in the 1620 collection, *Englische Comedien und Tragedien*, namely a German *Titus Andronicus*. Additionally, the following adaptations have survived: Andreas Gryphius's *Akardia Comica* oder Herr Peter Square, based on the mechanicals' episode in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and two slightly different manuscripts based on The Merchant of Venice, entitled *Comedia Benadit der Jade von Venetien and Comedia Genandt Dac Wohl Gesprochene Urtheil Eines Weiblichen Studenten oder der Jud von Venetien*. Most famously, perhaps, there is *Der Bestreite Bruderwold oder Prinz Hamlet aus Dänemark*, based on *Hamlet* and known in English as *Fratricide Punished*. Because it was first regarded as a possible source for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, or even as a translation of the lost *Ur-Hamlet*, *Der Bestreite Bruderwold* has received intensive scholarly attention. In comparison, *Romio und Juliete* has been neglected. *Der Bestreite Bruderwold* has been published three times in German, and there are no fewer than six English translations. It was also repeatedly performed in the last century, both in English and in German. *Romio und Juliete*, by contrast, has received only two German editions, and been translated into English only once. Only a single

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3 At this performance "the press of folk was such that the wall broke down" (E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923], 272).


8 Ernst Brenercke, in collaboration with Henry Brenercke, *Shakespeare in Germany 1550–1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 5. The clown was the first to perform in German, usually between acts (Helmut G. Asper, *Hauke's* *Studien zum Lustspieler auf der Breslauer Schauspielbühne in Deutschland im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* [Einsiedeln: Lactite, 1980], 25–26).

9 Brandl / Hugenkonten (1993), 25.

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11 Additionally, the following plays are not based upon Shakespeare's texts, but can be related to them, for instance, because they may share a common source: *Tragédie von Julio and Hypedina* (which resembles *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*); two plays by Jacob Ayyer, *Comedia von der schönen Seite* (Its plot is akin to that of *The Tempest*); and *Comenda von der Schönma Phaenicia* (resembling *Much Ado About Nothing*); as well as *Tugend- und Lobesreiter* (bearing strong resemblance to *Twelfth Night*).

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modern performance has been recorded (see below). However, this text, which survives in manuscript form in Vienna, is of equal interest, as this article aims to illustrate.

When analyzing the plays performed by the English comedians, literary critics are still quick to condemn them, because they are intent on setting Romio und Juliete and its peers side by side with their Shakespearean originals. More useful is the approach by Adolf Scheer who believes that Romio und Juliete ought not to be read as a literary alternative to the famous Shakespeare play. [...] It is a text which serves a purpose, serving the theatre, based not on the literary quality of the text but rather on the effectiveness of the stage action. 17

Like the other German Shakespeare adaptations of the seventeenth century, Romio und Juliete is a theatrical document and must be treated as such. The extant manuscript was written in the second half of the seventeenth century. Yet a play called "Von Romio vnud Julitla" already appeared in 1604 in a repertoire list handed to the city of Nördlingen, but we cannot be certain whether it was performed at the time. There are six confirmed performances between 1626 and 1688, and over the years, the play was very likely adapted and re-written several times. 18

In modern times, the only performance I have been able to trace took place in Princeton in 1924 with an all-male cast. I co-organized a staged reading of Lothar Bucher's English translation of Romio und Juliete, directed by Simon Godwin at the University of Cambridge on 13 February 2008. The reading and subsequent discussions with actors and audience were valuable for a deeper understanding of the play. Despite its sometimes awkward language it proved entirely stageable and often extremely funny.

How exactly this text (and other early German Shakespeare adaptations) came into being is difficult to establish. Yet a narrative similar to the following might be constructed: When the English players travelled to the Continent, they brought with them English plays (Shakespeare's among them), in print, in manuscript, in their

17 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 13.149.
18 Adolf Scheer, "Romio a Julie z jülichých Čech", Drozdlet revue (301) 12, 69-70, here 69. Thanks to Pavel Dlouhý who drew my attention to this article and kindly translated it for me.
19 Scheer, Koncept (cited in Scher 2001), 66 and Schindler have convincingly argued that the manuscript is connected to a performance at Cecily Kromerov Castle in 1668 (Otto G. Schindler, "Romio and Julite, an October 1889," Bibliothèque du Conservatoire des Piano: 1885, 57, 116, Heinz G. Ander, Spektakel der Wunderhübe. Wien: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1975, 45; Anna Bénecke, Das Schauspiel der englischen Komödianten in Deutschland (Halle: Niemeyer, 1935), 108.

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memories or in a combination of several of these. They continuously adapted the plays to the needs of the theater, changing tone, plot, and structure as they saw fit. And about ninety years after Shakespeare first wrote Romeo and Juliet, someone wrote down the text that has come down to us. Romio und Juliete is clearly based on Shakespeare's text, but whether on Q1 or Q2 has not been established. 19 As for Romio und Juliete's relationship to Shakespeare, it is roughly thirty percent shorter than the Second Quarto of 1599 (Q2) - the First Quarto of 1597 (Q1) being about twenty percent shorter than Q2. 20 Romio und Juliete is mainly written in prose, verse being reserved for (few) solemn occasions. The plot closely follows that of Romeo and Juliet, and a number of passages mirror the Shakespearean text nearly word for word. Chambers states that the play is "based upon Shakespeare in the Q2 form, since it uses passages (ii.1157-130; v.3.12-17) as given there and not in Q1" 21 - he cites two examples. Actually, there are thirty-four Q2-only instances in Romio und Juliete 22 and six more that can be likened to Q2 rather than to Q1. 23 There are also eleven instances where Romio und Juliete seems closer to Q1 than to Q2, 24 but textually the case is not clear-cut; these may thus be set aside as coincidences. In order to prove Romio und Juliete's dependence on Q2, it needs to be established that no Q1-only instances are found in the play. There are five such instances, 25 but three of them are stage directions, which leaves a total of two Q1-only instances against thirty-four Q2-only instances. The instances where Romio und Juliete seems to depend on Q1 can thus

19 Q1 (1609), Q4 (1622), Q5 (1637) and Q (1623) all derive from Q2 (William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, ed. by J. H. Levenson. The Oxford Shakespeare [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 113), and can therefore be excluded from this discussion.
20 Levenson (2000), 103. All references are to this edition.
22 For instance: "Pensées: Komb forth Romio iau sixe geven wessen kortweil ist gegeven." (Romio und Juliet, 2.3, 315) - "Romio: Away, be gone, the sport is at the best." (Q2, 1.4.232); "Juliete: Liebe Anna was bringt ihr mit meinen Romio guete oder bitter Zeitung." (Romio und Juliete, 3.7, 335) - "Juliet: ... Is thy news good or bad? Answer to that" (Q2, 2.4.34). All references for Romio und Juliet are to Cohn (1865), the act and scene reference is followed by the page number.
23 For instance: "Franz: [...] aber waschet ihr euch wohl lassen." (2.2, 331) - "Capulet: If you will watch me from such watching now?" (Q2, 2.4.12)
24 For instance: "Capulet: Aha Peter, wollen en nicht anderkur sein ka, so geschicke des Hunnells will" (Romio und Juliete, 5.3, 395) - "Capulet: Let it be so?" (Q1, 4.4.80).
25 For instance: "Romio: Vind ich detselsein gleiche bitte Herr Peter, er wolke keinen aufschub machen." (Romio und Juliete, 3.10, 364) - "Romio: Lord, holy father, all delay seems long. I: Juliete: Make haste, make haste, this lording doth us wrong." (Q1, 2.2.25-26); "Juliete [...] ist [...] stürzt" (Romio und Juliete, 5.4. 401). - "She stabs herself and falls" (Q1, 5.3.117 N3).
most probably be neglected against the large amount of evidence that speaks for a strong connection to Q2. I will provide but one example where Romio und Juliete depends on Q2 rather than on Q1: in the last scene of the play Paris mourns at Julia's tomb. Romio arrives and disturbs him. Paris challenges Romio, and Romio tries to calm him down: "Romio: Freund, wehr ihr seit, laut mich zu zudrücken, von saget das ein verwechselter Mensch Euch Euer leben geschenkter" (S.A. 399). Q2's equivalent reads:

Romio: By heaves, I love thee better than myself, For I am hollow-hearted against myself. Stay not, he gone, live, and herafter say A madman's mercy bid thee run away.

(Q1, 5.3.64-67)

The last two lines are absent from Q1:

Romio: I do protest, I love thee better than I love myself, For I am hollow-hearted against myself.

(Q1, 5.3.67-69)

Romio und Juliete is thus clearly based on the Second Quarto.

The German adaptation contains a number of structural changes, additions and omissions. Among the omissions are most of Shakespeare's monologues and set pieces, the scene in Mantua, and the brawl at the beginning. In fact, Romio und Juliete strikingly starts with a reconciliation between Mundige (Shakespeare's Montague) and Capulet, orchestrated by the Prince. Yet the feud is never wholly dispelled, and the initial truce does not prevent any of the deaths. Max Wolff believes that the inconsistency concerning the feud is due to two different sources which the "author" was struggling to combine. Nevertheless, the feud and the resulting generation conflict remain subdued in comparison to Shakespeare's texts – for example, the feud is not mentioned at the end of the play. As for additions, some examples are 1.2, where Julieta is introduced, and 3.8, where Romio visits the Father (Shakespeare's Friar) to obtain his consent to marry Julieta (during their first encounter, after the 'balcony scene', he does not mention marriage). Some Shakespearean passages are also transposed: for instance, Romio

25 Unless otherwise noted, the translation is by Bucher in Cohn (1865). "Romio: Freund, wehr ihr seit, laut mich zu zudrücken, von saget das ein verwechselter Mensch Euch Euer leben geschenkter" (S.A. 399).

26 "Verfasser" (Max Wolff, "Die Tragödie von Romio und Juliete", Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare Gesellschaft 47 (1911), 92-105, here 99). In fact, the play is probably the product of a collaboration (Schott [2001], 69).

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laments Julia's chastity and not Rosaline's (Shakespeare's Rosaline) in a passage (3.6) which is textually close to Shakespeare. As for structural changes, a notable example is that Julia is only told that she must marry Paris after she has fallen in love with Romio (even though Paris is present on-stage before). Another major change is Pickhåring, the clown, who is an important character in Romio und Juliete. In fact, he can be said to embody a whole set of changes to the play and its plot. Pickhåring's role not only incorporates that of Peter and those of the other servants, but he even steals some of the Nurse's scenes. Giorgio Melchiori believes that all of the comic roles in the Shakespearean play were played by one actor (namely, Will Kemp). In Romio und Juliete the consolidation of comic roles is taken one step further, creating the fully-fledged Pickhåring, an irreverent presence throughout the play. In fact, he enjoyed independent fame: not only did "Pickhåring" become a synonym for the clown, but he also features in numerous plays and even has the title role of several interludes. Additionally, he appears in the lengthy title of the 1620 collection Engelische Comedien und Tragedien, which was often simply referred to as "Pickhåring". Anna Bausecke contends that Pickhåring stands in such a central position that his representation enables one to "grasp the whole character of the drama of the [Eng]lish Comedians at the same time". I will illustrate how Pickhåring is incorporated into the Shakespearean plot and how his part is enlarged to suit the needs of the Wunderbühne with a passage where Julia, reminded that she must marry Paris, says that she is ill and needs the comfort of the Father. Although this scene (which has no exact correspondence in Shakespeare) has a tragic (or at least serious) undertone, Pickhåring adds his comic note, for example to the following dialogue:

Capulet: Wo schweint es sich.
Julieta: In den Herren.
Capulet: In den Herren?
Juleta: Ja, sehr leide grosse qual.

25 I use the term 'clown' in its early modern, Shakespearean sense.
27 This is confirmed by Romio und Julietta's manuscript which does not use italics for Pickhåring's name as it does with the names of other characters.
28 Uwe-K. Schiedes (ed.), Erinnerungen des Barock (Köln at Hamburg: Rowohlt [1970], 16, 37. The clown was often played by the Prince, the leader of the company (Willi Fleming in Schiedes art.). Das Schauspiel der Wunderbühne (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931), 230, probably because he was such a central figure.
29 Ibid., 62.
Interrupting conversations with such bawdy or irrelevant interjections is a trademark of Picklhihring’s. In the same scene, he also comments:

Picklhihring: Ein kranker Mensch kann nicht viel Freud haben.
Julieto: Ach die Jugend meiner Launen!
Picklhihring: Hab ich es nicht gesagt, sie liebt sich schon vor den sterben.

(5.1, 385)34

Here, Picklhihring’s otherwise light comments have a somber undertone – Julieto may actually be thinking about dying, although she does not voice it as in Shakespeare: “I’ll to the Friar to know his remedy. / If all else fail, myself have power to die” (Q2, 5.5.241–242).

Finally, Capulet has enough of the clown’s insolence:

Capulet: Schwerig Picklhihring, oder ich lasse dich in die Kuchen führen, dich zu streichlen.
Picklhihring: Vord ich habe vermeint, die welt mir lassen ein freiestick geben.

(5.1, 385)35

Earlier in the play, Capulet already threatened Picklhihring with a beating in the kitchen. Apparently this phrase was so common that in der Tugend- und Liebes-Streit Apolonius abbreviates it to a simple threat: “oder ich will dich in die Küchen führen lassen.”36 Helmut Asper calls a beating the classic means to get rid of the fool.37 In the ‘ball scene’, Tiofold (Shakespeare’s Tybalt) even threatens to hit the Nurse when he makes jokes at his expense (2.2.335). Picklhihring’s reaction is the same as to the earlier threat: he thinks he will be given food instead of a beating. Picklhihring is not the only clown of the Wanderbühne to have a food-related name: Jean Potage and Hans Stockfisch were also popular. Whether he was called Picklhihring or had another name, the clown figure played a central role in the plays of the English Comedians, commenting on or adding a comic parallel to the main plot, Romio und Juliete thus constitutes a prime example for Picklhihring’s prominence on the Wanderbühne.

Before concluding, I would like to show how Romio und Juliete sometimes clarifies notorious cruces in the Shakespearean text or supports current views on Elizabethan staging (as do the so-called “bad” quartos). For instance, one point that remains unclear in Shakespeare’s texts is Paris’s presence at the “ball scene”. Although in Shakespeare, Capulet invades Paris personally (Q2, 1.2.20–23), his presence at the ball is never made explicit in the text. In Romio und Juliete, by contrast, Paris is explicitly present at the feast and even speaks to Julieto (2.3.335). Productions of Romeo and Juliet “since the early nineteenth century have often introduced him as Juliet’s partner in dance or conversation.”38 Romio und Juliete thus supports current stage practice. Another instance where Romio und Juliete throws light on Romio und Juliet is a stage direction that is absent from the two Shakespearean quartos, but that is usually added in modern editions. In the somnet sequence during Romeo and Juliet’s first meeting, the quartos have no explicit stage directions for the kisses implied in the text, but modern editions usually provide them. For instance, Jill L. Levenson inserts “He kisses her’’ in both Q1 and Q2 at the points equivalent to Romio und Juliete’s stage directions (see Q1, 1.4.158–175; Q2, 1.4.206–223; and Romio und Juliete, 2.3.333). Romio und Juliete could again be said to support the customary staging (and editing) of Romeo and Juliet.

To conclude, I hope to have shown that Romio und Juliete is no less fascinating than Der Bestreifte Brudermond, even though modern scholarship has largely neglected it. Analyzed in its historical, textual and theatrical context, Romio und Juliete can provide insights into the world of the German Wanderbühne and throw important light on Shakespeare’s play.

34 “Capulet: Where hast thou any pains? / Julieto: In the heart. / Capulet: In the heart? / Julieto: Yes, and I suffer great torture. / Picklhihring: Sir, you put foolish questions. Does she not tell you that her pains are principally in the neighbourhood of her breast, belly, and navel, and the adjacent counties?” (386, Richter has “adjacent demesnes” and “clothes” instead of Picklhihring throughout.)
35 “Picklhihring: A sick person cannot have many pleasures. / Julieto: Ah, my tender yew! / Picklhihring: Did I not say so? She is already afraid of dying.” (Ibid., Richter has “A sick man.”)
36 “Capulet: Be silent, Picklhihring, or I will have you led into the kitchen for a whipping. / Picklhihring: I fondly imagined you wanted to give me a breakfast.” (Ibid.)
37 “or I will have you sent to the kitchen” (3.2, in Creizenach [1889], 97). My translation.
38 Levenson (2000), 196.
Zusammenfassung