The Window Scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* and Folk Songs of the Night Visit

by Jill Colaco

THE love story of Romeo and Juliet is rooted in European folklore, though Shakespeare took his version directly from the unpromising pages of a long and elaborate verse-romance, which he transformed so compellingly that his lovers became the new legend. Critics attempting to account for the spellbinding power of the play frequently turn to the Window Scenes (II.ii and III.v)[1] to speculate on the nature of the bond between the lovers. This paper is also concerned with those twin centers of the play, and with the important and undervalued Night Visit element that threads its way through the two intimate dialogues of plighting and parting. For *Romeo and Juliet,* with all its sophistication, draws on a popular tradition in keeping with the story's folklore origins.

The conventions of the Night Visit would have been familiar to Elizabethans from drama and folksong, so the primary purpose of the following pages is to restore to a modern audience the ability to recognize and respond to the motif. My argument has a further place in the context of recent writing on *Romeo and Juliet,* which has greatly concerned itself with the nature of the love affair, and stressed the legitimacy and spirituality of the union. A new appreciation of the Night Visit motif is a reminder that Romeo and Juliet, even after their wedding, are conducting a clandestine liaison that has more in common with a dangerous intrigue than with a licit marriage.

I would not want to deny the significance of the sacred and nuptial language in the love scenes; my contention is rather that the play

[1] *Romeo* references are to the new Arden edition, ed. Brian Gibbons (London, 1980);

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embraces many different kinds of lovemaking, and that Romeo and Juliet's feelings are expressed through a greater range of modes than any single critic will admit. H. A. Mason, for instance, interprets the balcony scene as a "scene of plighting rather than love";[2] in this paper, having decided to rename the scene in order to avoid the scholarly dispute about the balcony, I have called it the Plighting Scene as a tribute to Mason's insight.[3] But this is a large oversimplification of a long meeting, in which perpetual modulations in the lovers' language play endlessly against the visual language of the striking set.

Placing Romeo beneath his sweetheart's window in the moonlight puts him in the role of a serenader in the first stages of courtship; his soliloquy does indeed come from the serenader's impulse to sing in praise of his lady's beauty, even though on this occasion he does not expect to be heard. Romeo is also a lover in the *Song of Songs* and Courtly Love tradition, with Juliet at her window as the beloved in the walled garden and the lady in the castle tower. In the Parting Scene, it is no surprise to learn that in this walled orchard there are a nightingale and a pomegranate tree, since both are common accessories of the *Song of Songs* tradition.[4] But an Elizabethan audience would have picked up yet other cues from the staging, associating it immediately with the well-known and less elevated scenario of the Night Visit.

The image of Romeo as the importunate lover of Night Visit folksong need not cancel out the rest: the *Song of Songs* is as strongly

all other Shakespeare references are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974).

[2] *Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love* (London, 1970), p. 47. Other recent critics who have dealt with the marriage theme include Roger Stilling, *Love and Death in Renaissance Tragedy* (Baton Rouge, 1976), Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (London, 1981), and Robert O. Evans, *The Osier Cage: Rhetorical Devices in 'Romeo and Juliet'* (Lexington, Ky., 1966); Evans suggests that the dialogue turns on Juliet's proposal of marriage (p. 73).

[3] On the staging, see Richard Hosley, "The Use of the Upper Stage in *Romeo and Juliet*," *SQ*, V (1954), 371–9. Q1 specifically locates III. v "at the window," and Gibbons (new Arden ed., p. 127n.) deduces that both II. ii and III. v take place "at a window in the tiring-house façade, not at a balcony."

[4] The garden in the *Song of Songs* is an orchard of pomegranates, and in the *Romance of the Rose*, the nightingale and the pomegranate are named first in the lists of the garden's singing birds and exotic trees. Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, Shakespeare's main source, has none of this. On the sexual significance of the walled enclosure, see Garber, pp. 163–5.

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associated with the Night Visit as with Courtly Love,[5] and the overlapping of the uncertain serenader with the bolder lover is a way of telescoping all the phases appropriate to a more extended wooing. It does, however, subvert the nuptial interpretation of the play that seeks to rarefy the love affair and heightens the sanctioned marriage at the expense of the secret romance.

I

The paradigm of the Night Visit, as it is found in English and European *Fensterlieder*, goes something like this. The man makes the woman aware of his presence outside and asks her to let him in. The woman responds at first with surprise or disapproval:

Quho is at my windo, quho, quho?
Go from my windo, go, go.
Quha callis thair, sa lyke ane stranger,
Go from my windo, go![6]

Sometimes she urges caution, as in this typical exchange from the ballad "Young Benjie":

"O open, open, my true-love,
O open, and let me in!"
"I dare na open young Benjie,
My three brothers are within."
(Child 86A)[7]

But after the standard prevarication, the song usually ends with the woman relenting and inviting her lover to enter.[8] The "Quho is at my windo" song comes to this satisfactory conclusion:

Quho is at my windo, quho?
Go from my windo, go;

[5] Both elements are found in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*; see R. E. Kaske, "The *Canticum Canticorum* in the *Miller's Tale*," *SP*, LIX (1962), 479–500.

[6] This comes from a mid-sixteenth-century moralization in *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, quoted by Charles Read Baskervill, "English Songs on the Night Visit," *PMLA*, XXXVI (1921), 581.

[7] Child numbers refer to the original ten-part edition of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child (Boston, 1882–98), from which all quotations are taken.

[8] Baskervill, p. 571, sums up: "Sometimes the lady scorns the wooer and sends him off. Conventionally she makes a show of reluctance and finally yields."

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Cry na mair thair, lyke ane stranger,
Bot in at my dure thow go.

And in "Young Benjie," Marjorie makes this compromise:

"I darena, darena let thee in,
But I'll come down to thee."

Songs of Dawn Parting can be put in a separate category from the Night Visit, but the sequence is unmistakably interlinked. A formulaic line like "It's time, trew-love, ye wear awa" (Child 69A)[9] is often used in Night Visit ballads to mark the approach of day, and a narrative like "The Grey Cock" (Child 248) covers all the phases of the visit, from the man's night arrival to his dawn departure.

In the shorter lyrics, the story is minimal. The song is constructed around the man's repeated "Open the door" pleas or the woman's "Go from my window" refrain. In either case, the man's desperation or the woman's intransigence is suddenly reversed by the woman admitting her sweetheart to the house. The exchange is a kind of ritual, and the outcome is rarely in doubt. The comic potential of this predictable change of heart has been repeatedly exploited by storytellers and dramatists. Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* is a memorable instance of a double reversal, for Alisoun initially refuses to play the yielding part of a "Go from my window" singer—

"Go fro the wyndow, Jakke fool," she sayde;
"As help me God, it wol nat be 'com pa me' "—[10]

and then pretends to relent in order to set up the ardent Absolon for an even bigger surprise. But most of the folk songs are not comic; indeed, in many of the longer Child Ballads, the threat to the lovers is real, and their meeting may have fatal consequences.[11]

The opening of a Night Visit sequence can clearly be heard in the

[9] "Clerk Saunders." Compare " 'O,' sighing says him Brown Robyn, / 'I wish I were awa!' " (Child 97C); also "The day is come, I may no lenger byde" in the *Reeve's Tale, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (London, 1957), *C.T.* I(A), 4237.

[10] *C.T.* I(A), 3708–09. Robinson's note suggests that "com-pa-me" (come-kiss-me) is "perhaps the name or refrain of a song."

[11] See"Glasgerion" (Child 67),"Clerk Saunders" (Child 69), "Willie and Lady Maisry" (Child 70), "The Bent Sae Brown" (Child 71), "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard" (Child 81), "Young Johnstone" (Child 88), "The Mother's Malison" (Child 216), and "Auld Matrons" (Child 249). "Young Benjie" has a curious twist at the end, when the man drowns his sweetheart in the river.

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first words addressed by Juliet to the man under her window. Unlike the heroines in Shakespeare's sources, who immediately recognize their sweethearts in the moonlight, this Juliet responds to Romeo's sudden declaration with the challenge:

> What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
> So stumblest on my counsel?
> (II.ii.52–3)[12]

The dialogue that follows has affinities with both the lighter folk songs and the darker ballads of the Night Visit, befitting a scene that is precariously poised between comedy and tragedy. The thrill of danger found in the Child Ballads is lurking here in the Capulets' garden, and Juliet repeatedly expresses her fears:

> And the place death, considering who thou art,
> If any of my kinsmen find thee here . . .
> If they do see thee, they will murder thee . . .
> I would not for the world they saw thee here.
> (II.ii.64–74)

And with the coming of dawn, she translates the warning formula, "It's time, trew-love, ye wear awa," from the four-stress ballad meter into the barely blank-verse line:

> 'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone.
> (II.ii.176)

Towards the end of the Plighting Scene, the comic possibilities of the situation resurface. The interruption of the lovers' exchange by the Nurse—which is again without parallel in Shakespeare's sources—is reminiscent of the shorter Night Visit songs, where the risk of interference by the mother or father is comically treated:

> *Juliet*
> I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu.
> [*Nurse calls within.*]
> Anon, good Nurse—Sweet Montague be true.
> Stay but a little, I will come again . . .

[12] Following Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London, 1957), I take Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) as Shakespeare's "main and perhaps sole source" (p. 274), and "The Story of Rhomeo and Julietta" from William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, II (1567) as a possible supplementary source.

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Nurse. [*Within.*] Madam.

Juliet.
I come, anon—But if thou meanest not well
I do beseech thee—

Nurse. [*Within.*] Madam.
Juliet. By and by I come—
(II.ii.136–51)[13]

It is possible that this kind of three-cornered dialogue, with a parent actually participating, was a feature of the earlier song tradition; the first example I have found comes from a seventeenth-century broadside ballad in the Roxburghe Collection:

"I wish there were no Hinges, nor yet no Key nor Lock;
That I might come unto my love, now she is in her Smock!"
"O peace and be contented! I hear my Father knock."
And sing, Go from my Window, love, go!

"O Daughter dear, why are you out of your Bed so late?"
"O Father, I am very sick, and in distressed state."
"Methinks I hear some body under your Window prate."
And sing, Go from my Window, love, go![14]

In the play, as in the comparable folk songs, it is obvious that no hurt is going to come to the lovers through the Nurse's unwanted proximity; they are in the protected garden of comedy into which an authority figure cannot harmfully intrude. This is a different world from the Child Ballads where murderous kinsmen threaten the lovers' lives, yet the two traditions are related and Shakespeare's scene encompasses them both.

When Juliet turns courtship into trothplight, she is going beyond the role of a "Go from my window" singer, for it is rare for the woman in folk songs to tie her lover to any conditions before admitting him. In German *Tagelieder*, however, the man conventionally responds to such demands as "Show me a lover's loyalty" by conforming with what one scholar has called a "prevailing pattern" of

[13] Baskervill, p. 571. In "The Grey Cock" (Child 248), the father's presence in the background is important.

[14] "The Secret Lover," *The Roxburghe Ballads*, 9 vols. (London & Hertford, 1869–99), VI, 204–06.

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elaborate pledges.[15] And in "The Grey Cock" (Child 248), a Night Visit ballad in the mainstream of the tradition, the woman exacts a kind of declaration from her laconic lover:

> "And are ye come at last? and do I hold ye fast?
> And is my Johny true?"
> "I hae nae time to tell, but sae lang's I like mysell
> Sae lang will I love you."[16]

In any case, Juliet is never out of tune with the mood of the Night Visit, even when she talks of marriage. In her own vows, she has at moments the simple power of folksong:

> My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep.
> (II.ii.133–4)[17]

And her use of "true-love" in the phrase "My true-love passion" (II.ii.104) vividly employs the familiar terminology of ballad.[18] The accumulation of Night Visit elements, which heighten the sexuality of the scene and hold out the promise of swift consummation, also

[15] R. E. Kaske, "The Aube in Chaucer's *Troilus*", in *Chaucer Criticism*, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, 2 vols. (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1960–61), II, 167–79, esp. 173. Kaske quotes from a song by Minnesinger Rubîn: "Thy love has over my body so great a power, / No greater might it be. / Thou dwellest in my heart, woman most pure, / So that never can a dearer thing befall me / Than if I may see thee again, all wondrous. / My heart will I pledge thee for thine own."

[16] See also Ophelia's song, *Hamlet*, IV. v. 62–6:"Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me, / You promis'd me to wed.' [He answers.] 'So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun, / And thou hadst not come to my bed.' "

[17] See "The Sailor's Departure from his Dearest Love," *Roxburghe*, VII, 534–6: "The mountains high shall fall, beneath the valleys deep, / E're I prove false at all, my promise so I'le keep . . . The Sea be ever dry, and fire cease to burn." This is one of the many predecessors of Burns' "A Red, Red Rose," in which all the seas "gang dry." There is one other striking image in the Child Ballads worth recording here. In "Sheath and Knife" (Child 16A), a man mourns the loss of his sister and their baby: "I have lost a sheath and knife that I'll never see again." The strong sexual symbolism of Juliet's "This is thy sheath" (V. iii. 169) has such a direct ballad-like simplicity.

[18] This phrase occurs in nearly all the Child Ballads which include Night Visits, as part of the man's plea for admittance; see, for example, "Young Benjie," quoted on page 140 above. In the introduction to *The Penguin Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. xiv, Albert B. Friedman states that " ' true lover' becomes so fixed a phrase that a mountain ballad can speak of a 'false true lover'!" "True-love" is rarely an adjective, but in *Hamlet*, Ophelia's songs use the compound adjective ("With true-love showers," IV. v. 40) as well as the noun ("How should I your true-love know," IV. v. 23).

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strengthens the understated eroticism in Juliet's frank professions of love.

As the Plighting Scene draws to a close, Juliet's repeated recalling of Romeo traces the old Night Visit pattern of the woman's last-minute recalling of the suitor she had dismissed. And as the lovers reluctantly part and Romeo makes his speech to "The grey-ey'd morn,"[19] night merges into day and Night Visit gives way to aubade.

II

There is convincing evidence that these Night Visit motifs were readily available to Elizabethan dramatists in popular English folk-song. In an important article, which I have used extensively in this study, Charles Read Baskervill admits that extant Night Visit songs are tantalizingly rare in Britain, but his wide-ranging research nevertheless builds up a case for the existence of a strong native tradition going back to the Middle Ages: "These conventions of the night visit, though simple and natural enough in themselves, recur so persistently in different types of popular poetry as to suggest that to the popular mind the theme called for the use of certain formulas, and that back of the few examples . . . recorded early there lay a considerable body of song which had arisen among the folk."[20] In the Stationers' Registers for the 1580s, there are records of songs entitled "Open the dore" and "Goe from the windowe goe,"[21] and the moralized version of "Quho is at my windo" quoted above is even earlier, dated by Baskervill as mid-sixteenth century.

The dearth of allusions to folksong material by Elizabethan writers is certainly due in part to the reluctance of the upperclass literary world to acknowledge the existence of this large oral sub-culture. Sir Philip Sidney's discussion of "Chevy Chase" in his *Defence of Poetry* is a notorious exception to this general rule. However, Sidney himself,

[19] See Gibbons (new Arden ed., p. 136n.) for the editorial argument in favor of giving these lines (II. ii. 188–91) to Romeo rather than the Friar. The possible parallel with Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (see my text, pp. 149–50) supports this view.

[20] Baskervill, p. 576; the point is here being made specifically about "Open the door" songs, but it represents the overall conclusions of the article. See also W. Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 2 vols. (London, 1855–59), I, 140–2.

[21] See Hyder E. Rollins, "An Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries (1557–1709) in the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London," XXI (1924), 1–324, nos. 2020 and 974.

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that most courtly and fashionable of poets, drew on the resources of folksong in the Eleventh Song of *Astrophil and Stella* (a sequence whose sisterhood to *Romeo and Juliet* has often been noticed).[22] The dramatic opening is an adaptation of the "Who is at my window?" formula:

> "Who is it that this darke night,
> Underneath my window playneth?"

Astrophil's elaborate persuasion is repeatedly set off against Stella's simpler, folksong-like statements, until her fear of danger finally makes her dismiss him:

> "Peace, I thinke that some give eare . . .
> Well, be gone, be gone I say."

But there is some hesitation in her "Well, be gone," which suggests that, in line with the dominant "Go from my window" pattern, her harsh answer is not final.[23]

The virtual censorship operated by the educated did not prevail in the world of the theatre. Albert B. Friedman is one of the recent scholars to stress the dramatists' extensive use of folksong material: "The numerous quotations and allusions made by Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights to popular songs show that they expected their audiences to be intimately familiar with a great mass of such stuff."[24] Shakespeare's own irrepressible interest in folksong manifests itself in many of his plays; *Hamlet* includes a fascinating example of a bawdy branch of the Night Visit tradition in Ophelia's "To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day" (IV.v.48–66), an "Open the door" song about the one night in the year when the woman had the customary right to be the wooer.

There are a number of Jacobean plays that quote snatches from Night Visit songs, presumably reflecting the popularity of this genre

[22] See Gibbons, introduction to new Arden ed., pp. 43–7.

[23] Quotations are from *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford, 1962). The 11th Song was first published in the 1598 edition of *A&S*. Compare Stella's "Well, be gone, be gone I say" with "Begon, begon, my Willie, my Billie, / begon, begon my deare," in *The Rape of Lucrece*, ed. Allan Holaday, *Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, XXXIV, no.3 (1950), lines 3071–2.

[24] *The Ballad Revival: Studies in the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry* (Chicago, 1961), p. 27; see also A. J. Walker, "Popular Songs and Broadside Ballads in the English Drama: 1559–1642" (Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1934).

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in the early seventeenth century.[25] Although this proof of the provenance of Night Visit material postdates *Romeo and Juliet*, it certainly suggests that the kind of songs recorded in the Stationers' Registers in the 1580s remained popular throughout the 1590s, and, as I shall demonstrate shortly, the Night Visit motif was put to dramatic use by Munday and Marlowe before *Romeo and Juliet* was written. In one of Fletcher's well-known plays, *Monsieur Thomas*, a folk song is integrated into the plot to form a hilarious set piece on the theme of the thwarted Night Visit. When the unruly hero arrives with his friends to serenade his Mary, he finds that the women are ready for him:

> [*Enter*] Maid *above*.
> *Maid*. Why who is this?
> *Launcelot*. *O damsell deere,*
> *Open the doore, and it shall appeare,*
> *Open the doore.*
> *Maid*. *O gentle squire,*
> I'le see thee hang first:
> *Farewell my deere.*
> 'Tis master *Thomas*, there he stands.
> *Enter* Mary *above*.
> *Mary*. 'Tis strange,
> That nothing can redeeme him: raile him hence,
> Or sing him out in's owne way, any thing
> To be deliver'd of him.
> *Maid*. Then have at him:
> *My man* Thomas *did me promise,*
> *He would visite me this night.*
> *Thomas*. *I am here Love, tell me deere Love,*
> *How I may obtaine thy sight.*
> *Maid*. *Come up to my window love, come, come, come,*
> *Come to my window my deere,*

[25] In addition to the plays discussed in the text, there is a quotation from a Night Visit song in Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize*, I. iii. 45–7; all references to Beaumont and Fletcher plays are to *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge, 1966–79). There is an allusion in *Blurt, Master Constable*, IV. i. 54, in *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. A. H. Bullen, I (Boston, 1885). A "Go from my window" song, "Arise, arise, my Iuggie my Puggie," is printed in full at the end of Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece* (ed. Holaday, lines 3063–94), "added by the stranger that lately acted *Valerius* his part" (2995–6). Holaday dates the play in the mid-nineties, and this song appeared in the first edition of 1608; it is not known how early the song was incorporated into the performance.

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The winde, nor the raine, shall trouble thee againe,
But thou shalt be lodged here.
. . . [*Enter*] Madge *above* . . .
Madge with a divels vizard roring, offers to
kisse him, and he fals down.
Maid. Farewell sir.

(III.iii.66–93)

One joke is that Fletcher has staged a private Night Visit with a bevy of actors upstairs and down. More crucial to the fun is his turning of folksong into farce: the conventional framework remains ostentatiously visible as the women "sing him out in's owne way," but the formulaic first refusal ("*Farewell my deere*") is juxtaposed with a crude, Alisoun-like rejoinder ("I'le see thee hang first"). Like Chaucer in the *Miller's Tale,* Fletcher allows realism to overcome ritual, and Thomas to be tumbled to the ground with a sudden upsetting of the song's natural conclusion.

Here, where the actors sing and romp their way through the scene, the connection between the Night Visit scenario and the mainstream folksong tradition is abundantly clear. The Plighting Scene in *Romeo and Juliet* is very different from this—subtle in its allusions and serious in its lovemaking. But *Monsieur Thomas* nonetheless helps our reading of *Romeo and Juliet,* since it makes starkly visible a popular pattern that is submerged in Shakespeare's text. It also testifies to the vitality of the Night Visit tradition in song and theatre, fifteen years or more after Romeo's first performance under Juliet's window.

Other Elizabethan playwrights before Shakespeare had also explored the dramatic possibilities of the Night Visit. In Munday's *Fidele and Fortunio: The Two Italian Gentlemen* (1584), the heroine Victoria makes several appearances at her window, and the plot turns on multiple actual or suspected Night Visits.[26] *Fidele and Fortunio* may in fact have been one of the plots that Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote *Much Ado,* where the accusations against Hero depend upon a faked Night Visit.[27] He had definitely been impressed

[26] Malone Society Reprint, 1909. Fidele's hesitation under Victoria's window—"for my life I dare not be too bolde" (II. i. 417)—is reminiscent of *Romeo,* II. ii. 14. Related Night Visit conventions in the play include lines that mimic a hunt's-up (IV. vi. 1412–14; see below, note 41), and the euphemistic reference to the emptying of a chamberpot on an importunate suitor's head as "the entertainement that out of her window to you she gave" (V. ii. 1521).

[27] *Much Ado,* II. ii. 41–4; II. iii. 85–7; III. iii. 144–8, et passim. Anne Barton's introduction draws this parallel, p. 327.

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by the nocturnal encounter in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, which he used in *The Merchant of Venice* in the scene in which Shylock's daughter awaits her lover at a window (II.vi.24–59). Editors of *Romeo and Juliet* have long been aware of possible borrowings from Marlowe in the Plighting Scene, but little attention has been given to the shaping of both dialogues around the scenario of the Night Visit.

In Marlowe's play, Barabas the Jew is prowling around a nunnery, yearning for a glimpse not of a sweetheart but of his daughter Abigail, who has become a novice to recover the wealth hidden in the house. Abigail enters "above," and after four alternating speeches during which she and her father (like Romeo and Juliet at the opening of the Plighting Scene) remain oblivious of each other's presence, Barabas catches sight of her:

> But stay, what starre shines yonder in the *East*?
> The Loadstarre of my life, if *Abigall*.
> (II.i.41–2)[28]

Abigail responds to this Romeo-like opening with some of Juliet's surprise, demanding that the man should identify himself:

> *Abigall*. Who's that?
> *Barabas*. Peace, *Abigal*, 'tis I.
> *Abigall*. Then father here receive thy happinesse.
> (II.i.43–4)

Marlowe has substituted metallic for erotic "happinesse," and turned the amorous dialogue of the Night Visit into a father-daughter exchange with a sinister incestuous undertow. In his ecstasy at taking possession of the treasure, Barabas still finds occasion to address his daughter in a lover's language:

> Oh *Abigal*, *Abigal*, that I had thee here too,
> Then my desires were fully satisfied.
> (II.i.51–2)

But at this point the necessity for parting takes over, for Abigail fears that the rest of the house will discover them:

> Father, it draweth towards midnight now,
> And 'bout this time the nuns begin to wake;

[28] Quotations from *Jew of Malta* are from *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Fredson Bowers, I (Cambridge, 1973).

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To shun suspition, therefore, let us part.
(II.i.55–7)

Like Romeo, Barabas marks the end of the Night Visit with a fond flourish, and turns to greet the nearing day; as a translator of the most famous classical aubade (Ovid's "To the Dawn, not to Hasten," *Amores*, I.xiii), Marlowe would have been well aware that he was completing his night scene with a variation on the traditional dawn motif:

Farewell my joy, and by my fingers take
A kisse from him that sends it from his soule.
Now *Phoebus* ope the eye-lids of the day,
And for the Raven wake the morning Larke.
(II.i.58–61)

Shakespeare's imagination seems to have absorbed this dark, sardonic Night Visit and converted it into the lovely and innocent Plighting Scene.

A few years after the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, Henry Porter staged a Night Visit in a play considerably indebted to Shakespeare's script, *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (1599).[29] Porter's window scene (viii) seems to be based on the Plighting Scene, though his employment of Night Visit motifs is more conventional. In accordance with the best-known song format, Mall's first rough rejoinders predictably mellow until she agrees to come down to her suitor; the lovers also take the usual precautions not to disturb Mall's mother, though in the end she wakes and intervenes. But although Porter has reverted to a cruder type of Window Scene to suit his comedy, he has apparently been prompted to write it by the sophisticated Plighting Scene, and this tells us that Porter was in no doubt that he had been watching in *Romeo and Juliet* a variation on the traditional Night Visit.

Romeo and Juliet, then, was written in what practically amounted to a theatre tradition of the Night Visit, and the examples I have described make it clear that the dramatic versions never left the folk-song conventions far behind. In terms of the threefold distinction

[29] A number of lines distinctly recall *Romeo*: see Mall's "I but me thinkes you speake without the booke" (line 1517) and Juliet's "You kiss by th' book" (I. v. 109); also Mall's mother's: "Ile rather have her married to her grave" (line 1628) and Lady Capulet's "I would the fool were married to her grave" (III. v. 140). Quotations are from the Malone Society Reprint, 1912.

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that folklorists have made since the eighteenth century between "traditional" ballads of the narrative type collected by Child, "inferior" broadsheet ballads, and popular folk songs, I have been talking in this section primarily of the folksong category. But I would argue, following the approach of Baskervill's Night Visit article, that it is unnecessary to pursue this distinction very far. Although there is a notorious lack of evidence that Child Ballads with Night Visit elements existed in the sixteenth century, Beaumont's early seventeenth-century play, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* quotes verses from two Night Visit ballads: "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" (Child 74), with its ghostly visit of Margaret's spirit to William, and "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard" (Child 81). Interestingly, these co-exist with the frequent bursts of folksong interspersed in the play, which include verses from two "Go from my window" songs;[30] Beaumont did not feel it necessary to distinguish between popular songs and "genuine" folk ballads, and it is therefore unlikely that Shakespeare found the influence from these sources incompatible. Friedman, in *The Ballad Revival: Studies in the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry,* discusses at length the vexed question of "the deep submergence of the folk ballad in the sixteenth century," and considers the possibility that "the capital knew little and cared less about the superior kind of balladry."[31] But it is vital to the case I have been making for the presence of submerged Night Visit elements in the Plighting Scene of *Romeo and Juliet* to recognize there the mood and motifs of Child Ballads as well as popular songs. I would suggest that in *Romeo and Juliet* (and in *Astrophil and Stella*) we have marvellous indications that "the influence of popular on sophisticated poetry" began long before Friedman proposes, and that these literary works themselves support folklorists' assumptions about the existence of traditional love ballads in Elizabethan England.

It is also worth pointing out that the stage Night Visit could be naturally associated with other folklore motifs that are now familiar

[30] The "Go from my window" songs are quoted at III. 496–500 and III. 514–18; there is also a line possibly from an "Open the door" song: "What voyce is that that calleth at our doore?" (V. 195) which is here directed, with humorous inappropriateness, by old Merrythought to his wife. Child 74 is quoted at II. 422–45, and perhaps also at III. 559–60; Child 81 at V. 198–202 (see text below, p. 000). There is a possible parody of part of Child 81 in Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas,* IV. ii. 55–62; a fragment that is also found in Child 81A occurs in *Bonduca,* V. ii. 16–17.

[31] See Chapter One, especially pp. 34 and 27.

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to us from Child Ballads. The plot of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* for example, uses a number of ballad themes in a comic vein—including Luce's elopement with Jasper to escape an arranged marriage, the pursuit by Luce's father and official suitor, and the pretended death of Jasper, who is brought to Luce in a coffin in the manner of "Willie's Lyke-Wake" (Child 25). Similarly, in *Romeo and Juliet,* the Night Visit motif harmonizes with other recognizably ballad-like elements in the plot. The Montague-Capulet and Romeo-Paris themes parallel many ballads in which the woman crosses feud lines or family dictates in taking a lover,[32] or chooses between an official suitor and a true sweetheart.[33] The mock death that is to bring the lovers together,[34] and the double demise of lovers who cannot be parted,[35] are also stock devices of ballad. The Night Visit in *Romeo and Juliet* comes from the same ballad world as these other folk motifs, and would have been perceived as one of a cluster of traditional themes.

III

Even though the outline of the Plighting Scene follows the shape of a Night Visit song, beginning with the woman's challenge and ending with the recalling of her lover, it does not lead immediately to Romeo

[32] See "Erlington" (Child 8), "Clerk Saunders" (Child 69), "Willie and Lady Maisry" (Child 70), "The Bent Sae Brown" (Child 71), "Young Benjie" (Child 86), "Young Johnstone" (Child 88), "Brown Robin" (Child 97) and "The Mother's Malison" (Child 216), which are all ballads of family defiance with Night Visit elements.

[33] See "Hind Horn" (Child 17), "Fair Janet" (Child 64), "Clerk Saunders" (Child 69), "Lord Saltoun and Auchanachie" (Child 239), "Lord William" (Child 254) and "The Earl of Mar's Daughter" (Child 270). After the murder of Clerk Saunders during a Night Visit, by his sweetheart's seven brothers, the father "Says, Hold your tongue, my daughter dear, / And ye'll lat a' your mourning be; / I'll wed you to a higher match / Or eer his father's son coud be" (Child 69G); compare *Romeo,* III. v, where Capulet's fury follows close on Romeo's dawn departure. Fair Janet's father, in Child 64, makes her marry a lord, but she falls dead at the feet of the sweetheart Willie when he comes to dance with her at the wedding, and Willie says he will soon follow her.

[34] In "The Gay Goshawk" (Child 96), the woman takes a sleeping draught and wakes, after the family has made elaborate preparations for her funeral, to claim her lover. Child notes: "There are many other ballads in which a girl, for one reason or another, feigns death" (Part IV, 356); see also "Willie's Lyke-Wake" (Child 25).

[35] This happens so frequently that many songs end, after the suicide or wasting away of the second lover, with the same pair of floating stanzas, describing the intertwining of the rose and the briar (or "birk") that grow from the graves. "Fair Janet" (Child 64A), for example, ends with the birk-and-briar motif. In his Queen Mab speech, Mercutio is of course drawing on another kind of folklore.

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being admitted. When Juliet asks with wilful innocence, "What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?" (II.ii.126), the audience realizes—if the point has not already been made by the height of her window—that no hasty meeting will take place in her room on this occasion. There is, however, a strong feeling that the pattern will be completed, wedding or no wedding, and that Romeo's entry has merely been postponed. The Night Visit in *Romeo and Juliet* is split over two nights, and the incompleteness of the visit is one source of the suspense between the Plighting and Parting Scenes. Even when Romeo's banishment has been pronounced, the expectation that the lovers will yet have one night together is thereby kept alive.

The meeting takes place literally over the heads of Juliet's father and suitor, a constant reminder that the wedding ceremony has not wholly legitimized the lovers' relationship. Their married life begins without the sanction of family or society, and is more like the private betrothal meeting in which Night Visit songs probably originated than like the consummation of a legal and church-blessed union. Harley Granville-Barker has suggested that we are actually aware that the lovers are together, even while we are watching another scene being played out on the main stage: "The upper stage was associated with Juliet; it had served for her balcony and had been put to no other use. So while Capulet is planning the marriage with Paris not only will our thoughts have been travelling to her, but our eyes may have rested speculatively, too, on those closed curtains above."[36] And when the lovers do make their appearance at the window, it is entirely appropriate that they present an aubade, the final phase of the Night Visit sequence.

The natural sequel to a stolen Night Visit is a Dawn Parting before the awakening of the family or the town. The European folk tradition is rich in love-lyrics which celebrate and lament the sweet sorrow of parting, and many of these are recorded in *Eos*, a compilation of poetry on lovers' meetings and partings at dawn from across the world. In his *Eos* article, T.J.B. Spencer sets out the evidence for an English tradition of dawn songs, and minimizes the extent to which the Parting Scene can usefully be derived from earlier continental examples of the aubade. He allows, however, that it is "closer to the

[36] *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Second Series (London, 1930), pp. 22–3; see also Hosley, who endorses Granville-Barker's views about the location of the two window scenes, refuting the theory that other scenes were also staged on the upper level.

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early folk-poetry on the dawn theme than to the sophistications of the Renaissance" and affirms that it does indeed contain "a buried dawn-song of the traditional kind."[37] I need not rehearse all his arguments, since the main points are well known. In spite of the doubtful pedigree of Shakespeare's Dawn Parting, the scene has all the thematic and formal properties that place it in the mainstream of the aubade folk tradition. It can be parallelled in numerous places in European song, not only in its use of minor conventions—birdsong, hints of light, ingenious arguments denying the nearness of day, interruption by a friendly watcher—but also in its dynamics, the tension between the lovers' reluctance to accept the passing of night and their inevitable need to part.

Romeo and Juliet's debate about the lark and the nightingale has one interesting English analogy in the old Child Ballad, "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard." The following exchange has the formality of a well-used convention, though no other close English variants are recorded by Spencer:

> "Methinks I hear the thresel-cock,
> Methinks I hear the jaye;
> Methinks I hear my lord Barnard,
> And I would I were away."
>
> "Lye still, lye still, thou Little Musgrave,
> And huggell me from the cold;
> 'T is nothing but a shephard's boy,
> A driving his sheep to the fold."
> (Child 81A)

These stanzas capture the spirit of the aubade, the contradictory fears and desires of the couple, which border on comedy even as tragedy approaches: Little Musgrave is persuaded to stay and is killed by the returning husband. The Parting Scene is similarly set on a knife edge between make-believe and murder, and its brief reference to a hunt's-up is a further reminder of danger. Juliet urges Romeo to escape as if he were the huntsman's prey, with the words

[37] *Eos*, ed. Arthur T. Hatto (The Hague, 1965), p. 522. See also Baskervill, pp. 593–610; and Kaske, "The Aube in Chaucer's *Troilus*" (cited above), "An Aube in the *Reeve's Tale*," *ELH*, XXVI (1959), 295–310, and "January's 'Aube,' " *MLN*, LXXV (1960), 1–4.

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"Hie hence, begone, away" (III.v.26),[38] and later in the same speech says of the larksong:

> that voice doth us affray,
> Hunting thee hence with hunt's-up to the day.
> (III.v.33–4)

One of the early versions of "Little Musgrave" also connects the jealous lord's ride with the beginning of a hunt:

> *And some they whistled, and some they sung,*
> Hey downe, downe:
> *And some did lowdly say,*
> *Ever as the Lord* Barnets *horne blew,*
> Away Musgrave, away.[39]

Shakespeare is evidently fishing in the same deep pool of images as the ballad-makers and, I suggest, not simply sharing universal poetic tropes, but actually inviting his audience to associate his lovers' words with the language and ways of folksong.

The song tradition embedded in the brief reference to a hunt's-up is not always related to the Night Visit sequence, though it is of course a kind of aubade. Shakespeare editors usually gloss the term as the bridal song that greets a couple on the first morning of their marriage, a custom which may possibly go back to the literal rousing of newly-weds by huntsmen.[40] There is, however, another side to this tradition, since some versions of the popular song entitled "The hunt is up" are specifically concerned with the parting of secret lov-

[38] Both "Hie" and "away" seem to have some secondary references to hunting cries. Huntsmen more usually said "Hay!"—see "Hey, Mountain, hey!" in *Tmp.*, IV. i. 255, or "and then cry heigh like a Huntsman" in *Monsieur Thomas*, III. i. 256. However, the Middle English Dictionary also has an entry for "hī(e" and cites *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 1445:" 'hyghe!' ful hyȝe, & 'hay! hay!' cryed" and *Hunting the Hare*, 136: "Thei cryed, 'Hy, hy!' " "Away" appears in the stanza of Child 81 quoted in the text, and in Skelton's *Eleanour Rumming*, 168–9: "Hey, dogge, hay, / Have these hogges away!"

[39] Quoted from *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, V. 198–202. There is a veiled hunting threat in "The Bonny Birdy" (Child 82), as the husband is approaching the house and his wife tells her lover: "What needs ye lang for day, diddle. / An wish that you were away? / . . . is nae your hawk i my perch-tree, / Just perching for his prey?"

[40] Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611; repr. Columbia, S.C., 1950), glosses "resveil" as: "A Hunts-up, or Morning song for a new-married wife, the day after the mariage."

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ers.[41] This better suits Juliet's notion of a lark acting as the lovers' watcher to inform them of the day's approach; it is also an effective way of bringing together the aubade motifs of huntsmen or birdsong accidentally waking the couple. Both kinds of hunt's-up apply to the situation of Romeo and Juliet in the Parting Scene.

Shakespeare exploits elsewhere the hunt's-up's equivocal connotations.[42] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus finds the two couples asleep in the forest and gives the command:

> Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
> (IV.i.138)

He is surprising secret lovers who have overslept; at the same time, he is ordering a hunt's-up and setting his seal of approval on their unions. In *Titus Andronicus*, the baying hounds sing the hunt's-up:

> The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
> The fields are fragrant and the woods are green.
> Uncouple here and let us make a bay,
> And wake the Emperor and his lovely bride.
> (II.ii.1–4)

There is nothing untraditional here: the opening words, "The hunt is up," prepare us for the reference to a ceremonial waking, the setting is fresh and early, and as always in the background is the suppressed allusion to the sexual chase of the wedding night and the coupling that has newly taken place. Yet a hunt can easily turn sinister. The Emperor's bride is already up and flirting with another lover in the forest, which will shortly become the scene of murder and rape and the barbarous, Philomel-like mutilation of Lavinia, the harmless nightingale of these woods. This contradiction between wedding and warning encapsulated in the idea of a hunt's-up is acutely relevant to Juliet, whose "husband, friend" (III.v.43) is married to her and yet

[41] See Baskervill, pp. 596–8; and Chappell, I, 60–2. The OED has a quotation for 1574: "Unlesse you some time arise to geve your parramours the *hunte is up* under the windowes." See also the cry of Fidele and the importunate suitor Crackstone, who has been caught in a net under a woman's window in *Two Italian Gentlemen*, IV. vi. 1412–14: "Hoe, *Victoria*, if ÿ be awake, rise & looke out I pray,' / 'The hunt is up, / And fooles be fledg'de before the perfect day."

[42] For other medieval and Renaissance uses of the Love Chase, see Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, 1974) and Don Cameron Allen, *Image and Meaning: Metaphoric Traditions in Renaissance Poetry* (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 93–114.

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still her secret lover; the clever handling of song conventions does not dull the edge of fear, which turns the genial, serenading huntsmen of folksong into the vicious social forces hounding Romeo from Verona. Again, a knowledge of the song tradition makes a modern audience more aware of the incredible economy of this brief Parting Scene, as Night Visit pulls taut against Dawn Parting, wedding song against lovers' aubade.

Between the Plighting and Parting Scenes, the mood has changed, and reminders of the earlier Night Visit serve to underline the difference between that sweet parting and this bitter division. With the line, "The day is broke, be wary, look about" (III.v.40), the Nurse bursts in on the scene and rudely precipitates Romeo's departure; unable to continue the comic off-stage part of the Night Visit scenario, she is now needed to take on the more serious aubade role of the faithful watcher.[43] When Romeo has reached the ground, the lovers are positioned as they were in the Plighting Scene; the Night Visit is now clearly over, and this heightens the finality of the lovers' farewells. Instead of anticipating Romeo's ascent, Juliet is now gazing down at the prospect of further descent and endless separation:

> O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
> Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
> (III.v.54–6)

It is fated that there will be a third Night Visit—the bizarre tryst in the tomb—when everything that folksong lovers fear becomes reality. The friendly watcher, Balthazar, fails to interrupt in time, the families and the town are aroused, and morning slowly breaks. But the unpartable lovers still lie together, indifferent to discovery by their kinsmen or the day.

Harvard University

[43] See Spencer, p. 521, on the Nurse. The watcher is a common figure in continental aubades, but there are no English examples, unless we count the birds in ballads like "The Grey Cock" (Child 248), which have the function of official watchers; see Baskervill, p. 608. References to the night watch in *Romeo*, III. iii and V. iii recall the appearance of the town watchman on the walls in Provençal albas. See B. Woledge, *Eos*, pp. 344–89, who lists the watchman as one of the alba's main distinguishing features (esp. p. 345); see also Spencer, p. 510.

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