

The muffled voice whispers. Romeo hears of Juliet's death, he goes to the tomb, he takes Juliet's body *Thy lips are cold*. Lets her stand, holds her close, her dead arms encircling his neck *Here will I remain*. He drinks the potion, one of Juliet's hands flutters with life, their eyes meet, for a moment, passionterror *felt where the marrow touches bone* just as her hand moves to touch his cheek, Romeo falls, Juliet in his arms, their lips warm. "Yes," I say. *Yes*.

Verona, July 8

She taunts me through the streets of Verona, laughs when I stumble, she remains always beyond my grasp. Her name is Giulietta and before I could lay a hand on her shoulder, before I could ask her, *are the yearnings inscribed on any one body different, truly and fundamentally different, from any other?* she floats away, her gown never touching the ground, she lifts it, even though it never touches the ground.

I follow her to the Scaligero Bridge. I lean over the stone wall, half my body falling over the other side, my arms, my head, my hair flailing in the wind, I am ready to fly, down, down, down.

How long would it take for my body to hit the River Adige? How long?

And this is what I saw: living in the moment, in pure exhilaration, where there is nothing waiting at the other end, free-fall. That was a life worth living, in that moment of yearning. Must there be death waiting at the end? Damn, damn, damn the spectacular endings.

Maria Francesca LoDico is a Montréal writer and cultural journalist. Her work has aired on CBC Radio and appeared in many magazines and anthologies. Most recently an essay about her father's passing away, The Disappearing Sicily, won first prize in the Accenti Magazine Literary Awards. She is also the editor of the Montréal Zagat Survey and co-creator of World Bites, a television series about food and identity. Francesca is currently writing a novel based on her childhood in Sicily for which she has received grants from the Canada Council and the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec.

Sources

Girolamo de la Corte, in his history of Verona, offers the story of Romeo and Juliet as a factual event that took place in 1303.

"Romeo e Giulietta." *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti*, Luigi da Porta (Venice, 1530).

La Giulietta, Matteo Bandello (1554).

The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet, Arthur Brooke (1562).

Palace of Pleasure, William Painter (1567).

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare (1595).

The above were inspired by: Hero and Leander, Pyramus and Thisbe, Tristan and Isolde.

In da Porto and Bandello, Giulietta does revive before Romeo dies; in Brooke, Painter and Shakespeare, she does not.

Architecture and Body, Scott Marble et al. (A special project of *Precis*, The Columbia Architectural Journal, Rizzoli, 1988).

Insight Guides Italy (1990).

The Real Guide – Italy (1990).

DESI DI NARDO

The Diamond Ring

Your tongue caught between your teeth
Looks like an expired clam
The limp meat, fleshy swollen
Protruding from your lips

The antique photo,
Your impeccable memory of it—
The profound bottom where the dead
Details dispersed in your murky purse

You yearned to become her— a heroine
In her freshly starched, daisy-print dress
With a view of the green, green rolling hills
A model housewife, pinning laundry in the
wind

The fluttering, snapping sheet
Was all that separated you from him
As it lifted, a million sparkles fell from your
girdle
Over Mr. Gatsby. Looking elusive on the other
end.

Desi Di Nardo's work has appeared in the LRC, Descant, Lichen, Fireweed, 13th Moon, the National Post, Poetry on the Way (TTC) in 2006, and Canada's Parliamentary Poet Laureate's "Poems of the Week." Desi is included in the University of Toronto's Library of Canadian Poets. She has worked as an on-air entertainment host/writer and English professor. Her website is: www.desidinardo.com.