

MICHAEL CARRINO
ROSALINE

Romeo. With Rosaline, my ghostly father? no;

I have forgot that name, and that name's woe.

Friar Lawrence. That's my good son: but where hast thou been, then?

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act two, Scene 3, lines 45–47

Another starless evening. Poisonous mist crept over
my good father's stout walls into our garden,
circled every flower, bitter herb, seduced
me into imagining my celibate heart
confused that fair boy, impulsive
as he often was, made him melancholy.
I professed celibacy,
assured him I would forever
turn away from passion, its clouded,
uncontrollable fancy. I admit
glancing in his direction, yes
more than once and he doted on me,
then pouted. It is rumored
he only attended the feast
to make unseemly comparisons, and there
met by chance, by misfortune,
that impish child, his fate.
My conscience is clean.
I was clear—I foreswore love.
He was stubborn, ardent,
yet quick to her embrace;
that bride, widow, mourned child.

Everyone whispered. Their stories
would by ruse of sweet verse,
allow any scribbler to miscast me,
leave me absent from the stage, my name
a distraction. Such tasteless morbidity.
I prayed and forgave
all tragic, useless lust. I employed
sincere, melodic words in a voice
as if it were myself betrothed,
joyfully preparing for my everlasting wedding.