

**Angel-Luis Pujante and Keith Gregor, eds. 2010.**  
***Hamlet en España: Las cuatro versiones neoclásicas.***  
**Salamanca and Murcia: Ediciones Universidad de**  
**Salamanca and Editum.**

**Keith Gregor and Angel-Luis Pujante, eds. 2011.**  
***Macbeth en España: Las versiones neoclásicas.***  
**Murcia: Editum.**

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The two books reviewed here can be considered as two aspects of one enterprise, jointly carried out by Angel-Luis Pujante and Keith Gregor. These volumes are also the most recent outcomes of a longer and very fruitful research project. Its origins can be found in the research carried out by Angel-Luis Pujante for his translations of Shakespeare's plays. Intended originally to substantiate his translations, his research eventually became a major, independent branch that centred on the compilation of material concerning the history of the reception of Shakespeare in Spain – a branch that broadened even further when it connected with the international project that sought the same goals in several countries in continental Europe. The conference on "Shakespeare in the New Europe," held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1993, can be considered one of the starting points. Pujante – with the help of colleagues from the University of Murcia – contributed to its development with a conference held in 1999, and some of these papers were published under the title *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*. For scholars in Spain the work required the collective effort of a team of academics, mostly located at the University of Murcia, whose research has produced outstanding results. A compilation of critical reports on Shakespeare from 1764 to 1916, carried out by Pujante and Laura Campillo, was published in 2007 under the title *Shakespeare en España*. This book

mapped out the full scope of criticism on Shakespeare and his work. Keith Gregor also offered a thorough account of Shakespeare's presence in Spanish theatre from 1772 to the present, in an essay published in 2010. Now Pujante and Gregor have turned their attention to the adaptations, versions, and translations of two of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, in late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century Spain. In scope their aims may seem to be much more limited: the neoclassical period is just a small portion of the map in the history of Shakespeare reception in Spain, and perhaps not the most appealing one. However, the volumes being reviewed address a rather neglected area, and offer interesting insights into the various ways Shakespeare has been re-shaped, and the motivations – both aesthetic and ideological – behind them. And it is to be hoped that their work continues with further editions of other plays by Shakespeare.

For the reader of these two volumes the most outstanding features of the versions compiled by Pujante and Gregor are twofold. On the one hand, the way in which these plays confirm the almost hegemonic influence exerted by neoclassical rules in the eighteenth century, which made France a veritable “aduana cultural” (Campillo 2007: xxi; Pujante and Gregor 2010:15) for theatrical productions in virtually the whole continent; and on the other, the fact that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* were known in Spain not through translations of the original in English, but from French versions – written by someone who had never read Shakespeare's plays. The word “version,” though used by the editors in the titles of their volumes, is perhaps not fully expressive of the extent of the transformation suffered by Shakespeare's plays, and in their analysis they suitably resort to an alternative term, “refundición,” to refer to what happened. From a present-day perspective, based on the utmost respect to the original, these *refundiciones* may seem perverted; yet they show how Shakespeare never was (perhaps still is not) a stable figure in western literary history.

A great deal of the responsibility for the dissemination of this distorted image of Shakespeare must be attributed to one single person: Jean-François Ducis. Voltaire can be held responsible for laying the grounds for the dismissal of Shakespeare as a rough dramatist in France, and Moratín for doing the same in Spain (see Pujante and Campillo 2007:xxi); but the brunt falls on Ducis – a

playwright whom Pujante and Gregor brand as “mediocre” (2010:17) yet who held a monopoly on Shakespeare for the French stage – and, via translations, the Spanish – for several decades. Ducis’s own versions of Shakespeare’s plays were based on the synoptic adaptations created by Pierre-Antoine de la Place (Pujante and Gregor 2010:18). For his *refundiciones* he further reshaped la Place’s plots so that they could fit within the patterns of neoclassicism; and to fulfil this plan he clipped and invented, reinterpreted events and renamed characters, to the extent that Shakespeare’s original *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are barely recognizable under his neoclassical coat of varnish. The story of these transformations is outlined in great detail and clarity in the introduction to each volume.

When faced with the prospect of the French re-formulation of Shakespeare’s plays, it may come as a surprise to find that, in providing versions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* for the Spanish stage, the translators were quite faithful to Ducis’s original. This is no doubt further evidence of the subordination of Spanish drama to the French at the time. The freedom of the translators was limited to the choice of verse patterns (from French alexandrines to Spanish hendecasyllabic lines) and, occasionally, to the change of names for some of the characters (for example, from Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth to Ducis’s Frédegonde to García Suelto’s Demetria) or some minor lexical variations motivated by the need to suit the plays to current political conditions. All this is explained with great clarity by Pujante and Gregor in their introductions to each of the volumes, and can be inferred as well from the versions presented here. The first offers all four known translations of *Hamlet*. According to the editors, two of them were based on Ducis’s 1770 version, the remaining two on a revised text, published in 1809. Of these, only the earliest, attributed to Ramón de la Cruz, was printed (in 1900; see Pujante and Gregor 2010:16); the rest (an anonymous translation held in Santander and those produced by Antonio de Saviñón and José M<sup>a</sup> de Carnerero) were hitherto only available in manuscript. Their significance for Shakespearian and Spanish theatrical history, however, is quite limited, considering that they were never used for theatrical productions. Yet, as Pujante and Gregor argue, they still serve as illustrations of the way in which “el mito de Hamlet [...] contribuyó a la recepción de Shakespeare en España y en el conjunto de Europa” (2010:25) for over fifty years. The same paradigm applies to *Macbeth*. Again, Ducis served as the basis, via his version of 1790,

for three Spanish translations: one, written by Teodoro de la Calle, is lost; the remaining two are presented here, and one of them (Antonio de Saviñón's) is made available in print for the first time. The author of the third translation, Manuel García Suelto, claimed that he wished to present it in a style that would be "claro y energético sin bajeza ni afectación, y una versificación fácil y armoniosa," and the editors concede that he succeeded in this endeavour (Gregor and Pujante 2011:28). The same can be said about all the other versions, in general, and readers who wish to ascertain how Shakespeare was reshaped in late eighteenth-century Spain will no doubt enjoy reading them here.

The contents of both volumes are arranged in very much the same manner. The first, featuring the *Hamlet* translations, opens with a brief but very illuminating introduction (13-41) which outlines the history of these translations, from Ducis to the manuscripts (seemingly intended for performance) to their printed format. Since Ducis is the main source, a fair proportion of the introduction focuses on the variations he introduced. The second part of the introduction shifts to the Spanish translations, and analyses both the formats (verse, rhyme) chosen by each of the translators and the changes they made to Ducis's own version. Most enlightening is the way the editors combine textual analysis with consideration on the political circumstances that seemingly determined certain – albeit minor – alterations in lexicon and plot. So, for example, they argue that Saviñón's version was in part influenced by his support for the liberal "Cortes de Cádiz", whereas Carnerero's was determined by his deep conservatism (Pujante and Gregor 2010:37-38). The volume then presents all four translations, in chronological order, followed by a section with "Notas complementarias" on the different copies used for their collation (345-350) and on the authorship of the translation attributed to Ramón de la Cruz (351-353). The fourth section comprises two appendixes, with the first Spanish translation from an original in English (Moratín's) and a table listing all Spanish versions of *Hamlet*, from 1772 (the translation attributed to de la Cruz) to 2000 (by Alfonso López and Borrego for Edimat), compiled by Laura Campillo. The volume ends with a brief list of works cited.

The volume on *Macbeth* features the same sections: the introduction (11-35) has an account of the pains it took Ducis to make Shakespeare's tragedy palatable and "artísticamente

convincente” according to neoclassical tastes yet with the necessary “verité de sentiment” (Gregor and Pujante 2011:17, 18) – a greater challenge to verisimilitude than *Hamlet*, which “only” had the problem of the supernatural apparition of Hamlet’s father: for *Macbeth* Ducis had to cope with the presence of the witches and with the bloody excesses of the Scottish tyrant. Then the introduction analyses the two extant Spanish translations. The third section is here limited to a mere two-paragraph note on the two manuscript versions of Saviñón’s *Macbeth* and García Suelto’s printed edition (219); possibly just enough but otherwise a too succinct account of the differences between Saviñón’s first – and seemingly poorer – and second manuscript copies. An appendix in the fourth section includes, again, the first translation of *Macbeth* based on an English version; this was undertaken by José García de Villalta and, attesting to the prevalence of neoclassical tastes at the time, it proved a “fracaso mayúsculo” on the stage (Gregor and Pujante 2011:12), yet the text provides a substantial basis for any reader who wishes to compare it with the two neoclassical versions. A second appendix is drawn from Laura Campillo’s table of versions of *Macbeth* made in Spain from 1803 (Teodoro de la Calle’s) to 2009 (Miralles Torner’s). The volume concludes with a list of works cited.

If in their content arrangement these two volumes are very similar, in their printed format there are some differences to note. *Hamlet en España* has been published by Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca in collaboration with Editum (the publisher for the University of Murcia) on cream-coloured paper, which offers the visual impression of a good-quality print; 11-point font sizes, which may be a bit too small for some readers but means that each page contains sizeable portions of the text; and, most importantly, page headings which facilitate the location of each page within its corresponding section. *Macbeth en España*, on the other hand, published only by Editum, has a more austere format, with twelve-point fonts on white paper and no page headings. The printers’ choice of Ibarra Real as the font for the neoclassical versions is commendable in terms of the recuperation of national heritage print types, but its presentation on the page clashes somewhat with the bare formatting of the page itself. This may just be a personal impression, but these formatting choices make the first volume more attractive and readable than the second.

In all, the merits of these two volumes are considerable. Theatre historians and Shakespeare scholars will find here a unique opportunity to read texts hitherto not available and to learn about a rather neglected period in the history of Shakespeare's reception in Spain.

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