

**William Shakespeare. 2013.**  
***Sonetos y Querellas de una amante.***  
**English edition, introduction, translation and notes by**  
**Luciano García García**  
**Valencia: JPM Ediciones**

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“El que quiera ser juez inexorable de las traducciones poéticas, pruebe primero qué cosa es traducir de una lengua extraña en la suya sin añadir o quitar sentencia, y guardar cuanto es posible las figuras del original y su donaire, y hacer que hable en castellano, y no como extranjero y advenedizo, sino como nacidas en él y naturales”.

(Fray Luis de León, “Dedicatoria a Don Pedro Portocarrero”, 1631)

Shakespeare’s poetry, especially his “sugared sonnets”, has attracted the attention of several excellent Spanish translators in the last forty years of fruitful Anglo-Spanish literary relations. The list includes a number of Spanish-speaking literati of unquestionable prestige who have attempted the perilous task of rendering the Bard’s genius into the language of Cervantes, in most cases with meritable quality. Proof of this interest in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* among Hispanophone translators, readers and scholars<sup>1</sup> cannot only be attributed to the pioneering editions of the venerable Luis Astrana Marín (1932). Fortunately there are many more: Fátima Auad and Pablo Mañé

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed Ian R. MacCandless (1987) and J. Á. Marín Calvarro (1999) are two examples of authors of doctoral theses on Spanish translations of a good number of Shakespeare’s sonnets.

Garzón (1975, Ediciones 29), Agustín García Calvo (1983, Anagrama), Atilio Pentimalli (1990, Ediciones 29), Carlos Pujol (1990, Comares), Gustavo Falaquera (1993, Hiperión), Manuel Mújica Láinez (1997, Orbis), José María Álvarez (1998, Pre-Textos), Ramón García González (2003, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes), Antonio Rivero Taravillo (2004, Renacimiento; 2010, Biblioteca de Literatura Universal, Almuzara), Carmen Pérez Romero (2006, Universidad de Extremadura), Pedro Pérez Prieto (2008, Editorial Nívola), Christian Law Palacín (2009, Bartleby Editores), Andrés Ehrenhaus (2009, Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores), Ramón Gutiérrez Izquierdo (2011, Visor) and Miguel Ángel Montezanti (2011, Eudem, translated into the dialect spoken in the Argentinian area of Río de la Plata). Some of the aforementioned translator-poets have also published their Spanish versions of *all* Shakespeare's (known) poetic production, not only of the *Sonnets*. Furthermore, approaches have been varied, ranging from those who have translated their English iambic pentameters into Spanish prose, as in the cases of Astrana Marín and Auad and Mañé Garzón, to those who have translated only the metre, not the rhyme, such as Mújica Láinez and Law Palacín, or those who have applied both metre and rhyme in their translations, such as García Calvo, Pérez Prieto or Ehrenhaus.

Only a meagre few have been capable of translating Shakespeare's poetry and surviving the attempt with flying colours. In literary translation, as in most artistic endeavours and indeed in many aspects of life, the dividing line between the sublime and the ridiculous is extremely fine, and translating Shakespeare's poetry (indeed his whole literary production) puts any brave translator to the test. One of the latest scholars to join this elite club of competent translators who have dared challenge Shakespeare face to face and prove his philological, literary and astute strength is Dr Luciano García García, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Jaén who has devoted many years of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching to the English Renaissance and early modern literature as well as to the study of the Anglo-Spanish literary relations of the period. His main interests are Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry and drama (especially Shakespeare as a poet and playwright) and literary – especially poetic – translation. Indeed, his specialization in the two aforementioned lines of research could not combine more successfully, as

proved in his recent Spanish edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and *A Lover's Complaint*.

García's edition of *Sonetos y Querellas de una amante* (2013) includes not only the solving of the abundant textual peculiarities, punctuation problems and incongruities of the conventions of the period, of Shakespeare's own literary idiolect and of the succeeding editors who modified the texts since they were finally printed in 1609, but also an informative Introduction, followed by his excellent Spanish renderings of the 154 sonnets and of the 47 stanzas of *A Lover's Complaint*, all of which are accompanied by illuminating and scholarly footnotes on textual, biographical, cultural, philological and linguistically relevant data. With intellectual honesty, García acknowledges his debt to Rollins (1944), Wilson (1966), Duncan-Jones (1997), Kerrigan (1999), Burrow (2002) and Atkins (2007). His textual edition has naturally been based on the 1609 *Quarto*.

The Introduction that precedes the bilingual edition of the *Sonnets* and *A Lover's Complaint* allows this versatile editor-translator to explain his methodology and plan of action in detail. He reminds the fairly-specialised Spanish reader of the latest advancements in Shakespearean studies in connection with his poetry, but he also endeavours to familiarise his cultivated readership with the different interpretations of the mysterious biographical halo that envelops the circumstances in which Shakespeare wrote his *Sonnets* and *A Lover's Complaint*. García feels compelled to grant that little can be affirmed about Shakespeare, as so little is indeed known for certain about his personal life. He nevertheless addresses unsolved questions such as who the implicit narrator of the poems or the addressee(s) could have been, and even speculates on the identities of the rival poet and of the dark lady. He also wonders, just like many other specialists on the Bard, whether this poetic collection should be taken at face value. Should both scholar and reader consider the poems' hidden (auto)biographical hints seriously? Were the *Sonnets* merely the product of an exercise in dramatic poetic fiction?

García rejects the numerous hypotheses of late which reject the attribution of such dramatic and poetic works of universally-renowned geniality to the Stratford-born actor and impresario. After this open declaration of faith in the 1564-1616 Shakespeare and his refusal to accept any form of what we could call "Shakes-fiction," the editor uses his scholarly knowledge of the Bard's life and age to

elucidate key issues of his poetry, namely the T.T. initials of the (probably pirate) 1609 edition of the *Sonnets*, allegedly corresponding to Thomas Thorpe; or the mysterious W. H. initials of the dedication, presumably referring to the implicit addressee (the “lovely boy” and the “onlie begetter” of the sonnets), either Henry Wriothesley (Earl of Southampton) or William Herbert (Count of Pembroke). García explains the reasons employed by the supporters of the respective hypotheses which favour one candidate or the other, but brings to the fore an extra piece of information that should not be ignored: that the use of “Mr” in the dedication would not be an appropriate way of addressing a nobleman, but a gentleman, thus expanding the number of candidates to three in order to include William Harvey, and thus adding more fuel to the fire of uncertainty concerning all things Shakespearean. García nevertheless indicates his inclination towards the candidacy of Southampton.

The editor also devotes a few pages to the mysterious identity of the dark lady. He supports the idea that she was the Anglo-Italian Emilia Lanier (née Bassano), but does not ignore the weaker hypotheses that favour other female candidates, including a coloured girl (in support of which he reminds us that the English court had black musicians brought from Spain in the royal train of Catherine of Aragon). In his preference for Emilia Lanier, García admits to having based his choice on the feebleness of the hypotheses of the other candidates and on the number of characters with the names of Bassanio/Bassianus and Emilia/Emilius in Shakespeare’s “Venetian” plays. The reader might nonetheless have liked to read more of this poetess and musician of Italian (and probable) Jewish origin of dark hair and eyes about whom so much is now known thanks to the diaries of the Elizabethan astrologer Simon Forman, of whom Mrs Lanier was herself a customer and confider. These diaries were discovered and studied by the controversial and temperamental Shakespeare scholar A. L. Rowse (1973), who introduced the idea of Emilia Bassano/Lanier as the dark lady of the *Sonnets*. The young Emilia Bassano was the mistress of the elderly Henry Carey (Lord Hunsdon, the probable natural son of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn’s sister Mary, and the patron of The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, Shakespeare’s company). When Emilia became pregnant with Hunsdon’s child she was hurriedly married to the court musician Alphonso Lanier. Mrs Lanier’s mothering of a bastard son – named Henry, just like his father and his royal

grandfather – is of paramount relevance for the understanding of sonnet 127. If we accept these biographical data on Emilia Lanier to be true (taking for granted that she is indeed the dark lady of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*), it is surprising that García's translation of the aforementioned sonnet seems to deviate from this hypothesis, despite the fact that he himself admits to believing that Mrs Lanier could well have been the dark lady. The key allusion to the dark lady's "bastard shame" is ignored in García's translation. Lines 3-4 of the sonnet, "But now is black beauty's successive heir, | And beauty slandered with a bastard shame", are translated as "Mas ahora es de lo bello heredero aunque dudoso | Y belleza tachada de infame bastardía". Apart from the fact that the phrase "aunque dudoso" is a superfluous addition for the sake of the rhyme with "hermoso" (line 1), García's translation of line 4, "Belleza tachada de infame bastardía," seems to imply that the dark lady's beauty is marred by her bastard origin, when its correct translation should have made it clear that Emilia Lanier's beauty was marred by having had a bastard child. In my opinion, García could also have devoted more pages to explaining in more detail the life and deeds of this extraordinary lady, the author of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), one of the first professional poetesses in England, who many believe was so closely connected to Shakespeare, although the Bard, let us face it, could probably have been merely one more of her repertoire of lovers.

García also discusses the identity of the rival poet. According to him, the mysterious poet was either Christopher Marlowe (following Rowse, who believed in the latter's homosexuality and was, therefore, more likely to be favoured by the bisexual Southampton) or, as most critics now seem to accept, George Chapman. García does not opt clearly for either Marlowe or Chapman, although he makes the point of referring to documents that insist on Southampton's heterosexual behaviour after his marriage. The readers are presented with the facts and left to decide.

As regards *A Lover's Complaint* [*Querellas de una amante*], García laments in his explanatory Introduction both its consideration as a minor poetical work to accompany the publication of the *Sonnets* and the fact that it has been the recipient of little scholarly attention or interest of translators. García insists on the value of the "complaints," not only for their literary worth *per se*, but also as a

logical poetical conclusion of the *Sonnets*, as they add a more impersonal but no less perceptive analysis of love.

García pays special attention to explaining two key issues of his translations. Firstly, that he has endeavoured to give his versions a touch of Golden Age literary Spanish so as to approximate the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader to the feeling of reading the literary English of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The translator's skill in this is of the highest standard, as he succeeds in transporting the Spanish readership to the illusion of reading a Spanish alter-ego of the English poet. He also conveys his preoccupation in having made the right choice of verse for his Spanish renderings of Shakespeare's poetic production.

As any translator of poetry knows, in the case of translating English poems into Spanish, we have to take into account a few discrepancies existing between both languages as far as the counting of syllables is concerned. A Spanish line of verse requires a higher number of syllables than an English one. Any English-Spanish poet-translator is therefore forced to simplify and concentrate different meanings into a reduced number of syllables/words. The Spanish-English poet-translator would have to do the opposite, that is, to amplify the content of the verse by adding more syllables to his/her version. Besides, the English rhythmical system is orderly and regular (due to the abundance of lexical monosyllables and the great number of stressed syllables organized in metrical feet, where stressed and unstressed syllables alternate), whereas the Spanish system tends to be more variable.

Let us take the example of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. The most widely employed practice among Spanish translators who have attempted to translate the iambic pentameter of the *Sonnets* is to use the "alejandrino," as proposed by García himself (35-36), or the "endecasílabo rítmicamente pleno," as proposed by Pérez Prieto (2010:41-42), consisting in placing the stress on every two syllables, thus coinciding with the structure of iambic pentameter; and even to use the "endecasílabo blanco" or other longer verse structures, as proposed by others. García is right when he states that the main difficulty that we find when translating English poetry into Spanish metres, or at least into lines of the same length as the original, is that the "endecasílabo" is too short a line for the usual ten syllables of the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Even though he has

opted for the use of the Spanish “alejandrino,” he is perfectly aware of its possible disadvantages: firstly, that it is too long-winded and rigid in Spanish; and secondly, that its use runs the risk of surpassing the limit that the human brain interprets as a unit of perception and therefore tends to disintegrate into two halves or hemistiches. Because he is aware of its drawbacks, his choice of the “alejandrino” is governed by his own instinct rather than by an obsession with keeping strictly to the placing of its accents. He accepts the fact that his “alejandrinos” may occasionally result in fifteen-syllable “alejandrinos de gaita gallega.” As for the enigmatic *Complaints*, first printed at the end of *Shake-speares Sonnets*, published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609 and preceded by a separate heading and a further ascription to Shakespeare (but whose authorship several critics nowadays doubt), García has been a pioneer in, once again, turning their seven-line stanzas of iambic pentameters, known as “royal rhyme” or “Chaucerian stanza,” into “alejandrinos” which match perfectly the original English rhyme ABABBCC. The best that a poet can do, the translator and philologist García insists, is at least adhere as faithfully as possible to the ideas expressed in the poem and at the same time aspire to producing a natural poetic diction in Spanish, even if this means breaking the orthodox prosodic rules a little, be they “endecasílabos” or “alejandrinos,” as long as the Spanish verse reads smoothly and as naturally as it would read in English. And this is exactly what he does with extremely commendable skill and poetic intuition.

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