

INTRODUCTION

Birmingham's Shakespeare Collection now contains 98 languages, ranging from French and German, all the way to Klingon. As an English Literature and Spanish student at the University of Birmingham, I thought it would be interesting to do some research about where Spain fits into the collection. Whilst Shakespeare was not translated into Spanish until 1772, Spain's links with Shakespeare go back as far as the Bard himself.¹ I have used items from the collection in order to create a whistle stop tour of Spain's relationship with Shakespeare over the years.

SHAKESPEARE AND CERVANTES

It is possible that not only has Shakespeare had an impact on Spain, but that Spain had an impact on Shakespeare. Of course, one of his plays (*Love's Labour's Lost*) is set in Spain, but the influence doesn't end there. It is thought that Shakespeare may have been directly influenced by Miguel de Cervantes. The works of Shakespeare and Cervantes have often been linked over the years. Of course, they were contemporaries, both publishing work in the 17th century. But more than that, I don't think it would be too much of a stretch to say that when you think of English Literature, you think of Shakespeare, and when you think of Spanish Literature, you think of Cervantes. There is no evidence to suggest that the two ever crossed paths, and yet, it is believed that an English translation of *Don Quixote* may have influenced Shakespeare's lost play *Cardenio*.² Cardenio is a character from *Don Quixote*, and it is possible that Shakespeare used this character as inspiration for his play. However, given the fact that no manuscript survives of *Cardenio*, and it is already shrouded in questions of authorship, this link between Cervantes and Shakespeare seems a little tenuous. What can be said for certain is that the two writers were inspired by similar themes. As was said by James Fitzmaurice-Kelly in a lecture in 1916 (a transcript of which is in the collection) 'the methods of Cervantes and Shakespeare often differed, but their interest in the manifestations of human nature makes them akin'.³

TRANSLATING SHAKESPEARE INTO SPANISH

It took quite a while for Shakespeare to be available to read in Spanish. While translations started to be produced in the late 18th century, these were often heavily edited or adapted versions made to be performed. In a lecture given by Sir Henry Thomas in 1949 (transcript also in the collection), he even goes so far as to say these versions were 'falsified', and it was not until the 19th century that more faithful adaptations became available for Spanish people to read.⁴

I think it is also important to recognize that Castilian Spanish is by no means the only language spoken in Spain, and it is also not the only one in the Shakespeare Collection. In his lecture, Thomas asserts that 'English verse falls more easily into Catalan' than it does into Spanish.⁵ I thought it would be interesting to compare how one of Shakespeare's sonnets sounds when written in English, Spanish and Catalan. When Shakespeare was writing, poetry was made to be read aloud, so how it sounds is just as important as its meaning. Even if you do not speak Spanish or Catalan, I think it would still be worthwhile to read them aloud and compare the rhythms and how well each one flows. I have taken three versions of Sonnet 116 (my favourite) from books from the collection so you

¹ James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Cervantes and Shakespeare*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), p.2

² Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Cervantes and Shakespeare*, p.6

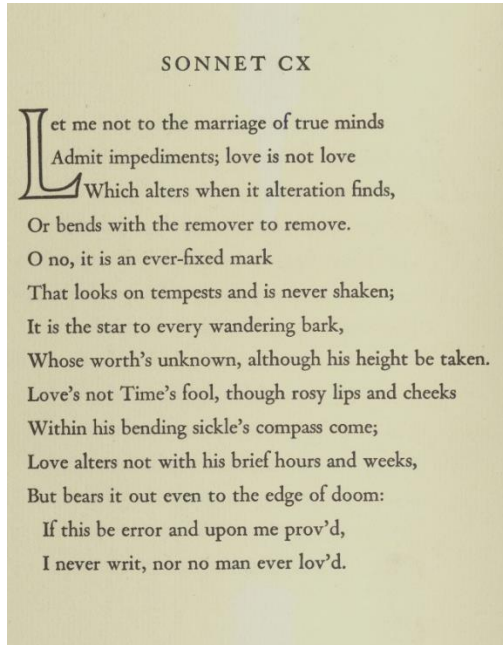
³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Cervantes and Shakespeare*, p.7

⁴ Sir Thomas Henry, *Shakespeare in Spain* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlidge, 1929), p.15

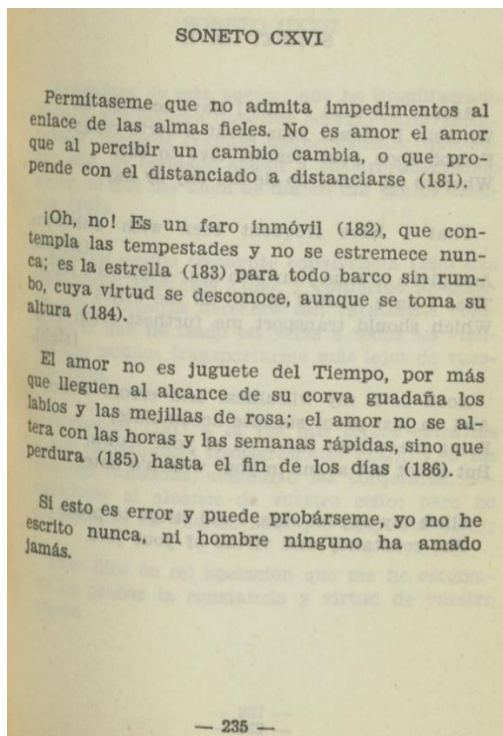
⁵ Henry, *Shakespeare in Spain*, p.20

can compare how each one sounds in the different languages. It is interesting to note the different word counts. The English version has 110 words, the Catalan 104, and the Spanish one 129! This will have a significant difference on the way each one sounds.

Sonnet 116 in English (The Sonnets of William Shakespeare by Grey Walls, 1948)



Sonnet 116 in Spanish (Sonetos de Shakespeare, Edición Crítica con el Texto Original y su Versión Española, 1944)



Sonnet 116 in Catalan (Els Sonets de Shakespeare, traducció completa de Carme Montriol Puig, 1928)

No creuré mai que hi hagi impediments
a la unió de cors fidels; que amor
no és ver amor subjecte a mudaments
o bé minvant a embat del disfavor.

Oh, no!, que Amor és far de fonda arrel,
trionfador de tota tempestat;
per' nau errant, el sempre fix estel
del qual medim l'alçada, no l'esclat.

No és joc del Temps, l'Amor. Ell no coneix
defalliments, ni tem el curs dels anys;
a Joventut, en forces, no cedeix,
i es manté ferm en mig dels desenganys.

Si, en mi, que és fals això provava algú,
ni jo he escrit mai, ni mai ha amat ningú.

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SHAKESPEARE IN 20TH CENTURY SPAIN

For the final section of this blog post, I wanted to take a look at the role Shakespeare played in Spain during the 20th century. I am specifically interested in how the Franco regime, which lasted from the end of the Civil War in 1939 to Franco's death in 1975, interacted with Shakespeare. During the regime, especially in its earlier years, Franco was keen to nationalise Spain, and promote the importance of 'Spanishness' and the values of the Catholic Church. It was found early on in the regime that the theatre would be a good way to promote these values. You might think that because the regime wanted to promote Spain and all things Spanish, it wouldn't choose an English writer to do so. But this was not the case. Shakespeare was performed at least once a year in the Español theatre in Madrid. However, plays were often modified to fit the ideals of Spain at the time. As is said by Keith Gregor in his book *Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre* (in the collection), Shakespeare in Spain during this period had the 'aura of recognizable Shakespeareanism, while carefully reshaping the text to suit the prevailing mood'.⁶ Despite Shakespeare not being Spanish, with some changes, his plays were still able to convey what the regime needed them to. As one critic was overheard saying after leaving a 1942 production of *Hamlet*: 'this is something to make even the coldest-hearted of us proud to proclaim themselves Spanish'.⁷ This Spanish example demonstrates to us how far Shakespeare's works have come since he wrote them all those years ago. Their meanings have

⁶ Keith Gregor, *Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p.89

⁷ Gregor, *Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre*, p.89

changed and evolved so many times. Hamlet was not originally written to promote a Spanish regime, but it was adapted as a tool to do so.

Shakespeare was also used as a tool to rebel against the regime. In 1967, a production of *Julius Caesar* was put on in Catalunya by the Alpha 63 Company. In general, people in Catalunya were opposed to the regime, as Franco was firmly against regional autonomy, as well as banning Catalan from public use. So, it was no coincidence that Alpha 63 chose Julius Ceasar. They wanted to make a point about a tyrannical dictator. As Gregor puts it, it was an 'audacious attempt to relate Shakespeare's play to late Francoist Spain'.⁸ There is a sense of irony in the fact that Shakespeare was used to promote the regime, but also to rebel against it – I think this proves the extent to which his work had been interpreted and used differently, depending on where and when you are.



Emma Parker, UoB Undergraduate Student, written as part of the Professional Skills Module (2023)

⁸ Gregor, *Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre*, p.95

Bibliography

James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Cervantes and Shakespeare*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1916)

Keith Gregor, *Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010)

Sir Thomas Henry, *Shakespeare in Spain* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlidge, 1929)

Images from the Shakespeare Collection:

La Tempestad (1962-63) by el Teatro Español

España Ahora (1990) by Teatro Experimental Andaluz

Production photograph on page 1:

Julius Ceasar, Teatro Romano, Merida, Compañía Lope de Vega, 1964

Sonnet 116 in English (The Sonnets of William Shakespeare by Grey Walls, 1948)

Sonnet 116 in Spanish (Sonetos de Shakespeare, Edición Crítica con el Texto Original y su Versión Española, 1944)

Sonnet 116 in Catalan (Els Sonets de Shakespeare, traducció completa de Carme Montriol Puig, 1928)

The Tempest, Teatro Espanol, Madrid, 1962

Midsummer Night's Dream, Teatro Espanol, Madrid, 1964