

Selected Poems
of
Fernando de Herrera

translated from Spanish by

Luis Ingelmo

&

Michael Smith

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2013 by
Shearsman Books
50 Westons Hill Drive
Emersons Green
BRISTOL
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-334-8

Selection and translations
copyright © 2014, Luis Ingelmo and Michael Smith.
Introduction copyright © 2014, Luis Ingelmo and Michael Smith.

Copyright in these translations remains
with Luis Ingelmo and Michael Smith, who have asserted their rights
to be identified as the translators of these works, in accordance with
the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

Contents

Introduction	7
Note on the Translations	9
<i>from</i> Various Poems	
Poems in Castilian Metres	
Poems in Italian Metres	
<i>from</i> Some Works by Fernando de Herrera	109
<i>from</i> Verses by Fernando de Herrera, <i>emended & divided by him into three books</i>	113
Indice de primeros versos	
Index of First Lines	144

Fernando de Herrera: A Brief Biography & Background

Little is definitely known about the life of Fernando de Herrera (1534-97) despite the fact that he was well known in his native Seville—though even his place of birth is disputed. There are references to a relatively humble birth. Herrera himself and his friend Pacheco affirm that Seville was his place of birth, but others claim that he was born of “*nobles padres con moderada hacienda*” (of noble parents of moderate means), basing on this his lifelong disdain for the *vulgus* and his espousal of the Horatian *odi et amo*... Whatever about any of this, which is the area of scholars, Herrera opted to take minor religious orders rather than full religious orders and entered into the service of Don Álvaro de Portugal, Count of Gelves, with the intention of devoting himself to poetry and his intellectual interests, which the Count and his wife Leonor cultivated. Herrera fell platonically in love with Leonor, who became his muse and to whom so many of his poems are dedicated. She became his Petrarch’s Laura: anything beyond this is pure speculation and most unlikely.

Even Herrera’s erudition has been put in doubt by some scholars. That he knew Italian and Latin is undoubted, but some doubt has been cast on his knowledge of Greek, with some scholars believing that he used Latin translations of the Greek. The weight of evidence, however, suggests that he knew Greek. What is not in doubt is his profound erudition, which is manifest in his *Obras de Garcilaso de la Vega con anotaciones de Fernando de Herrera*.

And what is not in doubt either is the importance of Seville in Spain in the first half of the 16th century. It was the primary port receiving the gold and silver from Spanish galleons arriving from the Americas, on which Spain built its European empire, making Seville the richest city in the Iberian Peninsula. It was the cradle of the Spanish Renaissance, in architecture, scholarship, philosophy, literature and other areas of the arts. It was certainly the right place in which Herrera could find a place for himself with his irrepressible enthusiasm for literature and study. Furthermore, he was fortunate in finding the patronage of the Count of Gelves, and especially of his wife Leonor, who established that Spanish institution known as *tertulias*, gatherings of scholars and writers who met to discuss the

humanistic culture of the Renaissance. It was that patronage that enabled him to pursue his literary and scholarly career which would not have been possible for him on the meagre resources of a cleric in minor orders.

More relevantly, so far as Herrera's poetry is concerned, is the impact on Spanish poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega and his friend Juan Boscán, which is not, however, to minimise the influence of Petrarch. Their poetry was collected by Boscán's widow and published in 1543 with the title *Las obras de Boscán y algunas de Garcilaso de la Vega repartidas en cuatro libros*. The writing of the poems was inspired by Andrea Navagero, whom the Venetian Signoria had sent to the Spanish Imperial Court of Charles V. Navagero, among many other Italians, had experimented with Italian prosody with the object of expressing in his native language the Latin rhythms of Horace and Virgil, and he had achieved much success. In Spain, Navagero met and befriended a young Spaniard, a man of the Renaissance, one Juan Boscán, whom he strenuously persuaded to try what had not before been attempted in Spanish—in fact, the Marquis of Santillana *had* attempted sonnets, although these were not then in print—the writing in Spanish of “sonnets and other forms” employed by good Italian authors. Boscán's example was followed by that of his friend Garcilaso, and out of their joint efforts eventually came their posthumously published book; and out of that book came Spanish Renaissance poetry and its earliest and probably greatest and most influential practitioner, Fernando de Herrera. Garcilaso's models were Virgil's eclogues and Horace's odes. More than Boscán, he stayed close to these classical models while learning, nonetheless, from their Italian imitators, Petrarch and Tasso. The chief characteristics of his poetry are restraint, elegance and respect for form. These are the qualities that Garcilaso found in Petrarch and they are the qualities that Herrera learned from Garcilaso without forfeiting the qualities of his native Spanish. In this he was no different from Ariosto, Michelangelo, Ronsard, Góngora, Camões, Sydney and Donne. Robert M. Durling remarked in his *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Harvard, 1976), “Petrarch's example aroused in poets all over Europe the hope of achieving classic representation in the mother tongue.”

Note on Our Herrera Translations

Most of the poems in this book were written by Herrera in sonnet form. Despite the renewal of this poetic form in English in recent years and although not usually adhering strictly to the older models such as the Shakespearian or Miltonic, archaisms of syntax and diction have not been altogether avoidable in these endeavours and have frequently vitiated the readability of otherwise fine efforts to carry the originals over to a modern readership. In view of this, the present translators have attempted the experiment of recasting the poems into modern form, avoiding paraphrase and the presumption of imitation in the Lowellian sense (sometimes called “interlingual recreation”). We have tried to achieve a calculated cadence that is usually not be found in prose versions which, however, we accept as having an undeniable usefulness in helping readers with enough Spanish to access the originals. We have kept in mind in our “re-creations” the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Propertius’ poems as translated by John Warden.

The mechanical reproduction of the original sonnet form results all too often in what Lowell rightly called literary taxidermy, something we have strenuously tried to avoid. This experiment may, and probably will outrage purists, but the translations of these sonnets were not made for such purists. We hope that enough of the originals has been retained to remind the modern reader of the poems literary historicity while avoiding a deadening temporal lock-in. Pleasurable readability without betrayal of the originals has been our primary aim.

As regards the ballads, we have had to take a somewhat different approach. Without ignoring rhyme except when it came naturally, and using more or less regular metre as a fundamental beat, it would have been impossible to translate these poems unless one resorted to a degree of paraphrase that would make it a misnomer to describe them as translations. Our compromise was to use assonance, the suggestion of a regular beat (as we’ve said), and the elimination of some tautologies only necessary to the metrical requirements of the originals. Taking all this into account, we have not hesitated to change line-breaks rather than force the English into unnatural inversions.

Spanish romances or ballads are not folk ballads in the English sense. While they use traditional forms, their content is usually of

an erudite, not popular nature, and has more in common with the *ballata* of Provençal. And it is this that makes it so difficult to use the English ballad form in translating them into English. One has only to look at the linguistic contortions that Pound had to employ in his versions of the Provençal *ballatas*. Despite his mastery of English prosody, Pound's versions of the Provençal are not his best efforts in translation, bogged down as they often are—and as he himself more or less admitted—in an awkward, even grotesque mixture of archaisms and colloquial English. All in all, his versions are less readable than those of Rossetti, however inadequate these may now seem. As for our own efforts, we have been prepared to sacrifice smoothness for fidelity. The term “musicality” applied to poetry is no more than a metaphor even when applied to lyrics intended for singing or musical accompaniment. It is, of course, arguable that poetry is not separable from its form. Adhered to strictly, however, this would mean that poetry cannot be translated. But poetry has been, and continues to be translated, often with great success. It is our conviction that half a loaf is better than no bread. What reader without German is not hugely indebted to Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton, to mention just two great modern translators? Or the reader without Chinese to the heroic efforts of Arthur Waley?

Something should be said about our translation of Herrera's ‘Eclogue’. Obviously the poem is very much indebted to Petrarch, or at least to Petrarch's reading of Virgil, as Petrarch was imported into Spanish by Garcilaso de la Vega and his friend Boscán. We have done our best to make this Renaissance pastoral readable to a modern reader without resorting to savage cuttings and displacements. The poem is what it is and cannot be removed altogether from its time and place. But to omit it would be to distort the range of Herrera's work. He wrote many poems of this sort, most of which, like Petrarch's, will not travel easily into English. Still, it seemed a good idea to include a sample of his work in this genre.

Similarly, we have done our best to make Herrera's ‘Elegy’ readable in English while staying as close as possible to the original. We think we have managed a reasonable cadence, without being unfaithful to the original, which is really the best that can be done short of metrical taxidermy.

Michael Smith, *Dublin*
Luis Zamelmo, *Zamora*

Note on the Spanish text

The Spanish text printed here has been modernised—this volume was never intended to be a palaeographic or philological edition—and is drawn from the following volume:

Juan Boscán, Garcilaso de la Vega, Fray Luis de León, San Juan de la Cruz, Fernando de Herrera: *Obras poéticas completas* (Inoria Pepe Sarno and José María Reyes Cano, eds.), Madrid: Cátedra, 2010.

de Poemas varios

from Various Poems

Poesía en metros castellanos

Poetry in Castilian Metres

1
ROMANCE

Días de mi perdición,
temidos y deseados,
si os cansáis de mi pasión,
¿por qué crecéis mis cuidados?

No hay en mí tanta dureza
que los pueda sostener,
ni me puede ya hacer
mayor mal vuestra braveza.

Yo padezco aborrecido,
pero no desesperado,
porque, cuanto más perdido,
tanto más vivo engañado.

Confuso, solo y dudoso,
no puede alegrarme el bien,
que los daños del desdén
me hacen todo celoso.

Vos fuisteis principio, días,
de mis pequeños contentos,
y volvéis mis alegrías
ya en eternos descontentos.

Tiempo ligero, mudable,
que nunca tienes firmeza:
solo para mi tristeza
te haces siempre inmutable.

Como llevas sin parar
mis cortos bienes perdidos,
¿por qué dejas afirmar
estos mis males crecidos?

1
BALLAD

Ruinous days,
dreaded, desired;
if my passion wears you out
why nurture my cares?

My durance
can't bear them;
your arrogance
is worse still.

I suffer rejection
not despair of my ill;
the more I am lost
the more foolish I live.

Perplexed, alone, unsure,
well-being's no joy.
The hurts of disdain
enjoin jealousy.

You, days, were
my meagre content.
You now change my joy
into endless unrest.

Weather fickle,
you'll never stay firm.
My sadness alone
kept you confirmed.

As you bear unceasing
the brief goods I lost,
why allow them to keep me,
my ills that persist?

No tuve tanto de gloria
que tal dolor sustentase;
no quiso Amor que gozase
de esto solo mi memoria.

Mis ojos están gastados
de lo mucho que lloraron,
y mis sentidos, cansados,
sin sentido me dejaron.

No me queda otro caudal
en esta grave mudanza,
sino penosa esperanza
de este mi perpetuo mal.

3

ROMANCE

En todas mis alegrías,
breves y vanos contentos
de mis engañados días,
me dejáis los sentimientos
de tantas tristezas mías.

Pero mal pude esperar
en tal bien tantas mudanzas,
debiendo considerar
que a tan grandes esperanzas
se sigue el desesperar.

¡Oh bienes de confusión,
causa de mi perdición!
¿Adónde me habéis traído,
pues ya de lo bien servido
desespero el galardón?

So little my glory
that grief would sustain.
Love wants not my memory
to enjoy this alone.

My eyes are burnt out
with so much sadness.
My feelings, expended,
drove me to madness.

I have nothing else left
in this change of will,
but the dolorous hope
of my long-lasting ill.

3

BALLAD

All the joys I felt
in my wayward days,
a happiness vain and brief,
are tainted now
by all the griefs
you leave to me.

But why did I expect
changes of such good?
I very well know
despair follows
all great hopes.

Wealth of confusion,
cause of my perdition,
where did you bring me?
It's time I received
my yearned for reward

Mas ¡oh, qué vana victoria
el cambio de aquesta gloria
con suceso tan lloroso!
¡Quién se viera tan dichoso
que perdiera la memoria!

Ausente, desesperado,
aborrecido y sin bien,
sufriendo un mortal cuidado,
padezco nuevo desdén
solo, triste y olvidado.

No me deja la pasión
que conozca la razón;
y, puesto en continuo engaño,
los ojos cierro a mi daño
con muy liviana ocasión.

Revuelve con mil antojos
un error en otro error;
si huyo de mis enojos
torno, forzado de amor,
a dar en ellos de ojos.

Cercado de mi flaqueza,
no tengo en cosa firmeza
sino en mi perpetua guerra,
porque al bien que busco cierra
siempre el paso mi tristeza.

from the lady I've wooed
with such devotion.

Such a futile victory.
All I did was change
my glory
for a truly
pitiful moment.
The happiest man alive
is one who forgets it all.

Distracted, desperate,
loathed, despondent,
suffering from deadly worries,
I endure renewed
scorn.
I'm all alone,
sad and forgotten.

This passion that fills me
admits no reason.
My day is full of deceptions.
At the slightest chance
I close my eyes to the pain.

All my numerous whims
compound my errors.
Forced by love
to escape my anger
I'm back to it again.

With so many flaws
I show no strength at all.
In my endless self-conflict
the road I seek to the good
is blocked always by sadness.

No huelgo de estar presente
ni lejos de mi tormento,
no me pesa verme ausente,
no puedo tener contento,
ni hallar quien me contente.

Ando de mí todo esquivo,
sin razón, libre y cautivo,
acompañado y desierto;
no puedo llamarme muerto,
ni puedo nombrarme vivo.

El dolor que siento es tal
en mi suerte aborrecida,
que sufro pena inmortal,
porque, muriendo mi vida,
no puede morir mi mal.

¡Oh, si pudiesen llegar
a do siempre habrán de estar
estos deseos, que son
lágrimas del corazón
para nunca descansar!

¿Por qué no huye mi pena,
pues que me huye la culpa?
Mas de aquesta culpa ajena
el amor que me disculpa
a mayor mal me condena.

Perdiérase la esperanza
en esta grave mudanza,
pues para tan triste vida
fuera más bien escogida
la falta de confianza.

I am constantly close-by,
far from my torments.
Though I don't regret
being far,
I can't find any peace
or anyone to cheer me.

I try to escape from myself,
mindless, free and bound,
in company and all alone;
I can't say I'm dead
or call myself alive.

So deep this pain I feel—
such ill-luck strikes me—
I suffer a constant sorrow:
dying as I do in life,
my inner pain won't die.

If only my desires could reach
where they belong!
They are sorrows
of the heart and won't
ever leave me in peace.

Why won't this pain leave me
when my guilt's already gone?
Yet the love that forgives
all faults, be they mine or others',
sentenced me to greater ills.

I am about to lose all hope
amid so much fickleness.
To such a sad life
lack of hope
seems more fitting.

El error del pensamiento
ha llegado a tal extremo,
que en la pena estoy contento,
y nunca en mis males temo
la fuerza de su tormento.

Condenado y despedido,
confuso y puesto en olvido,
tan lleno estoy de cuidado
que juzgo por mal pasado
algún espacio perdido.

Es este engaño presente
muestra de mi desvarío,
que quien no se duele y siente
de mal como aqueste mío,
con su daño se arrepiente.

Sale ahora de mis ojos
el fuego por sus despojos,
con que se abrasa la tierra,
y no se acaba la guerra
causada de mis enojos.

Yo estoy en dudosa suerte
para esperar más mudanza,
y el corazón no es tan fuerte
que no pierda la esperanza
de esta mi cercana muerte.

Acábensese ya mis días
al fin de mis alegrías;
¡que en un pequeño dolor
diese término el Amor
a mis antiguas porfías!

My thoughts drift
so wildly now,
I am happy in my grief.
Overcome by sorrow
I don't fear
its torment's power.

Condemned and banished,
confused and forgotten.
I am so sunk in worries
I think my former perils
a sort of lost place.

This current folly
displays my lunacy,
for whoever hurts not badly
from sorrows such as mine
will regret being its target.

I am just a wreck:
see the fire in my eyes,
a fire to scorch the earth.
The war my anger triggered
is infinite, unending.

I am in no doubt
any changes of heart will happen,
for it's not so strong a muscle
that it still expects
to see my own death at hand.

How I wish my days were ended
now that my joy is gone:
let Love end
all my former battles
with one sudden blow.

Si en algo me satisfago,
luego allí se me deshace;
y, si en hacerlo me pago,
veo que nunca se hace
porque yo jamás lo hago.

Si comienzo a proponerlo,
está en la mano mudarlo;
y cuando vengo a gozarlo,
la causa de no hacerlo
ha sido determinarlo.

6

ROMANCE

Yo lloro mi mal ausente,
de toda esperanza ajeno;
quien lo causa no consiente
que descubra por qué peno.

Quiere que muera en olvido
entregado al mayor daño,
y cuando veo este engaño
me conozco más perdido.

Cuitado, que en tal temor
no puede hallar defensa,
y librarse del amor
la razón ya tarde piensa.

Entré en el tormento nuevo
alegre del bien primero;
mas ahora desespero
que sin remedio lo pruebo.

If something delights me
it quickly melts away;
and if I praise myself for it
I find it can't be done,
for I never end up doing it.

If I begin to propose it
suddenly it changes;
and when I try to enjoy it
the very desire of doing so
prevents its being done.

6

BALLAD

I lament my wretched absence,
void of all kinds of hope;
she who is the cause won't allow
me to find the reason I am sad.

She wants me to die in oblivion
devoted to the worst of pains,
and when I see this deceit
I know myself well lost.

I'm troubled, deeply worried
I can't defend myself;
and when reason wants to be rid
of love it's then too late.

My first joy made me so happy
I quickly plunged into my torment;
but now I have no other choice
and I cannot stand it longer.