

DISCOVERING SHAKESPEARE IN EXILE: SPANISH ÉMIGRÉS IN ENGLAND (1819-1840)¹

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83

I

The theme of exile has been there from the beginning of literature itself. Not only has it affected poets and writers personally and been a subject of numberless stories, but it was a matter for discussion in classical literature that reached the Renaissance and beyond. Summarizing the manifold responses to exile runs the risk of simplification, but, as Claudio Guillén pointed out (1990, 1995, 1998), at least two contrastive positions can be observed: one might be represented by Ovid's attitude to it; the other, by what Plutarch, synthesizing previous Stoic commonplaces, wrote about it. In the remainder of this section I shall sum up the key points of this contrast, basically by following Guillén's observations.

In his *Tristia* Ovid made a personal, sad response to his experience of exile, one expressing nostalgia and lamentation. Ovid, as we know, was exiled to Tomis (modern Constanța in present-day Romania), which was the most remote place in the Roman Empire and whose inhabitants (the Getae) he looked upon as barbarians —incidentally, a feeling jocularly echoed by Touchstone in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*: "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths" (III.iii.5-8).² For Ovid, exile is the loss of civilization, the deprivation of the city. When he writes on the coming of spring in Tomis, Ovid thinks of Rome; not of Roman spring itself, but of the various social and cultural

activities associated with it. In other words, Ovid cannot find a meaningful world beyond Rome. Exile for him is a calamity, a sundering of the self. As his reaction is so personal and self-centered, exile becomes for him a subject of poetry rather than of moral meditation.

On the other hand, in Plutarch exile becomes a theme of moral reflection. In his *Peri phygés* (*On Exile*), written about a century after Ovid's *Tristia*, Plutarch rejected the opinions of Greek writers before him who exposed the evils of exile and drew on the Stoic consolations on it as defended by such as Musonius (*Discourse 9: That Exile is not an Evil*) and Seneca (*Ad Helviam matrem, De consolatione*), for whom exile is not a misfortune, but a test and an opportunity. Thus Plutarch observes that the evil of exile lies in opinion only, that exile can offer a quiet and contemplative life and defends the notion of the whole universe as our native land. As the human being is removed to a different place, he is in a position to discover or better understand what he has in common with the rest of mankind. Under the sky, he says, "no one is either exile or foreigner or alien; here are the same fire, water, and air; the same magistrates and procurators and chancellors —Sun, Moon, and Morning Star" (Plutarch 1959: 529).

84

It is not the purpose of this article to expound on this theme at length, but I think it useful to begin with these two opposed views of exile in classical literature, not only because of their intrinsic interest, but because they have a bearing on part of what will be discussed later.

II

That exile involves a test and an opportunity, and that it affords the possibility of new discoveries and a better understanding of things and people seems to be confirmed by the experience of a number of Spaniards who formed part of the emigration to England in the first decades of the 19th century. With the obvious and important exception that I shall discuss later, they were political émigrés who escaped the political persecution unleashed between 1823 and 1833, at the end of the ultraconservative reign of Ferdinand VII, which involved the restoration of absolutism. Most of them had to live in London jobless and in poverty, basically on not much more than the small subsidy granted them by the British government, and were averse to becoming integrated and learning the language properly (Alcalá Galiano 1907: 475).

Among the émigrés, however, there was a limited but active number of highly educated and professionally qualified liberals, who spent their time reading, studying, writing, translating or teaching. Following up a 1826 remark by a

confidential agent of the Madrid government to the effect that a writing mania had seized many Spanish émigrés in London, a contemporary historian has pointed out that these liberal exiles did indeed turn to writing and that the professional writers became more prolific (Llorens 1979: 153-165). But there is a special benefit which many of them reaped from their English exile: in some cases, a first and direct contact with Shakespeare's work and, in others, a more immediate, authentic and deeper acquaintance with it.

It should be borne in mind that Shakespeare generally became known to the Spanish public in the 18th century through France and mediated by French Neoclassicism. If we look at what was written on him then, both by defenders and detractors, we can gather that for most of them "Shakespeare" was no more than a name, and the author of a few tragedies. Only three writers show a reading knowledge of his work, or at least of part of it, in its original English. The first was Father Juan Andrés, who quoted from the English originals of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Tempest* (1782). Then Leandro Fernández de Moratín, who translated *Hamlet* from the English —i.e., not from the French neoclassical adaptation, as had been done before, both in Spain and other European countries—, and quoted from the original in the notes accompanying his translation (1798). Finally, Cristóbal Cladera, who published a critique of Moratín's translation (1800), in which he fell back on the original English text to substantiate his criticism (Pujante 2008). Thus we have to wait for the next few decades to witness an important change in this respect, a change which originated in exile, revealed a direct knowledge of Shakespeare and involved a different, generally positive appreciation of his work.

However, the contact of the Spanish émigrés in England with "authentic Shakespeare" and its effects differed according to the persons concerned. It should be noted that these liberal exiles had received a Neoclassical education and abided by its principles. For them Calderón was out of fashion, so, Shakespeare, who from A.W. Schlegel onwards was to be associated with the Spanish playwright as representing "Romantic drama", clashed with their Neoclassical tenets. On the other hand, the conservative German consul and hispanist Johann Nikolas Böhl von Faber, supported by his patriotic and more conservative Spanish wife, defended Calderón and Romanticism, particularly through his early propagation in Spain of Schlegel's ideas (Pujante 2001a: 161).

One of the Spanish émigrés who read, and wrote on Shakespeare during his London exile was Manuel Herrera (1779-1834). A liberal army officer, he was the first Spaniard to write in some detail on Shakespearean plays, independent of translations, and he was also one of the first Spaniards of that period who read in the English original and discussed plays that were then hardly known or mentioned in Spain —comedies like *Much Ado about Nothing* and "problem plays"

like *Troilus and Cressida*. Part of his notes were interpolated in his translations of texts by William Hazlitt and A.W. Schlegel, whose Shakespeare *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* he was the first to render into Spanish, even if rather partially and selectively. Herrera remained a Neoclassicist, criticised Schlegel and did not warm unconditionally to Shakespeare. As a critic, he was honest and practical rather than intellectually outstanding, and he committed himself in his evaluations. In this respect, he differs from most of his Spanish predecessors in avoiding generalities on Shakespeare: for one thing, his reading of *Much Ado About Nothing*, which is more extensive and detailed than Schlegel's, reveals that he wrote it with the original at his elbow, and constantly quoted from it. It is impossible to ascertain whether he engaged in this critical activity as a way to occupy his exile in London—in which case his notes were for him no more than a reader's jottings—or if he wrote on Shakespeare with a view to revision and later publication. Be that as it may, he died in 1834, one year after his return to Spain, and his notes, which remained in manuscript, were not published until 2001 (Pujante 2001b). Nor is it possible to establish whether Herrera prepared his translations and notes on his own, or if he was helped, even if only in part, by one of the literary men exiled with him in London. But more of this later.

86

Another liberal army officer exiled in London in those years was Evaristo San Miguel (1785-1862), later to become field marshal back in Spain. A fervent reader of history, San Miguel authored a number of biographical and historical writings, and later became a member of the Madrid Royal Academy of History. He published a brief popularizing biography of Shakespeare in which he discussed the change of literary taste in that period and showed an interest in Shakespeare's history plays that was unusual in contemporary Spanish writers and critics—in fact, he did not deal with the tragedies at all (San Miguel 1844). However, as has been pointed out (Par 1935 I: 289), his biography tends to be rather cursory, and given its tenor and the date of publication (eleven years after the end of the absolutist régime), it may or may not be a direct consequence of his experience of exile. However, exile did bring about a change in the two men of letters to be discussed next.

III

José Joaquín de Mora (1783-1864), a lawyer and professor of Philosophy, was well known as a staunch defender of Neoclassicism. He seems to have converted to Romanticism and to Shakespeare during his London exile. However, the circumstances and effects of this possible conversion are not quite clear. In a letter of 1813 Mora says he has read

something by Shakespeare, whom I consider the grandest genius that ever lived [...] I love it when I hear him called barbarous, savage and uncouth, because if these people understood and praised him, would he be what he is? [...] He is the best of poets. (In Pitollet 1909: 80)³

But this fervour was not to be expressed again. Five years later his newspaper *Crónica científica y literaria* published an adverse critique of A.W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen*, in all probability written by himself, and which confirmed his Neoclassical principles (Anon. 1818). In it he accused Schlegel of praising Shakespeare with blind enthusiasm and justifying his faults to the point of becoming responsible for all his mistakes. As this is the tenor of Herrera's notes, one wonders whether Mora may not have helped Herrera with his notes, as suggested above. Like Herrera, Mora was made prisoner in the Napoleonic Wars and taken to France, where like the officers and other educated prisoners, he spent his free time learning or improving his French and doing a lot of reading.

As an émigré in London between 1823 and 1833, Mora proved remarkably active as a writer, compiler and translator. Helped by Rudolph Ackermann, he founded *No me olvidas (Forget me not)*, a sort of almanac in prose and verse, of which six volumes were published between 1824 and 1829, basically intended to be sold in Latin America. In the 1825 issue he published a verse translation of Act II, scene I of *As You Like It*. He did not explain why he chose this particular text in what is his only rendering of Shakespeare, but it is reasonable to conjecture that, as an exile, he might have felt attracted by at least the first part of the scene, in which the banished Duke, addressing his "co-mates and brothers in exile", praises the advantages of life in the forest as contrasted with the drawbacks of "the envious court". Since the moral of the speech is that "Sweet are the uses of adversity", it seems evident that Shakespeare offers here a case of "*consolatio* in exile" in the tradition of Seneca, Musonius and Plutarch, as described at the beginning of this article (see also Tison 1960: 149; Kingsley-Smith 2003: 106-136).

Now what is odd in Mora's rendering is the treatment of the subject; he translates "exile" as "abandono mísero" (wretched abandonment or retirement), and there is no way of knowing that both the speaker and his hearers have been banished into exile, unless one has read the play or knows what it is about. Translations are not produced in a vacuum, and in cases like this translators may leave traces that reveal their own feelings and ideas on the subject. Here we are doubly frustrated, as Mora not only left no personal note on exile in this version, but he also blurred the very concept.

In a later evaluation of Shakespeare, Mora wrote:

To my mind, the classicist who scorns, despises or ridicules the new artistic methods which a wider knowledge of German and English literature has introduced into

Southern-European literature is as incomprehensible as the Romantic who treats with such hostility and lack of respect the models to be found in the opposite ranks. Nobody will ever convince me that Shakespeare is a barbarian, and Calderón an eccentric, nor can I persuade myself that they were top-ranking geniuses for the sole reason that they did not submit themselves to certain rules. (Mora 1840: XII)⁴

In other words, Mora converted or, at least, yielded to Romanticism during his English exile, and with it to Shakespeare, but seems to have been reluctant to burn his Neoclassical boats. His seemingly eclectic position, shared by others in the 1830s and 1840s, laid him open to accusations of “versatilidad acomodaticia” (over-readiness to adapt) (Par 1935 I: 166-169).

88 A similar case of conversion was that of the writer and statesman Antonio Alcalá Galiano (1789-1865), who became professor of Spanish Literature at the University of London during his English exile —the first professorship of this subject in Britain. Like Mora, he was at first an opponent of Romanticism and Romantic ideas as Schlegel had explained them. But his London exile made him change: he later confessed his “superstitious respect” for the observance of the classical rules, embraced the Romantic tenets and came to be in favor of Shakespeare. Back in Spain, he expounded Romantic principles in his preface to the Duque de Rivas’ *El moro expósito* (1834) —in a similar way to Victor Hugo’s prologue to his own play *Cromwell*. Alcalá Galiano’s conversion can be attributed, at least in part, to his gradual acquaintance with English literature during his London exile. He valued English writers as being of the first order, and in whose works a reader could see inspiration and good taste, as well as extraordinary originality and variety, and he pointed out that English literature ruled out the tendency to literary controversies one often found in other European Romanticisms, especially Spanish Romanticism. For him, England does not accept, or barely acknowledge, the division of poets into Classical and Romantic (in Saavedra 1982: 24). Then in his 1845 *Historia de la literatura española, francesa, inglesa e italiana*, he discussed and praised Shakespeare, whom he proclaimed “perhaps the first playwright in the world”⁵ (Alcalá Galiano 1845: 71, 74, 99-100). But he had also defended him in literary debates held at the Ateneo in Madrid in 1839. It is worth quoting what he said in a session in which the three unities were being discussed:

In England I saw a performance of Shakespeare’s *Othello*. During the action, the protagonist sails from Venice to Cyprus, and I can assure you that I made that crossing with him in the theatre without getting seasick. (In Pujante and Campillo 2007: 121)⁶

In other words, his London exile afforded him not only the opportunity to get acquainted at first hand with English literature in general and Shakespeare in

particular, but also the privilege of extending his reading experience of the text to that of the theatre-goer. Moratín, the first Spanish translator of Shakespeare from the original English, enjoyed the same opportunity during his stay in England in 1792-1793, but, instead of being beneficial, the experience confirmed his coolness towards Shakespeare and strengthened his Neoclassical convictions. Over thirty years later than Moratín, Alcalá Galiano grasped the opportunity and enriched his understanding of Shakespeare by watching him performed on the English stage.

IV

But there was another Spanish exile in England at the time whose acquaintance with Shakespeare left a deeper mark on him. José Blanco White (1775-1841) was the name that the Seville-born José María Blanco Crespo adopted after having decided to leave Spain for good and to exile himself in England. He was the grandson of William White, an Irishman who settled in Spain at the beginning of the 18th century. The surname began to be Hispanised and was used in alternation with the Spanish “Blanco”. Two years after arriving in England, Blanco White explained in a letter to his parents the reason for his adoption of the double surname: “Since my need was not to lose my real name in its country of origin and not to hide the one I was generally known by, I adopted that of Blanco White (cit. Méndez 1920: 18)”.⁷ However, this double Spanish-English surname was going to be the outer symbol of his twofold mind and life in his self-imposed English exile. Before moving to England, Blanco White was a Catholic priest in Spain, but felt he was not able to harmonize his ideas of intellectual freedom with the religious demands of the priesthood. Having settled in England in 1810, he became an Anglican priest, and later a Unitarian.⁸ As a poet and journalist, he edited the newspaper *El Español* (1810-1814) and later *Variedades o El mensajero de Londres* (1822-1825). But Blanco White had decided to become a writer in English, which led to uncomfortable and at times painful experiences. As a child he had learned and spoken English at home, but certainly not at the level that would be necessary for a writer in the language, so an assiduous dedication to it was a must. A reading of his English writings confirms that he succeeded in his endeavour: he collaborated in several English periodicals, was in contact with the English intelligentsia, including John Stuart Mill, and even wrote poetry in English —his sonnet *Night and Death* (1825) was highly regarded by Coleridge and others.⁹ Nevertheless, his native Spanish never left him, and writing it gave him a problem of identity:

The attempt to renew it, even occasionally, and just as I have now and then written Latin, since my arrival in England, was always very painful. I feel on similar occasions puzzled as to my own identity, and have to awake as it were from a melancholy

dream, and assure myself that I am not again in that country both of my love and aversion. (Blanco White 1845: 394)

At the same time, he was also fully aware of what the loss of his native tongue might mean to him, which leads us to his acquaintance with Shakespeare and what this afforded him. Apparently, his serious reading of Shakespeare began in the ninth or tenth year of his new life in England, as he later remembered:

It must have been in 1819 or 1820, when the writer of these lines, being suffering under a painful illness, which made his sleep very uneasy, used to place a volume of Shakspeare (*sic*) on a table with a light, near his bed, that, when awaking in distress, he might get up and endeavour to relieve himself by reading. (Blanco White 1839: 331)

Shakespeare must have impressed him, since in 1823, as editor of *Variedades*, he published Spanish verse translations of two fragments from *Hamlet* and one from *Richard II* prefaced by a brief but admiring introduction which could be regarded as the basis of his critical view of Shakespeare —to which I shall return later. What interests me now is the choice of the passage from *Richard II*, which is actually the speech by Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, when he hears his sentence of life banishment from the king:

90

A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege,
And all unlooked for from your highness' mouth:
A dearer merit, not so deep a maim
As to be cast forth in the common air,
Have I deserved at your highness' hands.
The language I have learned these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego:
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
Or like a cunning instrument cased up,
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony:
Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,
Doubly portcullised with my teeth and lips;
And dull unfeeling barren ignorance
Is made my gaoler to attend on me.
I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,
Too far in years to be a pupil now:
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?
(*Richard II*, I.iii.154-173).

Let us remember that in this scene the king banishes not only Mowbray, but also the latter's rival, Bolingbroke, who seems to submit to his banishment without resistance and considers the consolation ("comfort") of his imminent exile:

Your will be done. This must my comfort be:
The sun that warms you here shall shine on me,
And those his golden beams to you here lent
Shall point on me and gild my banishment.

(*Richard II*, I.iii.144-147)

However, when the king and the others have left, the memorable exchange between him and his father John of Gaunt makes clear that Bolingbroke's envisaged consolation was feigned, so it is now the father's turn to instil consolation in the son, though to no avail.

JOHN OF GAUNT

All places that the eye of heaven visits
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.
Teach thy necessity to reason thus;
There is no virtue like necessity.
Think not the king did banish thee,
But thou the king. Woe doth the heavier sit,
Where it perceives it is but faintly borne.
Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honour
And not the king exiled thee; or suppose
Devouring pestilence hangs in our air
And thou art flying to a fresher clime:
Look, what thy soul holds dear, imagine it
To lie that way thou go'st, not whence thou comest:
Suppose the singing birds musicians,
The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence strew'd,
The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance;
For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite
The man that mocks at it and sets it light.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

O, who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
By bare imagination of a feast?
Or wallow naked in December snow
By thinking on fantastic summer's heat?

O, no! the apprehension of the good
Gives but the greater feeling to the worse:
Fell sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more
Than when he bites, but lanceth not the sore.

(*Richard II*, I.iii.274-302)

It would seem, therefore, that Shakespeare has more or less juxtaposed in the same scene the two classical responses to exile as described at the beginning of this article: the Ovidian and the Plutarchan. Bolingbroke first pretends to find consolation in the idea of the sun shining everywhere in the world, a figure already present in Plutarch, and later Gaunt tries to console his son by using the same image ("All places that the eye of heaven visits"), but Bolingbroke rejects Stoic consolation on the grounds that neither thought nor imagination will offset pain. In other words, the dialogue becomes a debate in which consolation is rejected by the banished son in favor of lamentation (Tison 1960: 153). Shakespeare may also have drawn on contemporary writings: discussing the sources of *Richard II*, Kenneth Muir has pointed out that "to console a friend who has been sent into exile was, in fact, a favourite exercise" and that Shakespeare was acquainted with Erasmus' *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, which treats this subject (Muir 1977: 57).

92

As far as these scenes are concerned, Jonathan Bate thinks that Shakespeare may have drawn on Ovid's *Tristia*: "The language of exile in the first act of *Richard II* seems to echo that of the *Tristia*, with its emphasis on 'frozen winters' spent in banishment and separation from the native language" (Bate 1993: 167). It is, therefore, ironic that only two scenes after suggesting consolation to his banished son, John of Gaunt blows the nationalistic trumpet in the well-known speech beginning "This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars...." (II.i.40-66). Be that as it may, Blanco White chose the Mowbray speech for his translation. He clearly ignored the consolation aspect and went for the Ovidian type of response. The heading which precedes his translation reads: "Norfolk, in the play entitled *Richard II*, condemned to banishment, depicts the distress and sorrow of having to abandon his native tongue for a foreign one".¹⁰ In this case there is no need for us to conjecture an identification, however partial, of the translator with the Shakespearean character. He himself explained his position:

Firm as I have been, under most trying circumstances, in my resolution of never returning to Spain, the only loss, which experience would make me dread, if I could, a second time, live over the past, would be that of the native language. Among the instances of surprising knowledge of the human mind and heart in which Shakspeare's works abound, few, if any, have struck me so much as that contained in a passage (probably little noticed by readers not in my circumstances) in which he

describes the magnitude of the loss which a man banished from his country has to endure by living among those who do not understand his native language. (Blanco White 1845: 175-176)

Blanco White then quotes the Mowbray speech and concludes: “The idea is certainly spun out too far, but its truth is perfect, though by no means obvious”. I expect there is no need to italicize his parenthetical reference to the Shakespearean passage —“probably little noticed by readers not in my circumstances”. Clearly, if in Mowbray’s lament the English language “becomes a metonym for national identity” (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 68), in Blanco White the loss is not his country, but his native tongue.

As regards his translation of the speech, it is a far cry from Mora’s rendering of the *As You Like It* passage, not only in its higher poetic quality, but in the two personal and significant changes he makes, which to the best of my knowledge have not been noticed before. The lines “The language I have learn’d these forty years, / My native English” become in his version “El idioma patrio que he aprendido / Más de quarenta años”, i.e. “The native language I have learned for more than forty years” (Blanco White 1823: 76). Here the specificity of the English language in the Shakespearean character is lost in the process of adaptation, as, for example, when translating “Do you speak English” as “Do you speak my language?” (especially in the cinema). However, in Blanco White’s case this is not a question of cultural adaptation, but of personal appropriation. Here the translator speaks in his own voice, as is made evident in his rendering “*these* forty years” as “*more than* forty years”: when he translated this passage Blanco White was forty-eight.

93

V

After these translations, and with the exception of his rendering of just seven lines from *Twelfth Night* (l.i.35-41) in 1840, Blanco White occupied himself with Shakespeare as a reader and critic in the 1830s, and left a number of notes and articles on him in his adopted English. In 1837 he wrote on him in his personal journal, and later in 1839 and 1840, in the periodical *The Christian Teacher*. In 1840 he wrote his last notes on Shakespeare, this time again in his personal journal.

In the introductory note preceding his 1823 translations, Blanco White had already praised “the force of his thoughts and the originality of his genius”,¹¹ and pointed out his use of language as the key to understanding him: “An expression, a single word by this extraordinary man says more to him that understands him than a whole volume by others”.¹² He had also warned the reader against “the

holdings-forth of the French authors who speak of Shakespeare as a madman or an eccentric".¹³ It is clear that already in 1823 he had detached himself from the French Neoclassical education he had received. Later, in a 1837 diary entry, he returned to the ideas expressed fourteen years earlier, admitting the difficulty that Shakespeare must offer to a person like him, for whom "the original Standard of Taste has been the ancient Classics, especially if (as it happened to me) he has studied the French Writers anterior to the Revolution", since "the stumbling-block in Shakspere is found not so much in the want of the Unities, as in the novelty and boldness of his Metaphors. [...] His metaphors are full of the truest and most vigorous Life. He shows you the richest ties of Relationship by which Nature connects the, apparently, most distant notions" (Blanco White 1845: 288-289).

But it was the publication of *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspere* (1838-1843) that prompted Blanco White to write further on the English dramatist, specifically the four articles published in *The Christian Teacher*, the journal of the English Unitarians, and his diary note on "The Fools and Clowns of Shakespeare", his last piece of writing on the Bard. In all of them, and particularly in the articles, Blanco White shows that he was steeped in Shakespeare in a more thorough and knowledgeable way than before and more than most Spaniards who had dealt and would deal with him—and he did so now as a confirmed Romantic, avoiding the Neoclassicists versus Romantics controversies. In this respect, it should be stressed that his articles on Shakespeare form part of a critical production which shows a development from his early Neoclassical education to a more and more idealistic Romanticism.

In his first article Blanco White occupies himself with the knowledge of Shakespeare (or rather lack of it) on the part of the English, to whom he tries to show the educational value of reading him, especially from childhood or adolescence, while he also rejects expurgated editions like Bowdler's *The Family Shakespeare*. In the second, he stresses the importance of Shakespeare's history plays, particularly *Henry IV*, perhaps less universal than his tragedies, but expressive of great poetical delicacy and of an evident practical philosophy. The third publication is made up of six brief notes on *Hamlet* dealing with philological points, the fatality of the hero's story, his relationship with Ophelia and his feigned madness. The fourth and last article, by far the most substantial and penetrating, is not just a critical reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but a disclosure of his poetic credo. Finally, in his note "The Fools and Clowns of Shakespeare", unlike so many Spanish and European Shakespearean critics before him, he shows a special interest in Shakespeare's comic side and comments on the satirical function of some of his fools and comic characters.

In his essay on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Blanco White defends a new concept of the sublime based on the perception of ideal beauty, explains the

poetical importance of imagination in overcoming realism, values the symbolic use of language in literature and presents Shakespeare as a conscious and organic poet, capable of creating concord out of discord —though obviously not as the Neoclassical writers did.

The attempt to reduce these heterogeneous materials to unity, would appear perfectly absurd. How wonderful, then, must have been the power of that mind which, verifying its own grand conception of the Poet, seized both the external world and the world of Fancy, and with an ease, which has not left the slightest mark of labour, made the sauciness of Satire, the playfulness of Fancy, and the intenseness of Sentiment, unite in the most perfect harmony! In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the mind of Shakspeare does not only surpass in swiftness the nimble spirit that will “put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes,” but with a kind of omnipresence, chooses, without dizziness or confusion, every object of highest beauty and cheerful interest in the vast fields of reality, of imagination, of sentiment. (Blanco White 1840: 48-49)

It has been pointed out that here Blanco White, developing an observation by Ludwig Tieck, went further than the German writer in his search for the unity achieved by Shakespeare between the ideal and the material world (Llorens 1979: 393-394). In this respect, Miguel Ángel Cuevas has shown (1982: 252) that Blanco White had a first-hand knowledge of German aesthetic idealism and that he started to learn German in 1833, though prompted rather by his wish to read the German theologian August Naender in the original. On examining these articles on Shakespeare, especially the one on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cuevas concludes that, in his evolution from his Neoclassical education to his later complete identification with the Romantic ideas, Blanco White travelled the full circle that European aesthetics had described at the time in making Romanticism the successor of Classicism.

VI

In his memories of his London years, Alcalá Galiano showed that exile was a painful experience for all these Spanish émigrés, including himself, who were forced to live in England (Alcalá Galiano 1907), and Blanco White, who had settled in England for good and lived virtually like an Englishman, referred to the pain explicitly and implicitly. At the same time, the small group of intellectuals among them, particularly Mora and Alcalá Galiano, seem to have realized, and profited from, the more positive side of exile —not least Blanco White, who became a writer in English. They clearly benefited from direct contact with English life, culture and literature, an experience which was fruitful in various ways, particularly in

making English culture and literature better known in Spain and Spanish-speaking countries, in their conversion to Romanticism —with the exception of Herrera—, and thus in their contribution to Spanish Romanticism.

As far as their reading of Shakespeare is concerned, it is possible that they had read him before they went to England. Mora said he had. Alcalá Galiano and Blanco White were men of letters, and Herrera and San Miguel were known as highly educated army officers before their exile. However, if they had read Shakespeare earlier, they may have done so partially and superficially, and most probably in translation, particularly from the French. It was therefore their exile in England that afforded them the opportunity to read Shakespeare in the original, come to a better appreciation of his work, and write on him with first-hand knowledge of their subject —Blanco White being the most distinguished of them. After them, others, both in Spain and other countries, went on writing about Shakespeare, but usually second-hand generalities, probably without having read him sufficiently or in the original. However, at least in Spain, the work on Shakespeare by the Spanish exiles, the object of this study, can take credit for creating a precedent that would become more and more common.

Notes

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². This and subsequent references are to William Shakespeare. 1988. *The Complete Works*. Gen. Eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. Oxford: Oxford U.P.

³. “algo de Shakespeare, que lo considero el más hermoso genio que jamás ha existido [...] Yo gozo cuando oigo decir que es un bárbaro, un salvaje, un grosero; porque si estos hombres lo entendiesen y alabasen, ¿sería lo que es? [...] Es el mejor de los poetas”. This and subsequent translations into English are the author’s.

⁴. “Tan incomprensible es a mis ojos el clásico que desdeña, desprecia o ridiculiza los nuevos métodos artísticos que ha introducido en la literatura de los pueblos

meridionales el mayor conocimiento que han adquirido de la alemana y la inglesa, como el romántico que trata tan irrespetuosa y hostilmente a los modelos de perfección que abundan en las filas contrarias. Nadie me hará creer que Shakespeare es un bárbaro y Calderón un extravagante; ni tampoco podré persuadirme que fueron dos genios de primer orden, por la única y exclusiva razón de no haberse sometido a ciertas reglas”.

⁵. “quizá el primer dramático del mundo”.

⁶. “He visto representar en Inglaterra la tragedia de *Otelo* de Shakespeare. El protagonista durante la acción hace un viaje desde Venecia a Chipre, y puedo asegurar que yo he hecho con él ese viaje en el teatro sin marearme”.

⁷. “La necesidad de no perder mi verdadero nombre en la tierra de su origen y

la de no ocultar el que el uso general me había dado me hizo adoptar el de Blanco White”.

⁸. His religious evolution can be followed in his books, written in English, *Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism*, London, 1825; *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion*, Dublin, 1833; and *Observations on Heresy and Orthodoxy*, London, 1835).

⁹. See Blanco White's *Obra poética completa*, eds. Antonio Garnica and Jesús Díaz, Madrid, Visor, 1994, 348-353.

¹⁰. “Norfolk, en el Drama intitulado Ricardo II, condenado a Destierro pinta el Desconsuelo y Pena de tener que abandonar el idioma nativo por uno extranjero”.

¹¹. “el tono de sus pensamientos y la originalidad de su ingenio”.

¹². “Una expresión, una palabra de este hombre extraordinario dice más a quien lo entiende que un tomo entero de otros”.

¹³. “las declamaciones de los autores franceses que hablan de Shakespeare como de un loco o extravagante”.

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