

A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MONTEMAYOR'S "CABELLOS, QUANTA MUDANÇA"

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As its title indicates, this study presents a new English translation of Jorge de Montemayor's poem "Cabellos, quanta mudança". It also contains transcriptions of the original Spanish text and of the four known previous translations of this poem into English – three from the last decades of the 16th century and one from the last decade of the 18th century. It gives, in addition, a brief discussion of each of the earlier English versions in order to convey a sense of the problems involved in translating the original text and to provide the reader with a set of criteria for judging the success, or otherwise, of the new version offered here.

Keywords: Montemayor, Philip Sidney, Bartholomew Yong, Thomas Wilson, Robert Southey, translation.

Una Nueva Traducción al Inglés de "Cabellos, quanta mudança" de Montemayor

Este estudio presenta una nueva traducción en inglés del poema "Cabellos, quanta mudança" de Jorge de Montemayor; contiene, además, transcripciones del texto original y de las cuatro traducciones anteriores de dicho poema al inglés —tres de ellas de las últimas décadas del siglo XVI y la otra de finales del XVIII. Sobre cada una de estas se realiza un breve comentario para dejar constancia de alguno de los problemas de traducción que supone el texto de Montemayor y a la vez proporcionar al lector los criterios necesarios para juzgar el éxito —o no— de la nueva versión aquí presentada.

Palabras Clave: Montemayor, Philip Sidney, Bartholomew Yong, Thomas Wilson, Robert Southey, traducción.

The poem whose translation is offered here was written in Spanish by the Portuguese-born author Jorge de Montemayor (c. 1520–c. 1561) and included in his novel *Los siete libros de Diana*, originally published around 1559. This is considered to be the first pastoral romance written in Spanish, and it set the course of the later development of this genre over the following century. It also became relatively well known in literary circles in England during the last decades of the 16th century.

Barnaby Goodge used two episodes from it in the fifth and seventh Eclogues of his *Eclogs, Epytaphes and Sonnets*, published in 1563. And though neither of these make reference to “Cabellos, quanta mudança”, Googe’s book served to introduce *Diana* to English readers and initiated an interest that made it one of the best-known Spanish texts of the time (see Chamosa: 42–3).

The novel’s central character is a beautiful shepherdess named Diana, and it examines the complexities of her amorous relationships. “Cabellos” is the first poem to appear in Book 1. It is sung by “the forgotten Sireno”, a heartbroken shepherd who has been abandoned by Diana. This is the text of the poem as it appears in the 1561 edition, published in Barcelona (Montemayor 1561: fols. 5v, 6r, 6v):

Cabellos, quanta mudança
he visto despues que os vi,
y quan mal parece ay
essa color desesperança.
Bien pensava yo cabellos
(aunque con algun temor)
que no fuera otro pastor
digno de verse cab’ellos.

Ay cabellos, quantos dias
la mi Diana mirava
si os traya, o si os dexava,
y otras cien mil niñerías!
Y quantas vezes llorando
(ay lagrimas engañosas)
pedia celos, de cosas
de que yo estava burlando.

Los ojos que me matavan,
dezi dorados cabellos,
que culpa tuve en creellos
pues ellos me aseguravan?
No vistes vos que algun dia
mil lagrimas derramava,
hasta que yo le jurava,
que sus palabras creía?

Quien vio tanta hermosura
en tan mudable subjecto?
y en amador tan perfecto,
quien vio tanta desventura?
O cabellos, no os correis

por venir de ado venistes,
viendome como me vistes,
en verme como me veis?

Sobre el arena sentada
de aquel rio, la vi yo,
do con el dedo escrivio:
Antes muerta, que mudada.
Mira el amor lo que ordena,
que os viene a hazer creer
cosas dichas por muger
y escritas en el arena.

There are three known English translations of this poem dating from the late 16th century. On the basis of its inclusion in the manuscript of *Arcadia*, we know that Sir Philip Sidney's version had been written as early as 1580, although it wasn't published until the third edition of *Arcadia*, in 1598. In that same year, Bartholomew Yong published a complete translation of *Diana*, including of course this poem. However, in his preface to the book he claims that he had begun working on it as much as nineteen years earlier (see Yong: Preface), so we can assume that this poem was translated by the early 1580s. And in 1596 another version of the poem appeared in a manuscript translation of *Diana* by Sir Thomas Wilson, but it remained unpublished until 1920 (see Thomas).

In the 18th century two more English versions of "Cabellos" were produced. The first, which deserves little attention, is an anonymous 12-line poem loosely based on the lover's complaint in Montemayor's poem and included in a digested collection of several historical novels by Lope de Vega, Montemayor and Gil Polo entitled *The Pilgrim; or, The Stranger in His Own Country* (Chamosa: 46, 51–2). The second is an elaborate and self-indulgent effusion published in Robert Southey's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal* in 1797.

And finally, a literal transcription of the poem is included in an unpublished translation of *Diana* presented as a doctoral thesis by RoseAnna M. Mueller at the City University of New York in 1977.

1. Sir Philip Sidney, 1598 [1580]

Translated out of the *Diana* of Montemayor in Spanish. Where *Sireno* a shepheard pulling out a little of his Mistresse *Dianas* haire, wrapt about with greene silke, who now had vtterlie forsaken him: to the hair he thus bewaild himselfe.

What changes here, ô haire,

*I see since I saw you:
How ill fits you this greene to weare,
For hope the colour due.
Indeed I well did hope,
Though hope were mixt with feare,
No other shepherd should haue scope,
Once to approach this heare.*

*Ah haire, how many dayes,
My Dian made me shew,
With thousand pretie childish plaies,
If I ware you or no?
Alas how oft with teares,
O tears of guilefull breast,
She seemed full of iealous feares,
Whereat I did but ieast?*

*Tell me ô haire of gold,
If I then faultie be,
That trust those killing eyes, I would,
Since they did warrant me.
Haue you not seene her mood,
What streames of teares she spent,
Till that I sware my faith so stood,
As her words had it bent?*

*Who hath such beautie seene
In one that changeth so?
Or where ones loue so constant bene?
Who euer saw such woe?
Ah haire are you not grieu'd,
To come from whence you be,
Seeing how once you saw I liu'd,
To see me as you see?*

*On sandie banke of late,
I saw this woman sit,
Where sooner die than change my state,
She with her finger writ:
Thus my beleefe was staid,
Behold Loue's mightie hand
On things, were by a woman said,
And written in the sand. (Sidney: 487–8)*

Sidney makes his first (and arguably his only) importation into the poem in

lines 3 and 4: "How ill fits you this greene to weare,/ For hope, the colour due"; while the Spanish text only says: "how disagreeable [ugly] it seems / that color of hope". It is generally agreed that Sireno is talking here about the color of the ribbon, and Sidney provides the short prose introduction to make this clear. In addition, the introductory paragraph of Montemayor's text points out that Sireno lays the lock of hair on the "green grass" (Montemayor 1561: 5v). Still, such specificity might be thought a weakening of the original text, since we also know that Diana's hair has a rich golden hue. The vaguer wording in Spanish at least leaves open the possibility that Sireno could also be thinking of the lost promise of happiness represented by that gold.

Most of the rest of Sidney's poem is, in my opinion, a faithful and successful rendering of the Spanish text. His solutions for the 3rd, 4th and 8th quatrains deserve particular attention. As we shall see below, all of these have presented special problems in one or another of the later translations (possibly including my own). Although he changes the rhyme-scheme from the original A-B-B-A, this first translation of the poem makes it clear that, in order to sustain a satisfying prosody in English it is necessary to decompress Montemayor's tightly-wrought language (whose short lines are constructed primarily around three stressed syllables) and thus to expand and vary line length. Note that Sidney establishes a regular pattern of lines of 3-3-4-3 mainly iambic feet.

2. Bartholomew Yong, 1598 [c. 1582]

*Haire in change what libertie,
Since I sawe you, have I seene?
How unseemely hath this greene
Bene a signe of hope to me?
Once I thought no Shepherd might
In these fieldes be found (O haire)
(Though I did it with some feare)
Worthy to come neere your sight.
Haire, how many times and tydes
Did my faire Diana spie,
If I ware or left you by
And a thousand toyes besides.
And how oft in weeping sort
(Of deceitfull teares O springs)
Was she iealous of the things,
Which I spake or did in sport?
Those faire eies which wrought my woe,
(Golden haire) tell me what fault*

*In beleeuing them I caught,
When they did assure me soe?
Saw you not how she did greeue,
Spilling daily many a teare,
Unto her till I did sweare,
That I did her words beleue?
Who more beautie euer knew
In a subiect of such change,
Or more sorrowes, or more strange
In a love so perfect true?
On the sand her did I see
Sitting by yon riuer bright,
Where her finger this did wright
Rather dead then changed be.
See how love beares us in hand,
Making us beleue the wordes,
That a womans wit affordes,
And recorded in the sand. (Yong: 3)*

With a couple of exceptions, one of which is glaring, Yong's version fairly accurately translates the sense of the original. Like Sidney, he also imposes "green" in the first quatrain. Unlike Sidney, however, he maintains the original A-B-B-A rhyme-scheme. His lines, though, are virtually impossible to scan. He seems to be more interested in reproducing the sense of the Spanish text, while keeping to a lurching pattern of 4 stressed syllables per line. This approach produces some very uncomfortable phrasing, such as especially that in quatrain 6:

*Saw you not how she did greeue,
Spilling daily many a teare,
Unto her till I did sweare,
That I did her words beleue?*

But the most telling failure of this version is Yong's suppression of the eighth quatrain of the original. The probable reason for this omission is the considerable obscurity, for a non-native speaker, of its language:

O cabellos, no os correis
por venir de ado venistes,
viendome como me vistes,
en verme como me veis?

Sidney had come up with a rather elegant solution for this quatrain, but Yong apparently felt himself unequal to the challenge. The problem is the verb "correr". And the answer lies in the fact, as commentators point out

(Chamosa: 46; Montemayor 1996: 16, n. 34), that the pertinent meaning in this context must be "avergonzar" (to shame or, as it is reflexive here, to be ashamed). This is the sense that Sidney chooses to translate with "grieve": "*Ah haire are you not grieu'd*". The failure to make a similar connection led to confused misreadings of this quatrain in all subsequent English versions of the poem.

3. Sir Thomas Wilson, 1596

Such is the case in Wilson's considerably more polished version of "Cabellos". His consistent use of tripled iambs mimics, in some passages quite successfully, the constricted three-beat lines of Montemayor's verses. However, this pre-determined formal restraint, along with the A-B-A-B rhyme-scheme, produces at times some painfully twisted syntax, as is most evident in the 5th and 10th quatrains:

Ah haire what change there is
since first I did you vewe
how ill befitteth this
fresh collored hoping hewe

This hope me once did hould
though somewhat fearely
that neuer Shepard should
enjoy your sight but I

Ah haire how often did
Diana for yow seeke
within my bosome hid
wth toyes ten thousand lyke

How oft she shew'd wth teares
Ah teares frō fained brest
that iealously she feares
that which I did in iest

But tell me haire of gould
those eyes w^{ch} wrought me woe
refuse to trust whoe cold
sith they secur'd me soe

You saw from them some day
a thousand teares ther rain'd
till I did sweare and say
I thought her words wer faind

Who er such beauty knewe

in such a changing eye
or in a louter true
so hard a destinie

Ah haire yo^w must not pass
thether frō whence yo^w came
that saw me as I was
And see me as I am

On sands where she did sitt
the river runing by
with finger thus she writt
raither then alter dy

Loe heere of loue a token
to trust that, y^t can stand
that's by womā spoken
and written in the sand (Thomas: 377–8)

Apart from his choice to leave the color of hope referred to in the opening ambiguous, two other quatrains in Wilson's translation deserve special mention. Quatrain 6 may at first glance appear to be a mistake, but only if we fall into the trap of reading "faind" as a variant form of "feigned", which would suggest that the speaker believed Diana's words to be false rather than true. And in fact, this must be the sense that Wilson intends in the "fained brest" of quatrain 4. In line 24, however, he is most likely punning on the word's now obsolete sense. According to the OED, its meanings include: "1. *intr.* To be delighted or glad, rejoice"; "2. *trans.* To make glad. Hence to welcome (a person)" and "3. To rejoice in, enjoy; also, to take to gladly, show preference for" (562). Interestingly, one of the examples given in the OED for entry number 1 above comes from 1596, from Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (v. xii. 36): "[She] fains to weave false tales." The word seems quite often to bring falsity to mind. So, by way of this clever pun, Wilson manages both to capture the immediate meaning of the original and to suggest the hidden insincerity of Diana's words. Sadly, the same cannot be said of quatrain 8.

His reading here is an unfortunate gaff. Rather than maintaining the interrogative of the Spanish text, he transforms the first three lines into a literal imperative:

Ah haire yo^w must not pass
thether frō whence yo^w came
that saw me as I was
and see me as I am

Since Wilson clearly understands that the shepherd is addressing a lock of Diana's hair, this interpretation simply makes no sense. If the speaker possesses the hair he is spilling his heart out to, then he cannot prevent it from coming to him from Diana's fickle head to witness his present sorrow. It is interesting to note here that RoseAnna M. Mueller's literal, line-by-line transcription of this poem repeats a similar misreading of this point. She stresses that she has no pretension of translating Montemayor's poems as poetry, only to capture their literal meaning. However, in the case of this quatrain, she reads the verb *correr* all too literally:

Oh hair, did you not run
To come to where you came
Once seeing me as you saw me
Seeing me as you see me? (qtd. In Chamosa: 53)

Neither reading comes close to reflecting the emotion expressed in this quatrain. In fact, the pathos of the poem rests on precisely this situation; the lock of hair, which metonymically represents Diana, is the impassive witness to the shepherd's distress.

4. Robert Southey, 1797

Except for the anonymous 12-line poem referred to above, published in 1737, the only other English version of Montemayor's poem until now is a flowery transmutation produced by Robert Southey in 1797:

Ah me! Thou Relic of that faithless fair!
Sad changes have I suffered since that day
When, in this valley, from her long loose hair
I bore thee, Relic of my Love! away.
Well did I then believe DIANA's truth,
For soon true Love each jealous care represses;
And fondly thought that never other youth
Should wanton with the Maiden's unbound tresses.

Here on the cold clear Ezla's breezy side
My hand amid her ringlets wont to rove,
She proffer'd now the lock, and now denied,
With all the baby playfulness of Love.
Here the false Maid, with many an artful tear,
Made me each rising thought of doubt discover,
And vow'd and wept—till Hope had ceas'd to fear,
Ah me! beguiling like a child her lover.

Witness thou how that fondest falsest fair
Has sigh'd and wept on Ezla's shelter'd shore,

And vow'd eternal truth, and made me swear,
My heart no jealousy should harbour more.
Ah! tell me! could I but believe those eyes?
Those lovely eyes with tears my cheek bedewing,
When the mute eloquence of tears and sighs
I felt, and trusted, and embraced my ruin.

So false and yet so fair! so fair a mien
Veiling so false a mind who ever knew?
So true and yet so wretched! who has seen
A man like me, so wretched and so true?
Fly from me on the wind, for you have seen
How kind she was, how lov'd by her you knew me;
Fly, fly vain Witness what I once have been,
Nor dare, all wretched as I am, to view me!

One evening on the river's pleasant strand,
The Maid too well beloved sat with me,
And with her finger traced upon the sand,
"Death for DIANA—not Inconstancy!"
And LOVE beheld us from his secret stand,
And mark'd his triumph, laughing to behold me,
To see me trust a writing traced in sand,
To see me credit what a Woman told me! (Southey: 89–91)

On a trip to Spain, according to his own account, Southey drank from the waters of the Esla River as he travelled from Benavente to Tordesillas. Since the Esla, he claims, has been "consecrated to the genius of George of Montemayor", he is inspired to give his readers a "specimen" of Montemayor's poetry (Southey: 86). Indeed, so inspired was he that he imports the "Ezla" literally into quatrains 3 and 5 as the specific setting of the lovers' trysts and the shepherd's sad musings. But again, though this is an addition to the text of the poem, Montemayor does identify the Banks of the "Ezla" in the preceding prose passages as the place where Sireno is seated.

It is also worth noting that Southey manages to have his cake and eat it too with reference to the ambiguous "color of hope" that opens the poem. In a footnote to the first quatrain he offers the following explanation, "The first stanza of the original, alludes to a Spanish peculiarity. The hair of Diana was kept in green silk." Then he gives the following alternative translation:

Sad changes have I suffered since that day,
When here reclining on this grassy slope,
I bore thee, Relic of my Love! away,
And faded are thy tints, green hue of Hope!

And he goes on to quote an extract, in both Spanish and English, from the *Historia de las Guerras Civiles de Granada* to illustrate what he calls "the love-language of colours" (Southey: 89–90).

But in spite of Southey's familiarity with his sources, this poem is a far cry, both in form and content, from the original. The formal, elevated register imposed by Southey's iambic pentameter can hardly capture the hard-edged tone of Montemayor's shorter, more austere lines, nor the subtle wit produced by their brevity. In addition, Southey proposes in the 3rd quatrain that Diana plays a teasing game of hide-and-seek with the lock, while it seems clear that – as in all three previous versions – she would tease the befuddled youth by fumbling disingenuously through his clothes to see if he carried with him this token of her love.

His solutions for the other problem passages, quatrains 4 and 8, are also less than satisfying. His version of lines 13–16 is not even a partial paraphrase of the original. The Spanish text says literally: "How many times, crying / (ah, deceitful tears) / she demanded jealousy, over things / I did [or said] in jest". This seems to make no sense. Nor is Mueller's paraphrase any better: "She begged for pity / of things I mocked" (Chamosa: 53). However, as Juan Montero points out in his critical edition of *Diana*, "pedir celos" was a proverbial expression of the time and suggests something like "to look or seem jealous". The meaning of lines 15 and 16, he proposes, is that "Diana was, or pretended to be, jealous of other shepherdesses whose love meant nothing to Sireno" (Montemayor 1996: 15, n. 30). It will be seen that my own version of these phrases takes a slightly different direction. But in any case, all three of the 16th-century translations are much closer to the mark than Southey's in this respect.

And finally, Southey also changes the interrogative of lines 28–32 to the imperative. But unlike Wilson, he has the bereaved lover tell the lock of hair to "Fly from me on the wind", supposedly out of shame because it sees him in his present misery after having seen him in his past joy.

In summary, Southey's version of this poem seems to be just as much, if not more, about Southey himself, or his concept of how English poetry should sound at the end of the 18th century, as about the specific poem, and its particular language, that Montemayor had written.

5. A new proposition

In the translation that follows I have attempted to tread a fine line between the need to preserve the poem's sense, and emotional subtleties, while at the same time using an accessible, lyric language cast within the relative limits of a recognizable (but flexible) prosodic structure. I hope I have learned from the examples set by Sidney, Yong, Wilson and Southey. I

leave it to the reader to decide whether this proposition is more or less successful than the ones that have preceded it.

Oh hair! such cruel inconstancy
seen since first you were seen.
How sickly now it sits with me,
the color of my dreams.

And once I thought, in joy
(though not without some fear),
it were no other shepherd boy
would find himself so near – her hair.

Oh hair, how many times
Diana spied, and named me names:
Did I bring you with, or leave behind?
and hundreds such childish games.

How often did I see her cry,
ah, deceitful tears,
jealous of my love, when I
pretended not to care.

Eyes that well would murder me,
oh golden hair!
How was I wrong to believe their plea;
they made me feel so sure.

Sometimes, you have seen her art,
the tears that overflowed, and stirred,
till I would swear with all my heart
that I believed her words.

Whoever saw such beauty
in a thing that altered so,
a lover so strict in his duty?
Whoever saw such woe?

Hair, be moved for the heart of a man,
to come from where you came,
seeing me as you saw me then,
and seeing me now as I am.

Beside the sand we lingered
where the river's waters sped.
And there she wrote with her finger,
"Before inconstant, dead."

In love, this is the summons
and you will obey its commands:
promises made by a woman,
written in the sand.

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