

Joaquín Pascual

## **Bilingual cultures: the learned language and the vernacular in Renaissance Seville and ancient Rome**

In the humanistic circles of Seville, as in other cities of Europe, the relationship between Latin and vernacular poetry was constant throughout the sixteenth century. School education at that time was based mainly on the imitation of Latin authors, whether directly from classical works or through contemporary Latin poetry, which Spanish poets also used to write, at least during their formative years. Many genres, subjects, techniques, images, phrases, and words of Spanish Golden Age literature were translated and adapted from this contemporary Latin poetry. Moreover, the vernacular poetry of educated writers was also based on the precepts and examples of Latin poetics. Therefore the influence of Latin was decisive in the development of a cultivated Spanish poetry in the Renaissance.

It is interesting to note the numerous similarities between the influence of ancient and modern Latin poetry on the revival of vernacular poetry in the sixteenth century, and the influence of Greek authors and of Greek poems written by Romans on the birth of a cultured Latin poetry in antiquity. The same procedures of emulation in a foreign language as well as of translation and adaptation of genres, subjects, motifs, and techniques into the vernacular can be easily shown in both periods. Just as ancient Rome had been captivated by the literary arts of conquered Greece, so Spain was captivated by the Renaissance literature of the conquered lands of Italy, insofar as the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, belonging to the kings of Aragon and later to the kings of Spain, were the starting point of this influence in the Iberian peninsula.

With an extensive bibliography on the profound influence of Greek literature in ancient Rome already in existence, we need not elaborate further on this well known phenomenon. To show these similarities, I shall focus therefore on a few cases of the relationship between Latin and vernacular poetry in sixteenth-century Seville. Seville, the 'Little Rome' (*Hispalis Romula*) of the ancient Roman Empire, also happened to be the most Italian city of Renaissance Spain in many respects such as population, trade, culture, architecture, painting, etc.<sup>1</sup> The seed of the new literary taste of the Renaissance was sown in Seville in the fifteenth century by several scholars, Spanish and Italian, who had spent a formative period in Rome and Bologna. These included Alfonso de Palencia (1424–1492), whose Latin prose

---

\* This article forms part of DGICYT-project PS 93-0130.

1. See Vicente Lleó Cañal, *Nueva Roma: mitología y humanismo en el Renacimiento sevillano* (Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1979).

uses a richer vocabulary than his own Spanish translation;<sup>2</sup> the Latin poets and companions in the Spanish College at Bologna, Rodrigo de Santaella (1444–1509) and Antonio de Lebrija or Nebrissensis (1441–1522), who was a Latin teacher at the Estudio de San Miguel in Seville; also the Sicilian Lucius Flaminius (d. 1509), who had been the disciple of Pomponio Leto in Rome, and Jacobus a Lora, praised by Petrus Martyr de Angleria in a poem during his stay in Seville and author of Latin hymns and an epistle in Latin verse to his protector Hieronymus Pinelus (d. 1520).<sup>3</sup> Likewise, many young Roman writers used to spend an educative period in Greece, the birthplace of the first learned orators and poets of ancient Rome.

Antonio Carrión, a disciple of Nebrissensis, was one of the foremost Latin and vernacular poets in sixteenth-century Seville. In the vernacular he wrote a poem, *Batalla de la riquessa et pobresa*, continuing the cultured poetry of the former century. This book was in the library of Fernando Colón, who quoted the initial verses in his *Abecedario* (number 12.284):

En quanto engaño biuimos  
quán breve ...<sup>4</sup>

The title reveals that it was an allegorical debate, and the subjects of the deceptive world and of wealth and poverty brings to mind stanzas 219 and 227 of Juan de Mena's *Laberinto de Fortuna*:

¡O siglo perverso, cruel, engañoso!  
¡O vida segura la mansa pobreza,  
dádiva santa desagradesçida!  
Rica se llama, non pobre, la vida  
d'el que se contenta bevir sin riqueza.

Carrión's *De assumptione*, a Latin epic poem of 170 lines written in the style of Virgil, is also largely influenced by the allegorical tradition of vernacular poetry. Verses 72–90, where Atropos argues with Nature, show a particular influence of El Cartujano's *Panegírico a Isabel*:

E tribus interea sic unam affata sororem  
est placidis Natura modis quae forfice duro  
ultima fila secat non exorabilis ulli:  
[...] uerbis duro annuit ore  
Atropos. hanc iuxta simul assensere sorores.  
At Natura, etc.

- 
2. See Luisa López-Grigera, *Anotaciones de Quevedo a la 'Retórica' de Aristóteles* (Salamanca: Gráficas Cervantes, 1997), p. 39.
  3. Likewise Fernando Núñez de Toledo, after his studies in Bologna, worked in Seville, where he published a commentary on Juan de Mena's *Laberinto* in 1499; subsequently he was Juan de Mal Lara's teacher as professor of rhetoric and Greek in Salamanca. Further information on the Latin poets of Renaissance Seville mentioned in this work may be found in my article 'Aproximación a la poesía latina del Renacimiento en Sevilla', *Excerpta Philologica*, 1 (1991 = *Antonio Holgado Redondo Sacra*), 567–99.
  4. Norton, p. 484, no. 1341.

The three Fates are also mentioned in stanza 71 of Mena's *Laberinto*:

vi los tres fados, e Cloto el primero,  
Lachesis segundo, Atropos tercero.

Even in an epigram by Carrión using the words and metre of Catullus, the similarities with Mena's *Debate de la Razón contra la Voluntad* are clear. The disapproval of frivolous poems and songs is also found in the seventh stanza of Mena's *Debate*. The first verses of this book are actually quoted by Carrión in his commentary on Verinus's *Disticha* (Seville, 1506), where the Cordoban poet Mena is the only Spanish author to be mentioned. Both Andalusian poets dissuade their own will from writing useless poems and exhort it to 'search for heavenly nourishment' (lines 7–8):

Sursum eia! mea te refer uoluntas,  
et coelestia pabula appetantur.

Hence Carrión's Latin poetry still shows itself to be strongly influenced by the subjects, characters, techniques, and procedures of the allegorical tradition of fifteenth-century poetry in the vernacular, which he had practised himself.

A colleague of Carrión at the Estudio de San Miguel and disciple of Nebrissensis and Lucius Flaminius Siculus, Pedro Núñez Delgado was probably the principal Latin poet in Seville during the first third of the century. His *Epigrammata*, printed in 1537 two years after his death, included Latin poems of many other literary genres. His particular interest in the epigram in both Latin and the vernacular is shown in his only known vernacular poem, a translation into *coplas* of a Latin epigram on Queen Dido printed in a Spanish translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Crónica troyana*, which Núñez edited in Seville in 1512 (fols. 103–04). Through his poems and in the notes of Cristóbal Núñez, another Latin and Spanish author, we find indications that most men concerned with the literary Renaissance in the city were closely linked.<sup>6</sup> At the Estudio de San Miguel, Núñez Delgado was the teacher of Luis de Peraza, who also wrote Spanish and Latin poems as well as the first known history of Seville.<sup>7</sup>

Once humanism had established a firm footing in Seville, the influence of a few other learned men connected with Italian culture would be a determinant for the literary development of the city through their activity in key circles. The Renaissance of letters according to Italian taste was promoted in the city, among others, by Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, archbishop of Seville and nephew of Cardinal Mendoza (1428–1495); Francisco de Mendoza, archdeacon of Seville; Fernando

---

5. Joaquín Pascual (ed.), *Maese Rodrigo de Santaella y Antonio Carrión, Poesías (Sevilla, 1504): introducción, edición crítica, traducción, notas e índices* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1991), pp. xxxviii–xxxix, xli–xlv and 72–89.

6. Francisco Vera, 'Petri Núñez Delgado *Epigrammata*: introducción, edición crítica, traducción, notas e índices' (unpublished PhD thesis, Universidad de Cádiz, 1990).

7. Joaquín Pascual, 'La poesía latina de Luis de Peraza en la primera mitad del Quinientos', in *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre Humanismo y Renacimiento*, ed. Maurilio Pérez-González, 2 vols (León: Universidad de León, 1998), I, 527–35; Luis de Peraza, *Historia de Sevilla*, ed. Silvia M. Pérez-González, 2 vols (Seville: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1997).

Colón, the son of the famous Genoese admiral, who bequeathed his huge library to the cathedral of Seville; and archdeacon Baltasar del Río, bishop of Scalas, who, after returning from Italy, organized several literary competitions in Seville from 1531 onwards. These were the first known competitions in Spain for both Latin and vernacular poems. In them, the Italian pronunciation of Latin was fostered among the young competitors, as well as Latin poetry and Italian-influenced oratory. Several of the Latin poems written for these competitions by Franco Leardo, a Genoese banker who had established himself in Seville at the beginning of the century, were published among the Spanish stanzas.<sup>8</sup> The Italian influence contributed to the preference for Latin over Spanish in the cultivated poetry written during the first half of the sixteenth century in Seville.

One difference between the situation in ancient Rome and that in early modern Seville was that Latin in the Renaissance was not only a language of literary prestige but also a sacred language and the only means of communication for academic and scientific purposes in most European countries. Furthermore, Castilian was never as widely understood in the different countries of the Spanish kingdom as Latin was in most provinces of the Roman Empire. Latin was not even considered a foreign language in sixteenth-century Spain as Greek had been in Rome, since some Spanish authors argued that their mother tongue was closer to Latin than was any other language. This allowed Latin to be used in the Renaissance for longer, and probably more richly, than Greek had been by the ancient Roman authors.

About the middle of the century in Seville Juan de Quirós wrote epic poetry in Latin and the vernacular. Of his Latin poems on Doctor Gasca's victory over Gonzalo Pizarro in Peru and on the bullfighter Pedro Ponce de León, only the verses quoted by his disciple Benito Arias Montano are known.<sup>9</sup> Besides the laudatory verses of his pupil concerning these Latin poems, Quirós's mastery of classical epic poetry is attested to by his Spanish *Christopathía* (Toledo, 1552), a poem in seven *cantos* or 353 octaves containing the gospel account of the Passion.<sup>10</sup> Here Quirós seems to be translating from Latin all kinds of expressions from Virgilian epic. Unlike Carrión's lost *Batalla* and his Latin poems influenced by vernacular poetry, Quirós's epic poems in Latin are lost, while his Spanish epic poem ignores the allegorical tradition, trying to adapt ancient epic poetry to the vernacular metres successfully employed in Spanish by Garcilaso de la Vega. Nevertheless, neither in Latin nor in the vernacular could the tales of sixteenth-century epic poetry ever contend with the successful novels of chivalry in Spain.

In the remaining decades of the century, among the Sevillian circle of poets, only Quirós's pupil Arias Montano and Canon Francisco Pacheco would continue writing more in Latin than in Spanish, in terms of quality as well as quantity.

---

8. Joaquín Pascual, 'Le banquier génois Franco Leardo, un poète latin de Séville dans la première moitié du XVIème siècle', in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bariensis*, pp. 475–83.

9. Violeta Pérez Custodio (ed.), *Los Rhetoricorum libri quattuor' de Benito Arias Montano: introducción, edición crítica, traducción y notas* (Badajoz: Diputación Provincial, 1995), pp. 119–21.

10. *Christopathía*, 2nd edn, Opúsculos literarios rarísimos 6 (Valencia, 1955).

Nevertheless, they could only be understood by a learned minority, and only the poetry of the former was printed, thanks to his social preeminence, his acquaintance with the printer Plantin and his reputation among European poets.<sup>11</sup> In Pacheco's Latin love poems, as in Fernando de Herrera's Spanish poetry, the subjects and motifs of Petrarchan lyric may also be found. In two very closely related Horatian genres, Pacheco wrote two Latin *sermones* and a Spanish satire, in which he criticizes the Spanish poets of his time.<sup>12</sup>

Among this plague of bad poets in existence at the time, we can even include Francisco Sánchez, principal Latin professor at the Estudio de San Miguel in 1556, named 'Father of Gerunds' by Pacheco, and his friend Alejo Salgado Correa, who was praised by Sánchez in a Latin epigram, and who is said to have been abandoned by his squire, a poor poet who preferred to renounce the year and a half's salary owed to him for services rendered, rather than suffer and praise his master's bad Spanish poems any longer.<sup>13</sup>

The imitation of ancient Latin poetry had been practised by most learned poets in the first half of the sixteenth century, but the divorce between unartistic poetry in the vernacular and the highly-wrought poetry in Latin of a cultivated élite, which never had a popular appeal, seems to have brought about an important crisis. The attempt to emulate the ancient Latin authors in their own language seemed absurd, as it had been for the Roman writers who tried to emulate the Greek classics. Moreover, the limited social range of this Latin poetry could not serve as the propaganda required by the protectors of culture of that time, while the Spanish poems written by common people displeased the critics and lacked the prestige necessary to serve that same purpose.

The main aim of some cultured poets of Seville, instead of emulating the Latin poetry of the classical age in its own language, would henceforth be to adapt that poetry to their own tongue. This situation also occurred in antiquity, when Roman poets wrote poems and even tragedies in Greek, a practice which was disapproved of by Horace. In sixteenth-century Spain the use of Latin as a spoken language was explicitly rejected by León de Castro and his pupils Sanctius 'El Brocense' and the Sevillian Juan de Mal Lara (1524–1571). Mal Lara, who wrote poems and other works in both Latin and Spanish, returned to Seville in the year 1548 to open his own school. His rhetorical doctrines greatly influenced literature in the city in the second half of the century, which was more erudite than before, and limited Latin to a few isolated uses and literary genres, according to the famous paradox, *Latine loqui corrumpit ipsam latinitatem*. Mal Lara's school was inherited by Diego Girón

- 
11. Juan F. Alcina, 'La fama de las odas de Arias Montano entre poetas y humanistas luteranos', in *II Humanismo y pervivencia*, III, 1447–55.
  12. Bartolomé Pozuelo (ed.), *El licenciado Francisco Pacheco, Sermones sobre la instauración de la libertad del espíritu y lírica amorosa: estudio introductorio, edición crítica, traducción, notas e índice de nombres* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1993); Francisco Rodríguez-Marín, 'Una sátira sevillana del licenciado Francisco Pacheco', *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, 17 (1907), 1–25.
  13. Stanko B. Vranich, *Ensayos sevillanos del Siglo de Oro* (Valencia: Albatros, 1987), p. 16.

(1530–1590), a former student who also wrote Latin and Spanish poems.

This academy, as well as the palaces of the count of Gelves and the duke and duchess of Alcalá de los Gazules, among other places, was the meeting point of many Andalusian poets, scholars, and men of culture such as Francisco de Medina, who was tutor to the duke's son, Gonzalo Argote de Molina, Canon Pacheco and his nephew Francisco Pacheco, Fernando de Herrera, Cristóbal Mosquera de Figueroa, Cristóbal de Mesa, Francisco Medrano, Juan de la Cueva, Cristóbal de las Casas, Juan de Arguijo, Baltasar del Alcázar, Mateo Alemán, Pablo de Céspedes, and others. They were all admirers of Latin poetry as well as partisans of learned Spanish poetry, which, like the Latin verse of the time, abided by the rules of rhetoric and poetics, and could thus be compared to the classical works without pretending to emulate the Latin authors in their own language. This led these cultured poets to look for a model of vernacular poetry based on the classical literary arts which while avoiding the common language might be understood by a larger audience and please patrons as well as scholars.

This was the chief purpose of Fernando de Herrera's poems and *Anotaciones* on the poems of Garcilaso (Seville, 1580).<sup>14</sup> Mal Lara had encouraged Herrera to carry out this commentary; Pacheco, Medina, Girón, Mosquera, Luis Barahona de Soto, and other members of Mal Lara's academy collaborated and contributed with their Latin and vernacular verses, as well as their poetical translations. Medina, who had been in Italy for a few years, succeeded to the chair at the Estudio de San Miguel after Sánchez's death in 1580, and wrote the main preface of this book, which has been seen as the manifesto of this Andalusian literary school. This preface, with Herrera's poems, may be easily compared with Horace's arguments in his literary epistles and the purpose, method, and quality of his own poems.

The practice of Latin versification by the Renaissance poets, even when only a few Latin poems are extant, as in the case of Garcilaso, Fray Luis de León, or Herrera was thus a determinant in the development of a cultivated Spanish poetry.<sup>15</sup> The Neo-Latin poems, closer in form to the ancient poetry while contemporary in subject, served as a bridge to adapt the classics of antiquity to vernacular poetry. Latin and vernacular epigrams were written by, among other poets of this Sevillian

---

14. Antonio Prieto, *La poesía española del siglo XVI*, II: *Aquel valor que respetó el olvido* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987), pp. 613–19; Begoña López-Bueno (ed.), *Las 'Anotaciones' de Fernando de Herrera: doce estudios* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1997); Stanko B. Vranich, *Francisco de Medina (1544–1615), maestro de la escuela sevillana* (Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1997).

15. For Garcilaso de la Vega's Latin poems see his *Obras completas*, ed. Elias L. Rivers (Madrid: Castalia, 1974), pp. 468–71, and my translations in 'Técnicas de traducción de la poesía latina renacentista según la lengua de la literatura castellana de su tiempo', in *Reflexiones sobre la traducción*, ed. Luis Charlo (Cadiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1994), pp. 507–20. For Fray Luis de León see his *Poesía*, ed. Juan F. Alcina (Madrid: Cátedra, 1986), pp. 211–19; and for Herrera, Cristóbal Cuevas & Francisco Talavera, 'Un poema latino semidesconocido de Fernando de Herrera', *Archivo hispalense*, 215 (1987), 92–125; José Cebrián, 'Nota: cuatro poesías inéditas de Fernando de Herrera', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 69 (1992), 263–68; id., 'Sobre Herrera y Mal-Lara con un Hércules por medio', in *Estado actual de los estudios sobre el Siglo de Oro*, ed. Manuel García (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1993), I, 233–44.

circle, Medina, whose poetry and activity also served as a model to the painter Francisco Pacheco (1571–1654), nephew of the canon of the same name and father-in-law of Velázquez, Rodrigo Caro (1573–1647), and Juan de Robles (1575–1649), belonging to the last generation of Spanish Golden Age writers. By the end of the sixteenth century and the following decades, Pacheco's atelier became the principal academy of learned painters and writers in the city, and in his *Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones* he included at least seven Latin poems by his friends among other Latin and vernacular laudatory poems and epitaphs.<sup>16</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, Caro still wrote as many Latin poems as Spanish.<sup>17</sup>

Once the Spanish models were established, Latin poetry, which had become ever less cultivated since the second third of the sixteenth century, was relegated to still lower status in the secular society of the seventeenth century. Like the processes, so the achievements in ancient Rome and in Renaissance Spain were thus quite similar: a vernacular poetry obeying the rules of classical poetics, and providing works which might be used as school models to replace the foreign classics. Virgil and Horace had replaced Homer and Pindar in Roman schools as the Spanish poems of Garcilaso and Herrera replaced in turn the Latin classics as models for the new poets.

*Universidad de Cádiz*

- 
16. *Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones*, ed. Pedro Piñero & Rogelio Reyes (Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1985).
  17. See Joaquín Pascual, *Poesías e inscripciones latinas de Rodrigo Caro: edición crítica, traducción y estudio*, Microform PhD Dissertation 32 (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1990), and Rodrigo Caro, *Poesía castellana y latina e inscripciones originales: estudio, edición crítica, traducción, notas e índices*, ed. Joaquín Pascual Barea (Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1990).