

The Armenian Translation of Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost*



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The play "Love's Labours Lost", written about 1594-1595 was first published in 1598, presumably from foul paper in a quarto edition (Q1) and was entitled "A Pleasant Conceited Comedie Loues Labors Lost". Though the text in Q1 was badly printed, it served as a copy for setting the play in F1. The plot seems to be Shakespeare's own: numerous topical allusions in the play (meant for courtly audience) make many lines hardly intelligible to the modern reader. Later the comedy appeared in the list of Shakespeare's comedies in *Meres's Palladies Tamia* and is mentioned in Tofte's *Alba or Month's Mind of a Melancholy Lover*, published the same year. This 1598 publication was in

quarto form and Shakespeare's name was on the title page for the first time in print as the author of a play.¹

Instead of following the customary round of court functions and frivolities, King Ferdinand of Navarre and his gentlemen resolve to make Navarre *a little academy of learning*: they enter into a three-year agreement which presupposes living a life of seclusion in which food and sleep are to be placed under precise regulation and women's society should positively be prohibited. The only "sanctioned" recreation of these gentlemen is the word - Costard's and Don Armado's jokes. When it comes to signing the agreement, the gentlemen begin to show signs of irresolution: thus, though Biron declares his readiness to take the oath, he is more doubtful than his two madcap companions - Longaville and Dumain who are usually given to wit and mockery. Having felt hesitation in his companions' behaviour, Biron reports this fact to the King with malicious promptness. Anyhow, the unexpected visit of the Princess of France made them all break their vows.

Trying to keep his recent vow, the King is compelled to house both the princess and her train in the tents out of his palace gates. As the plot unfolds, the King and his lords show lively personal interest in the beautiful Princess and her vivacious ladies - Rosaline, Maria and Katherine.

Meanwhile the first violation of the edict of retirement is made when the clown, Costard, is found in the company of Jaquenetta, a country girl to whom Don Armado, also smitten, secretly writes love verses. Costard, for punishment, is placed in the Spaniard's custody for a week's fasting on bread and water, but he is released from jail to deliver a love-letter of Armado's to Jaquenetta. At the same time Biron gives Costard

a note for Rosaline, and the clown gets the letters mixed, so that Armado's absurd effusion is placed in Rosaline's hands, causing the ladies great amusement; while Biron's poetry reaches Jaquenetta who, unable to read it, seeks the aid of the village schoolmaster Holofernes.

Thus, love turns all the votaries of wisdom into furtive sonnet-writers. Moreover each of them tries to hide his own "wrongdoing", blaming and reproving the others for breaking their vows. In the long run, love – mighty and victorious as it is – wins and both the parties, ladies and gentlemen, get involved in tricky love-games.

The source of the slender plot of this comedy is unknown, and many authorities credit it to Shakespeare's imagination. It is essentially a satire on the manners and modes of the day, burlesquing fads and affectations as manifested in the Euphuistic era of Lyly.

French history undoubtedly contributed much to the formation of the plot. Biron and Longaville were two well-known adherents of Henry of Navarre, and the name Dumain appears to be an anglicized form of Duc de Mayenne, another prominent figure in the civil wars in France then.

The comedy comes to prove that its author is familiar with the Spanish romances of chivalry; there is a marked resemblance between Armado, Holofernes and the Italian comic characters of the braggart and the pedant in *GL'Ingannati*.

Mary Fitton, Shakespeare's beloved woman was also a source of inspiration for him. She changed the world for him; she gave him blissful days of tenderness and divine hours of delight. Her moral record did not belittle her charm in the poet's eyes and did not diminish his passion. Anyhow, in time her disloyalty turned Shakespeare's joy of love into bitterness, idealistic admiration - into realistic contempt; this ebb and flow is the very sign of supreme passion, its mark and method.

The first great depiction of Shakespeare's mistress appears in *Love's Labour's Lost* and is called Rosaline. Rosaline is described in the comedy with plenty of particularities; many details of both body and soul are given so vividly that it is impossible to doubt the sincerity and fidelity of the original portrait.² A great number of other peculiarities come to prove the identity of the poetic image of the heroine: white complexion, high forehead and black hair, heart-hardness, wit, spiritual torture.

In fact, Biron, one of the lords attending the King, is an exquisite portrait of Shakespeare himself. Thus Rosaline praises him for his cheerfulness and eloquent speech. When converting in the play, Biron and Rosaline indulge in 'a journey of wit' in which Rosaline more than holds her own standpoint, showing indeed astonishing self-assurance spiced with the contempt of Biron.³

Every word in the first encounter of Shakespeare's characters deserves observations:

Biron. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

Ros. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

Biron. I know you did.

Ros. How needless was it then to ask the question!

Biron. You must not be so quick.

Ros. 'Tis' long of you that spur me with such questions.

Biron. Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.

Ros. Not till it have the rider in the mire.

Biron. What time o'day?

Ros. The hour that fools should ask.

Biron. Now fair befall your mask!

Ros. Fair fell the face it covers!

Biron. And send you many lovers!

Ros. Amen, so you be none

Biron. Nay, then will I be gone. (II, 1)

Բիրոն. Մի՞թե մի անգամ չեմ պարել ձեզ հետ ես Բրաբանտում:

Ռոզ. Մի՞թե մի անգամ չեմ պարել ձեզ հետ ես Բրաբանտում:

Բիրոն. Պարել եք, գիտեմ:

Ռոզ. Իսկ ինչ կարիք կար այդ հարցը տալու:

Բիրոն. Դուք տաքանում եք:

Ռոզ. Ինձ զրգռում եք նման հարցերով:

Բիրոն. Ձեր միտքը սաստիկ արագ է վազում, նա շուտ կըհոգնի:

Ռոզ. Առիթ կունենա նա իր հեծյալին ցեխը օգելու:

Բիրոն. Որ ժամն է հիմա:

Ռոզ. Ճիշտ այն ժամն է, երբ խենթերը նըման հարցեր են տալիս:

Բիրոն. Ես ձեր դիմակին լավ բախտ եմ մաղթում:

Ռոզ. Այո, ահն դեմքին, որ նա ծածկում է:

Բիրոն. Ցանկանում եմ ձեզ շատ սիրահարներ:

Ռոզ. Ամեն: Դուք այդ ցանկանում չեք:

Բիրոն. Ուրեմն զընամ: (թարգմ. Խ.Դաշտենց, 1951 - 53)

This language, style and expression of thoughts and ideas is eminently and peculiarly characteristic of young Shakespeare: a lord of love himself, taming shrews and making his heroines run after vagrant heroes, now the inconstant hero gets himself entangled hand and foot with the unfaithful lady and strives vainly to free himself.

What does Biron think of his charmer? In his monologue, he uses words which are so unexpected and out of context of the play that we are compelled to regard them as a deliberate paining of Shakespeare's mistress, so cold and unfaithful.

Biron says:

...Nay, to be perjured which is worst of all;

And, among three, to love the worst of all;

A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,

With two pitch balls struck in her face for eyes;

Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed

Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:

And I to sigh for her! To watch for her!

To pray for her! Go to: it is a plague

*That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, white, sigh, pray, sue and groan:
Some men must love my body and some Joan.* (III,1)

Բիրոն. Երդ՞ումս դրժել, որը ամենից վատթարագույնն է,
Եվ երեքի մեջ ես սիրահարվեմ ամենավատի՞ն:
Մի կոկետուհու՞, թավշյա հոնքերով,
Որ իբրև աչքեր՝ զույգ սև գնդակներ ունի երեսին:
Երկինքը վրկա, ով որ կարող է այդ ամենն անել,
Թեկուզ Արգոսը իր պահապանն ու ներքինին լիներ,
Կըհառաչեի ես նըրա համար, անքուն կըմնայի ես նըրա համար:
Կաղոթեի, որ ձեռք բերեմ նըրան: Դա պատուհաս է,
Որ Կուպիդոնը ինձ ուղարկում է իբրև փորձություն,
Որ չեմ ձանաչել ամենակարող իր զորությունը:
Ես պիտի սիրեմ, զըրեմ, հառաչեմ, հեծեմ դառնաղի,
Ոմանք սիրում են քաղաքի աղջիկ, ոմանք էլ գյուղի: (III,1)

it should be stated that the twelve - line passage is eleven in Armenian: the last line is of translational interest. Some love my body - քաղաքի աղջիկ, some Joan- գյուղի աղջիկ, whitely wanton - կոկետուհի.

The famous Armenian writer and translator Khachik Dashtens published his *Happy Comedies* in 1953, *Love's Labours Lost* among them. He focused his attention to the imagery of the play securing faithfulness of translation to the original. In *Love's Labour's Lost* the dominating series, apart from nature and animal images, is that of war and weapons. This fact the emphasizes the chief interest and entertainment of the play: *the civil war of wits*, the whole being, in Armado's words, a little more than *a quick venue of wit -snip, snap, quick and home* ! (V,1)

Արմադո. ... սըրամտության մի շեշտակի հարված:
Մեկ, երկու և ուղիղ դիպավ նշանակակետին:

The main underlying theme, confounding and dispelling the fog of false idealism in the light of the real life experience, is presented through a series of brilliant encounters, when even the laughter *stabs*, the tongue is keen as the *razor's edge invisible*, and lets missiles fly to right and left.

Boyet a lord attending the princess says:

Boyet. Fleeter than arrows, billets, wind, through, swifter things. (V,2)

Բոյե. քան նետն ու հողմը, զընդակն ու միտքը, բանն արագագույն:

Words are pictured throughout as repair – like thrusts, arrows, bullets fired from a cannon or as combatants tilting with their spears at a tournament. Another lord attending King Longaville's wit is described as a sharp – edged sword handled by too blunt a will, Moth carries Armado's message like a bullet, Boyet and Biron tilt straight and merrily

at each other, Boyet's eye gets wounded *like a leaden sword*, while jesting Biron in desperate capitulation stands in front of Rosaline and cries.

*Biron. ... lady, dart thy skill at me;
Bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout;
Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance'
Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit; (V,2)*
Բիրոն. օրհորդ, տեղա իմ գրլխին քո հարվածները:
Ջարդիր, ջախջախիր ինձ հեզնանքներով և նախատինքով,
Տգիտությունըս հատիր, կըտրատիր քո մըտքի սըրով.
Հոշոտիր ինձ քո սուր սըլաքներով:

In addition to this general *civil war*, three other kinds of combat are witnessed, that of the little group of scholars in their Academy, who, as the King rather prematurely assures in the opening lines, are *brave conquerors*; warring against their own affections *and the huge army of the world's desires*; the war of men and women in the cause of love, headed by the King when he cries out certain words, to which Biron makes his own addition:

King. Saint Cupid, then! And, soldiers to the field! (IV, 3)
Արքա. Ով սուրբ Կուսպիդոն: Հառաջ, զհնվորներ դեպի ռազմի դաշտ:
and Biron who adds,
*Biron. Advance your standards, and upon them, lords;
Pell-mell, down with them; but be first advis'd
In conflict that you get the sun of them. (IV,3)*
Բիրոն. Պարզեք դրոշմեր: Դե, դեպի կանայք:
Թող շըփոթահար վայր փըռվեն մըրանք: Մի բան լոկ հիշեք.
Այդ մարտում պետք է անպայման հաղթել:

The defense is made by the women with their wits, incited by Boyet and their final victory is achieved with the enforcement of strict terms of probation on their prisoners.

*Boyet. Arm, wench, arm! encounters mounted are
Against your peace: Love doth approach disguised,
Armed in arguments; you'll be surprised:
Master your wits; stand in your own defence: (V,2)*
Բոյե. Ի զեն, օրհորդներ, ի զեն. մանզի ձեր հանգստության դեմ
Գրոհ է սկսված, թշնամին ծպտված
Առաջանում է. դուք պաշարվում եք,
Արհացեք ոգով և պաշտպանվեցեք.

Obviously, all these poetic techniques can be treated as Shakespeare's earliest skills, the tendency of creating symbolic impact – an important feature expressing the

poet's conception of his theme. Hence, interestingly enough, this symbolism becomes a marked characteristics for all his great tragedies. Moreover, Shakespeare's symbolism raises and sustains the emotion of his audience.

The above mentioned passages come to prove that Khachik Dashtents' principles - *reliability, fidelity, faithfulness* - work for the adequacy of the translation to the original. The Armenian translation corresponds to the original, fully evoking the same atmosphere created by author himself. Thus, Dashtens is deservedly considered to be one of the outstanding Armenian translators of the 2nd half of the 20th century.

Notes:

1. Judging by the character and style of this writing, critics assume that it is one of Shakespeare's early plays. Coleridge speaks of it as *a juvenile drama* and as the author's *earliest dramatic attempt*.
2. Here it should be mentioned that Rosaline's character appears in *Romeo and Juliet* and in some sonnets addressed to his *dark lady*.
3. In the *Romeo and Juliet* Mercutio called her *hard-hearted*.

References:

1. Frank, Harris (1912) *The Women of Shakespeare*. New York: Mitcael Kennerly, MCMX.
2. Shakespeare, W. (1966) *The Complete Works*. London: Spring Books.
3. Shakespeare, W. (1951-53) *Yntir Yerker*. Tr. by Kh. Dashtents. Yerevan. Vol. 2.
4. Spurgeon, Caroline (1965) *Shakespeare's Imagery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Շեքսպիրի «Սիրո ապարդյուն ձիգերը» կատակերգության հայերեն թարգմանությունը

Սույն հոդվածը նվիրված է Շեքսպիրի «Սիրո ապարդյուն ձիգերը» կատակերգության հայերեն թարգմանության վերլուծությանը: Այն առաջին անգամ թարգմանվել է հայ անվանի գրող, թարգմանիչ Խաչիկ Դաշտենցի կողմից: Նա թարգմանել է ոչ միայն այս, այլև Շեքսպիրի մյուս բոլոր կատակերգությունները, որոնք առանձին գրքով լույս են տեսել 1953 թվականին: Խաչիկ Դաշտենցի թարգմանության մեջ շեշտը դրվել է «համարժեքության» սկզբունքի՝ հարազատության, հավատարմության և վստահելիության վրա: Խ. Դաշտենցը, ինչպես նաև Հ. Սևանը, Ս. Մկրտչյանը, հետևել են Հ. Մասեհյանի առաջադրած սկզբունքներին և համարվում են հետմասեհյանական շրջանի անվանի թարգմանիչներ: