



Vol. 6, No. 9, 2017

DOI: 10.22099/JPS.2017.4965, ISSN: 2322-2557

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William Shakespeare's Sonnets. Translated by Omid
Tabibzadeh. Tehran: Niloofar Publishers, 2017. 411 pp.
ISBN 978-964-448-712-5 (hardback)

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Without question, William Shakespeare (1564- 1616) occupies a unique position in the history of English literature. He wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets and 4 narrative poems. Shakespeare's sonnets are the most personal of his works, so it acts as a unique introduction to Shakespeare's mindset, on the one hand, and very seminal entry for the familiarity with the manifestations of thought and literature in Renaissance England, on the other hand. Because of the importance of Shakespeare's sonnets in English literature and, by extension, in the World literature, the lack of a complete Persian translation and interpretation necessitates this new rendering.

Translation of Shakespeare's works in Persian has a long and eventful history. As far as we know, during the Qajar Era (1785- 1925) Shakespeare's plays began to appear in Persian costume. Hosseingholi Salvar was the first one who translated Shakespeare's comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1899/ 1278. Later, Abu'l-Qāsem Khān Qarāgozlu, better known as Nāṣer-al-molk, who was a Persian politician during Qajar Era, translated *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor*

of Venice which came out in 1961/1339 in France. Fortunately, from that time onwards, the translation of Shakespeare's plays continues up to the present time.

Unlike Shakespeare's plays that some of them (e.g. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet*) have been translated over and over again, Persian translators have not paid much attention to Shakespeare's poems. From Shakespeare's narrative poems just *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* have been translated into Persian respectively in 1301/1922 and 1335/1956. It is worth mentioning that Lotfali Suratgar, a professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Tehran, was the first person who produced a Persian version of these two long narrative poems. Unluckily, the former remained unfinished.

The credit for translating Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in Persian is almost unanimously given to Iranian poet and translator, Masoud Farzad. Presumably, he translated five of Shakespeare's sonnets into prose between 1933/1312 and 1938/1317. In addition to scattered prose and verse translations of Shakespeare's sonnets, there are two selected bilingual translations of his sonnets: one in prose, including 100 sonnets, by Taghi Tafazzoli (1998/ 1377), and the other in verse, including 78 sonnets, by Behnam Moghddam (2000/1370). But translating a collection of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* cannot provoke the same sense in the reader as that of the whole cycle. Although each of these sonnets is independent, they are thematically linked.

Omid Tabibzadeh's recent translation is the first complete translation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* into Persian. The volume includes all the 154 sonnets, features a long, informative, and path-breaking introduction, and helpful glosses. Providing information on the genre, English sonnet, and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, the "Introduction" is long and informative. Discussions include the dedication of Thorpe's 1609 edition, the 1940 pirated edition of the sonnets by John Benson, their order and date of composition and autobiographical contents.

Selection of medium and form are among critical decisions for translating poetry. Tabibzadeh has rendered Shakespeare's *Sonnets* into lucid and fluent Persian prose. Also, he has done his best to keep Shakespeare's brevity of

language, that is, for each line in English there is exactly one line in Persian. All in all, it is a successful translation with sporadic flourishes of lyricism.

The third section is the most informative part of the book as it is impossible to have a deep understanding of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* without explanatory notes, because they are replete with political and social references, mythological and biblical allusions, and literal devices e.g. puns, double entendres, and word plays. In my opinion, it is the translator's towering achievement. To do this, he has consulted the most authentic and up to date sources written by seminal Shakespeare-scholars, e.g. Thomas George Tucker and Katherine Duncan-Jones.

Despite all these merits, the book has also its drawbacks. One, for some proper nouns there are different Persian pronunciations (e.g. in p. 40 «چاپمن» و «چپمن» for Chapman; and in p. 293 «دان» و «داون» for Donne. A more vigorous copyediting would have reduced typographical errors like "sonett" instead of "sonetto" (34); and «باربینگ» instead of «بربیچ» (30). The translation also fails to notice multiple meanings in some words and phrases including "princes" (170), l.2; "black lines" in p.186, l.13; and "O Cunning Love" in p.356, l.13). Some mythological references are also missed (e. g. p. 98, l.2 "Devouring Time" refers to the myth of Cronus; and p.162, l.8 "winged speed" refers to the myth of Pegasus). Five, according to dictionaries of quotations some lines and phrases from Shakespeare's *Sonnets* have passed into the common stock of English proverbial expression and cliché. Unfortunately, this part is totally missed in the present book.

Despite these criticisms, Tabibzadeh should be complimented for offering this charming translation, together with his comprehensive analysis of the *Sonnets*.