

Antonio Ballesteros González, ed., trans. and notes 2011: *Poesía romántica inglesa. Antología bilingüe*. Madrid: Asociación de Directores de Escena de España. 442 pp. ISBN: 978-84-92639-24-3.

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Anthologies constitute highly complex meta-literary products and a genre of their own. The texts included undergo alterations in the light of the new context in which the anthologist situates them, in accordance with selection criteria and with the function the collection is to fulfil. The prestige of the author(s), the novelty or prevalence of a particular literary form and the aesthetic quality of the anthologised compositions are usually the main considerations for the inclusion of representative authors and texts. Additionally, anthologies may be determined, to a lesser extent, by ideological, economic or social motivations (Lefevere 1992). Therefore, anthologists face a multifaceted task which involves, as Claudio Guillén (1985: 413) notes, an intricate process of re-elaboration of an already existing corpus of texts, and consequently a critical rewriting of the selected pieces.

The task is even more complex in the case of anthologies of translated texts, since the corpus was originally written in a foreign language and belongs to a different literary tradition. As Harald Kittel points out, “despite obvious correspondences, it would be a mistake to assume that anthologies of literature translated from one or several source languages are a mere subclass of anthologies of untranslated literature . . . the dual nature of literary translations would have to be emphasized, not to forget the complex functions of a translator editor” (1995: xv).

Mindful of such specificity, Essman and Frank (1991: 71-72) distinguish between “editor’s anthologies” or collections of texts translated by others and “translator’s anthologies”, where the responsibility of selection, translation and critical analysis falls on the same person —the anthologist-translator-critic. Indeed, Antonio Ballesteros González’s *Poesía romántica inglesa. Antología bilingüe* (2011) belongs to the second category as the author fulfils that triple function in this new edition of English Romantic verse in translation. First, as in an art exhibition, the book offers a selection of texts from the total repertoire of English Romantic poetry deemed worth transmitting to Spanish readers. Secondly, the anthology is also a vehicle of cultural transfer since it expands the store of extant translations in the Spanish literary polysystem. Finally, by means of paratextual material —introduction, list of primary and secondary sources and

philological notes— it supplies readers with a critical perspective as to the place English Romantic verse occupies within the larger corpus of English poetry and highlights its most significant traits.

This new anthology is by no means the first devoted to English Romantic poetry in Spain and, therefore, it may be said to confirm an undying fascination for the poetical works of English Romantic writers in the country. It is true that Romantic poets were gradually introduced through the scattered versions which did occasionally see the light in Spanish literary magazines in the late nineteenth century. Those were eventually collected in anthologies of foreign verse in the early decades of the nineteenth century, thus establishing a long-standing tradition throughout the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Such was the case of the emblematic editor's anthologies by Enrique Díez-Canedo, *Del cercano ajeno* (1907) and Miguel Sánchez Pesquera, *Antología de líricos ingleses y anglonorteamericanos* (1915-1924), and the memorable compilation by Fernando Maristany, *Las cien mejores poesías (líricas) de la lengua inglesa* (1918), an early example of a translator's anthology of English verse.<sup>2</sup> These monolingual collections were fundamental in granting Spanish readers access to a fairly recent corpus of Romantic and Victorian poetry. After those early translation anthologies, all of which devoted space to Romantic poetry, nineteenth-century English verse gathered new impetus in Spanish versions just after the Civil War. This was mainly owing to Marià Manent's celebrated three-volume bilingual anthology, *La poesía inglesa* (1945-48) whose first issue was entirely devoted to *Románticos y Victorianos* (1945).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, *La poesía inglesa*, reissued in 1958 by Janés, offered an invaluable source for emerging poets, literary critics, and academics alike concerned with foreign verse. As Ángel Crespo (1988: 36-37) and José M<sup>a</sup> Valverde (1979: 73) later claimed, Manent's anthology exerted a powerful sway over their work as critics, translators and poets, somehow coming to shape their aesthetic values. Indeed, Valverde, one of the forerunners acknowledged by Ballesteros, was a crucial figure in the process of making English Romantic poetry known to Spanish readers. Yet, Spanish anthologists in the second half of the twentieth century are also highly indebted to Manent's *Románticos y Victorianos*, which made of Wordsworth,

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of the reception of foreign poetry through translation and renewal of the poetic repertoire in Spain in the early twentieth century, see Gallego Roca (1996).

<sup>2</sup> Enrique Díez-Canedo's *Del cercano ajeno* (1907) anthologizes European poetry and includes Percy Bysshe Shelley and Victorian poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, George Meredith, Arthur Symonds, as well as Walt Whitman; Miguel Sánchez Pesquera in *Antología de líricos ingleses y anglonorteamericanos* (1915-1924) devotes two half volumes to Byron's poems by several translators, although he does not only compile versions of Romantic poets. Fernando Maristany in *Las cien mejores poesías (líricas) de la lengua inglesa* (1918) follows A. L. Gowans and Gray *The Hundred best Poems (Lyrical) in the English Language* (1903) and includes Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Robert Burns, Samuel Rogers, Lady Nairne, William Wordsworth, Walter Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, Walter Savage Landor, Thomas Campbell, Allan Cunningham, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and Thomas Hood.

<sup>3</sup> The second volume was *De los primitivos a los neoclásicos* (1947) and the last one *Los contemporáneos* (1948). José Janés commissioned Manent to produce the bilingual collection of English poetry. It was published by Lauro, a name used by the publisher after the Spanish Civil War for his new cultural venture.

Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats enduring figures just when the first anthologies of English poetry had fallen into oblivion.

Ballesteros's awareness of not being the first to offer Spanish readers a selection of Romantic verse in translation leads to his due acknowledgement of precursors. However, some major Spanish anthologies are overlooked. Mention is made of Ángel Rupérez and his *Lírica inglesa del siglo XIX* (1987), as well as of José M<sup>a</sup> Valverde and Leopoldo Panero's anthology *Poetas románticos ingleses* (1989), both being noteworthy compilations of English Romantic verse in translation.<sup>4</sup> Although exhaustiveness is not required in this respect, other significant anthologies of translation have been omitted in Ballesteros's account. According to Enríquez Aranda (2004) there were seventeen extant anthologies fully or partially devoted to English Romantic verse published throughout the twentieth century. Two other anthologies should also be noted here as contributing to the dissemination of English Romantic poetry in the recent past through excellent poetic versions: *La música de la humanidad: antología poética del Romanticismo inglés* (1993) by Ricardo Silva-Santisteban and published by Tusquets, and the latest by Gabriel Insausti, *Poetas románticos ingleses: antología* (2002).

Despite the long list, Ballesteros makes an outstanding contribution in expanding the Romantic canon of English verse in Spain. In *Poesía Romántica Inglesa* it is literary considerations in the first place which compel the author to make an extraordinary selection including the most quoted of English Romantic compositions: Wordsworth's 'Ode Intimations of Immortality', the 'Lucy Poems', 'Tintern Abbey' and sections from 'The Prelude'; Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'; Shelley's 'Ozymandias' and 'Ode to the West Wind'; Byron's 'She Walks in Beauty' and fragments from the epic 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage'; some of Keats's odes, 'To a Nightingale', 'To Autumn', 'On a Grecian Urn', and a selection from the work of Blake, pioneer of this literary movement. The larger catalogue, which is briefly summarized here, partially coincides with Rupérez's and with that offered by Valverde and Panero, all of whom focus chiefly on the male poets above mentioned, although 'minor poets' such as Robert Southey or John Clare, present in previous collections, have been ignored here.<sup>5</sup>

Aware of the restrictive approach of former compilations, Ballesteros adds to the expected index of names and titles a selection of women's voices, and this undoubtedly adds further value to this volume. I contend that, apart from the purely literary, there is also an underlying ideological criterion informing this anthology which aims at vindicating a more varied and richer repertoire than that exclusively based on male canonical poets. As a result, Spanish readers of this anthology will have the pleasure of discovering the as yet

<sup>4</sup> *Lírica inglesa del siglo XIX* was reprinted in 2007 while *Poetas románticos ingleses* has been systematically reissued in the last two decades by several commercial publishing houses: 1993, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Exception has to be made of three women poets —Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Brontë and Christina Rossetti— included in Rupérez's collection, although they are regarded as Victorian, chronologically speaking. However, Ballesteros also considers Barrett Browning's poetry as quintessentially female Romantic verse.

unfamiliar compositions by Mary Alcock, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Jane Taylor, Felicia Dorothea Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon next to others by more readily recognizable names —Dorothy Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The will to go beyond the well-established inventory of English Romantic poetry known to Spanish readers demonstrates an unprejudiced attitude and an evident responsiveness to the existence of a multifarious literary history of English which has been gradually rewritten over the past twenty-five years. Ballesteros's decision to promote the knowledge of English female writers is naturally informed by notable achievements in the field of Women's Studies leading to the much delayed recovery of long-forgotten or ignored female authors. Consequently, the anthologist offers classical feminist references in 'Bibliografía Selecta. Estudios de índole general' (2011: 21-25), such as Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and Mellor's *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), just to mention a couple, in addition to more updated titles like Wolfson's *Borderlines: The Shifting of Gender in British Romanticism* (2006). Additionally, there is a separate section on 'Poetas románticas inglesas' (2011: 41-43) that provides a larger reference list on Romanticism, gender, and the anthologised women poets.

Indeed, there is no collective anthology of Romantic women poets in English translated into Spanish as yet and the present volume endeavours to pave the way in that direction. All the women poets, with the exception of Jane Taylor, were present in Gilbert and Gubar's foundational *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985), which attests to their significance. However, only two of the female poets included in *Poesía romántica inglesa* have occasionally been present in Spanish compilations, Barrett Browning being the most widely anthologised both in English and Spanish. A selection of Barrett Browning's poems appeared in 1907 in Díez Canedo's compilation, and later in 1945 in Manent's *Románticos y Victorianos*.<sup>6</sup> Anna Laetitia Barbauld was also included in Maristany's anthology with a single poem in 1918.

It should be highlighted that a mixed readership, ranging from poetry lovers and students to more specialised readers, is being addressed by Ballesteros, but they will all undoubtedly benefit from engaging with the anthology. First, the instructive tone that characterizes the paratexts makes it a suitable work for a readership approaching English Romantic poetry for the first time. The six-page survey on the literary period and its contribution within the wider framework of world literature will be a useful guide in this respect. Ballesteros avoids excessively lengthy textual annotations and referencing within the body of the text in order to escape the weightier apparatus of other scholarly editions. The footnotes accompanying the poems usually offer biographical, cultural and historical data or highlight the link among related texts. This bilingual edition is also clearly intended to offer the best and most representative English poems of the Romantic era so that readers can truly enjoy reading them in the language they were written, while it provides reliable

<sup>6</sup> Manent chose to translate 'Flower-spirits' also included in this anthology, and some *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (VI, VII, XV, XVIII, XXI).

assistance for those seeking to fully understand the original texts in Ballesteros's accurate and pleasing versions. As for readers well-acquainted with English Romanticism, they will find the paratexts quite valuable, particularly the exhaustive reference section under 'Bibliografía selecta' (2011: 21-43) comprising a useful and up-to-date list of bibliographic and online materials. An inventory of general sources on English Romanticism is supplied under 'Estudios de índole general' (2011: 21-25), including classical studies such as Maurice Bowra's *The Romantic Imagination* (1950) and M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), as well as recent publications catering for a variety of critical approaches to this period. English anthologies of poetry both on the period and on individual poets, and general introductions to Romanticism are also listed. Additionally, under the name of each of the poets selected, a list of Spanish editions is given, when available, followed by English editions ("Ediciones utilizadas") consulted for the preparation of the volume in question, and an updated inventory ("Biografías y estudios críticos") of secondary sources mostly in English, including web pages.

Browsing through this initial section of the book it becomes patent that while there are many Spanish editions for each of the male Romantic poets, women poets of the nineteenth century have gone unnoticed so far. It is in this regard that Ballesteros's anthology makes an essential contribution. Certainly, this is the first to bear witness to the commendable production of a considerable number of women poets in the Romantic era, more female than male poets being represented. This seeming predilection for female writers, however, is misleading, for the space devoted respectively to male (44-367) and female (368-414) poets is unbalanced, with Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats being more generously represented by a greater number of texts and pages.<sup>7</sup> Ballesteros states that "[a] la espera de traducciones y publicaciones en España que reivindicquen el elevado valor estético de la producción literaria de estas últimas . . . valgan los comparativamente escasos poemas que aquí se incluyen como muestra de que merecerían ser más conocidas y difundidas en nuestro entorno" (2011: 373).

To many readers one of the most appealing aspects of this anthology will be the possibility it offers to ascertain the diverse array of interests and sensibilities encompassed within the selection of women's verse. Ballesteros's choice certainly undermines the biased notion that women's verse of the period is largely characterized by an excess of sentimentality. The corpus chosen ranges from the moralising and politically concerned tone of Mary Alcock ('Instructions, Supposed to be Written in Paris, for the Mob in England') and Anna Laetitia Barbauld ('The Rights of Woman') or the patriotic epics by Felicia Dorothea Hemans ('England's Dead' and 'Casabianca') to the lyric mode of Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Floating Island' and 'Thoughts on my Sick Bed'. Furthermore, this selection significantly comprises poems that explore the morbid and the sinister, elements the author explicitly relates to the 'gothic mode' alongside the predominantly

<sup>7</sup> Ballesteros's admiration for Wordsworth (twenty-three complete poems or fragments) and Keats (thirteen poems) is palpable, while the rest of canonical Romantic poets are allotted half the number of pages.

lyric-meditative poems by Dorothy Wordsworth. Hemans's 'The Haunted House', Letitia Elizabeth Landon's 'The Little Shroud' and Barrett Browning's 'The Dream: A Fragment' are paradigmatic of this gothic vein. The choice of gothic, also present in Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', pinpoints Ballesteros's fondness and long acquaintance with the literature in question.

Deciding on the appropriate translation method is always one of the most challenging aspects in the elaboration of poetry anthologies. The choice between verse —rhymed, metrical, free verse— and prose is a complex one and is frequently determined by the relevance of the source text's formal and prosodic qualities as regards achieving the desired aesthetic effect. Translation decisions are also determined by textual display. In bilingual editions, with original and translation facing one another, this turns into a key constraint when opting for a suitable translation method. Although coherent with current norms for poetic translation which suggest not 'upgrading' the target text by forcing rhyme, Ballesteros also shuns metrical versions in Spanish *verso blanco* which would convey greater musicality to sonnets and ballads.

On the whole, Ballesteros's translations are written in polished free verse or else poetic prose, achieving a high degree of semantic and pragmatic accuracy. However, given the variety of poetic forms present —from short epigrammatic poems and sonnets to lengthy meditative poems in blank verse and some pieces in free verse— the approach to each one of these might have been undertaken individually in an attempt to recreate as much as possible the distinctive qualities of each text-type. Thus, while the option for free verse seems satisfactory in the case of William Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell' or Wordsworth's fragment of the 'Prelude', for which Ballesteros offers commendable versions, this does not seem the most suitable vehicle for rendering the resounding compositions of 'The Tyger', 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' or 'Ode to the West Wind'. The translator might have attempted versions in Spanish *verso blanco*, not an exact equivalent for the English 'blank verse', which Lefevre (1975) suggested as a desirable method to render rhymed verse. Yet, the translator coherently justifies his choice, pointing out that he opts for "el verso libre para no forzar en exceso la traducción mediante una rima artificiosa que solo lograría distorsionar y subvertir el sentido del poema" (2011: 10). He undoubtedly acknowledges the high degree of difficulty involved in poetic translation and has adopted a sensible and honest approach to deal with it.

Following Jakobson's *dicta* that "poetry by definition is untranslatable" and hence "only creative transposition is possible" (1959: 238), it must be agreed that Ballesteros has succeeded in rendering the spirit of the Romantic age through reliable versions, for which he is to be highly commended. By registering some major women's voices in *Poesía romántica inglesa* Ballesteros has also helped re-define an all-encompassing picture of what English Romantic poetry was, illustrating the broad range of interests, styles and voices that shaped it. It was high time that a more comprehensive catalogue of English Romantic poetry saw the light in Spain and we can only be grateful to Antonio Ballesteros González for having made it possible.

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