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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *ANTOLOGÍA POÉTICA: EDICIÓN BILINGÜE* (TRANSLATED, EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY ANTONIO BALLESTEROS GONZÁLEZ). EDICIONES CÁTEDRA, 2021

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As all Anglicists will be aware, the Romantic school of poetry which flourished in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries constitutes one of the most important poetic movements in the Anglophone literary canon. Of the major Romantics, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge may be considered the pioneers, above all through their joint volume *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. In particular, Wordsworth has been re-read in more recent times by critics ranging from acolytes of the poetic such as Harold Bloom to a Marxist like Raymond Williams. The volume under review, edited by the distinguished Anglicist Antonio Ballesteros González (currently attached to the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid), offers the reader a long introductory essay providing a broad conspectus of the life, work and ideas of Wordsworth, followed by a generous selection of poems in parallel text mode with the Spanish translations provided by Ballesteros himself. The poems are further accompanied by a chronology, an editorial note, and a full primary and secondary bibliography. The editor, while praising his predecessors in the translation of Wordsworth into Spanish (also noting Catalan translations), presents this volume as the most comprehensive bilingual critical anthology of Wordsworth's verse to have appeared to date in the language of Cervantes.

The introductory essay offers a lucid discussion of Wordsworth's life and work, and the evolution of his opinions in the wake of the French Revolution—from an enthusiastic radicalism to a more cautious conservatism. Wordsworth's identity as poet of nature, or indeed self-styled "prophet of nature", constant across his long career, is at all points accorded its due recognition. Particular stress is laid on aspects including his formative upbringing among natural objects in the Lake District of North-West England, his capacity to empathise with the poor and those on society's margins, and the philosophical bent that characterises his entire work. Also evoked are his close bond with his sister Dorothy and his relations with his fellow writers, Coleridge of course but also the likes of Walter Scott and Thomas De Quincey. Ballesteros emphasises Wordsworth's importance in literary history, seeing in him one of the very greatest poets not only of the English canon (surpassed only by Shakespeare and Milton), but also of the universal poetic heritage.

The selection of poems is ample and representative: all the best-known poems are there, with the two key volumes *Lyrical Ballads* and *Poems Published in 1807* fully represented. In line with the usual critical consensus, the emphasis is on the poet's earlier work, the later poems often being seen as generally inferior. As would be expected, included are the major poems expounding the poet's philosophy ("Tintern Abbey," "Ode on Imitations of Immortality"), as well as moving narratives of rural life like "Michael," "The Idiot Boy" or "The Thorn", and celebrated lyrics such as "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (also known as "Daffodils") or "The Solitary Reaper." A laudable inclusion is one of Wordsworth's most politically radical compositions, "Goody Blake and Harry Gill"—a poem from *Lyrical Ballads* in which nature intervenes on the side of the downtrodden. Inevitably there are omissions—one might miss such eloquent narratives as "The Last of the Flock", "The Brothers" or the neoclassical "Laodamia"—but all the essential is present. The poems are chronologically arranged (and not thematically as in some of Wordsworth's own editions); the volume closes with the long autobiographical poem or personal epic that is generally regarded as Wordsworth's masterpiece, "The Prelude, Or: Growth of a Poet's Mind". That *magnum opus* is, doubtless for reasons of space, present not in full but by means of a judicious selection with extracts from each of its thirteen books, the original preferred being (again in line with majority critical opinion) the philosophically adventurous 1805 text rather than the more orthodox 1850 version.

Antonio Ballesteros' translations are intentionally line-by-line and literal, being his stated objective to achieve "the greatest possible understanding of the text by the Hispanophone reader" ("el mayor entendimiento posible del texto por parte del lector en lengua española") (p.123). Thus there is no attempt to reproduce Wordsworth's rhymeschemes or to replicate the rhythms of his blank verse; meanwhile, understanding is enhanced by the provision, where relevant, of annotations in the form of footnotes. The general level of accuracy is extremely high, despite the occasional mistranslation. Some more specific observations on these Spanish versions will here be in order.

Regarding the key aspect of textual detail and its preservation, the translations exhibit a high degree of appropriateness. The English landscape, especially in its Lake District manifestation, is a vital element in the poet's work, and the translator has risen to the challenge of rendering the highly specific lexicon that describes it. Landscape terms successfully translated include "down" as *llano* and "dell" as *valle* in "The Idiot Boy" (p.225); as well as "heath" as *brezal* in "Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman" (p.273) or "moor" as *páramo* in "Resolution and Independence" (p.457). The translator seems to have had more trouble with the very English term "common" (a collectively owned piece of land), giving it multiple renderings across the anthology, the best being *pradera del pueblo*, again in "Simon Lee" (p.271).

Translation cruxes are liable to occur not only in the register of landscape, but also in the related field of the naming of plants, nature being dear to Wordsworth on both macro and micro levels. Here a native speaker may detect small inaccuracies. In "The Ruined Cottage", the noun "thrift" is taken to be an adjective denoting the quality of simplicity (a thrifty person is one who does not overspend), and is rendered as *sencilla* (qualifying the noun *manzanilla*) (p.165). However, "thrift" is also the name of a plant and is employed by Wordsworth in that sense. Conversely, in "Nutting", the word "stock" is taken to refer to a plant and translated as *alheli* (p.347), whereas here, in Wordsworth's hands, it is part of a set phrase ("stocks and stones", also used by Milton) and means 'object made of wood'. These are of course minor errors, for rare indeed would be the translator with a botanist's knowledge of plant life in the Lake District.

While textual detail is a vital element in translation, equally crucial is the rendering of the source text's "feeling"—of the translator's capacity to convey at least a part of the author's most profoundly felt and expressed moments and emotions. With Wordsworth this can take us into the area of complexity. To take as an example, in the celebrated "Ode on Imitations of

Immortality"—a meditation focusing on what Wordsworth himself in the poem calls the "philosophic mind"—, the translation succeeds in achieving that goal. Ballesteros' renderings of key lines from that poem successfully convey the sonority and stateliness of the original, as with "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?" / *¿Adónde se evadió el fulgor visionario*?" (p.515) or "And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore" / *Y escuchar a las olas poderosas mecerse para siempre* (p.525). Similar remarks may be made regarding the translation of that other major poem of ideas, "Tintern Abbey", whose crucial philosophical passages are lucidly and movingly rendered, as in lines like "the still, sad music of humanity" / *la queda, triste música de la humanidad* or "the round ocean and the living air" / *el redondo océano y el aire viviente* (both p.290).

If the language of poems like the "Ode" and "Tintern Abbey" embraces complexity, Wordsworth was also a poet who consciously—indeed, famously in the programmatic *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*—sought simplicity in key parts of his work. That deliberate simplicity is well communicated in the translation, for instance in the titular hero's closing exclamation at the end of "The Idiot Boy": "The cocks did crow, to-whoo, to-whoo/ And the sun did shine so cold" / *Los gallos cacareaban uuh, uuh/y el sol brillaba demasiado frío*. Another instance is "We Are Seven", where the dialogue between the rational narrator and the more intuitive child comes over in all its starkness: '"How many are you then', said I,/'If they two are in Heaven?'/'The little maiden did reply'/'Oh Master! we are seven"' / '"¿Cuántos sois entonces?', dije yo/'Si estos dos están en el Cielo?'/'La chiquilla replicó':/'¡Ay Señor, somos siete!'" (p.267). In "The Thorn", however, the translator loses an opportunity to enter textual debate over simplicity: that poem contains the much-maligned lines "I've measured it from side to side:/'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide", castigated as 'unpoetic' and indeed subsequently edited out by Wordsworth, but perfectly justifiable in context. The translator renders Wordsworth's original lines and allows the poem an annotation, but his comments make no mention of the stylistic controversy (p.207). The fine poem "Resolution and Independence" (also known as "The Leech-Gatherer") is another which throws up a potential intertextual debate around Lewis Carroll's parody of the poem in *Through the Looking-Glass*—which challenge is, however, not taken up.

The extracts from "The Prelude" in the 1805 text merit separate consideration, occupying as they do over a hundred pages. The filleting

carried out means the disappearance of significant passages, notably from Book III (*Residence in Cambridge*) to Book V (*Books*), where, *inter alia*, an interesting intertext with Cervantes is not included, and Book VII (*Residence in London*), where some important socio-historical commentary is omitted. In Book III, another opportunity for textual debate is lost: the selection fails to include the famous description of Isaac Newton's statue in Trinity College ("Newton with his prism and silent face")—a line actually improved on by Wordsworth in the 1850 text by adding two of his finest ever ("The marble index of a mind forever/Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone". Lines as powerful as these could call in question the notion of the superiority of 1805, but the excision of this part of Book III precludes discussion of the matter.

Nonetheless, the purple passages of "The Prelude" are in general appropriately translated, with the original's dignity maintained, and here we may cite three examples. The famous "Stolen Boat" episode from Book I (*Childhood and School-Time*) has its key lines sonorously rendered, as in "It was an act of stealth/And troubled pleasure" / *Fue un acto furtivo y de incierto placer* (p.611), and in the climax when the child imagines that a gigantic shape "with measured motion, like a living thing/Strode after me" / *Con mesurado movimiento, como una cosa viviente,/Anduvo en grandes pasos tras de mí*: the translation communicates the awe and mystery of the original (p.613). In a different dimension, namely the political, the lines in Book X (*Residence in France and French Revolution*) celebrating the revolutionary spirit are perhaps the most famous in the entire "Prelude": "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven" receive full justice from the translator with his eloquent rendering *Gloria fue estar vivo en aquel amanecer/pero ser joven fue el verdadero cielo* (p.688)—as a translation, a shade on the free side, but which conveys the utopian enthusiasm of the original. Equally, the poem's conclusion (Book XIII) has its strength well conveyed, in lines like "we shall still/Find solace in the knowledge that we have" / n*osotros todavía/ Hallaremos solaz en el conocimiento que poseemos*. The same happens with the epic's last line, in which the human mind is seen as finally superior to nature since it is "of substance and of fabric more divine" / *de una substancia y fábrica más divinas* (both p.725).

All in all and despite any cavils over errors or omissions, this anthology is an impressive achievement. In the context of the Spanish-speaking world, it can be recommended to both students of English literature and the general reader as an excellent introduction to the life and work of one of the most

important and influential figures in the Anglophone literary canon. It may also be hoped that, through Antonio Ballesteros' volume, the readers of the twenty-first century will find their appreciation of the natural world enhanced, and will concur with William Wordsworth's own advice: "Let Nature be your teacher".