Blanco White's Anglophilia, Translations and Poetry: A Self-exiled Writer in England

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ABSTRACT
This paper studies José María Blanco White as a translator of English poetry and as a pioneering figure in the cultural fusion between Spanish and English letters. From his beginnings in Sevillian Enlightment he decided to exile in England where he dedicated part of his time to different intercultural and cultural tasks, specifically to translation. Blanco White's anglophilia encompasses both writing directly in English as well as his contributions to English culture through different journals of the era. There is a glaring consonance between his life and work that represents a harmonious unity which perfectly illustrates the nature of his era.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Literary Translation, Interculturalism, Romanticism, Blanco White, Shakespeare

RESUMEN
Este trabajo estudia a José María Blanco White como traductor de poesía inglesa y como una figura pionera en la fusión cultural entre las letras inglesas y españolas. Desde sus inicios en la ilustración sevillana, decidió exiliarse en Inglaterra donde dedicó parte de su tiempo a diferentes tareas culturales e interculturales, concretamente a la traducción. La anglofilia de Blanco White aúna tanto la escritura directamente en inglés como sus contribuciones a la cultura inglesa a través de diferentes periódicos de la época. Hay una notable comunión entre su vida y su obra la cual representa una unidad armoniosa que ilustra perfectamente la naturaleza de su tiempo.

Palabras clave: Estudios de traducción, Traducción literaria, Interculturalidad, Romanticismo, Blanco White, Shakespeare.

1. Introduction

José María Blanco's multicultural nature will be discussed here through an examination of his work on English poets from different eras, mainly from the Elizabethan to the Augustan period. His knowledge of the English language and his familiarity with the British classics encouraged his academic colleagues to explore English literature. Blanco was responsible, for instance, for Lista's and Reinoso's imitation of Miltonian verse in a poetry competition which they themselves had organized.[1] It was thanks to Blanco that Lista translated and employed Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* as the basis for his *Imperio de la Estupidez* (1798). In the next

[1] The reader may find information about this Contest, along with other literary and cultural facts, in an article which we have published in *Alfinge* 20, 2008, 151-170.

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section we shall see how Blanco also brought Pope's poetic work to life in Spanish, albeit in an indirect way.

As we shall see, after having spent more than a decade on English soil, Blanco continued to hone his poetic skills. Circa 1823 he had dedicated himself to literary translation. It was during this time that he did his first dabblings at writing poetry in English.

2. Some notes of his beginnings as a translator

Blanco prepared a translation of German poetry, though doing so indirectly, translating from the French. The poem was Gessner's "Cancion de la alborada" ("Song of the Dawn"). This was one of his first attempts at the kind of translation at which he would excel during his time in England. Before embarking on his journey to London he would work on an English eclogue, but in the same way that he recreated Gessner's verse: through indirect translation, as we shall see shortly.

Thus, from among the works of his youth a free verse translation of an eclogue stands out. This was the first translation he performed from English, and it yielded some 110 lines. The Sevillian's entitled his work "Égloga al Mesías" the original text being Alexander Pope's "An Eclogue for the Messiah." Pope, in turn, had based his work on Virgil. Blanco was only aware, as he lamented in his notes,[2] of a translation in French prose. Blanco[3] (1994: 133) wrote the following in the manuscript:

> The eclogue which I present to the Academy is taken from one written by the English poet Pope, who imitated Virgil's *Pollio*, who in turn had borrowed from various thoughts found in the Prophecy of Isaiah, which he adorned and extended to his liking. I don´t know whether to call this piece of mine a translation or an imitation, because the term *translation* suggests less invention and original work than I should like, while the term *imitation* is too vague and does not convey a certain loyalty to the original which I have maintained throughout. I shouldn´t like to appropriate anything which is the work of another, but neither should I like to be deprived of anything belonging to me, especially in this genre of works in which self esteem is so essential – I know not why, but more than in others. It is true that in my eclogue there are few thoughts which are not at least suggested in Pope's work, but I have throughout given give these thoughts a twist, exhibiting a certain kind of originality.

In this preliminary reference the translator makes a note of his efforts and subtly presents some ideas on the theory of translation, as he doesn't know whether to opt for the concept of "translation" or the term "imitation." Later, when he compares some excerpts he alludes to painting to explain his task in these terms: "he who is versed in the craft of poetic images will see in almost the same words a vibrant and grand painting rather than one with no movement, and of less splendor." Blanco

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[2] There is a manuscript copy of the eclogue created by Jose María Blanco at the Library of the Hispanic Society of America in New York. The original manuscript is kept at Seville's University Library and features, as Garnica explains, very careful and calculated writing.

[3] We have translated these quotations *ad hoc* for this paper.

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justifies the selectiveness of his poem, stating that "I should note that everything in the English version does not appear in my eclogue because, as I never really set out to translate it, I was free to omit what I found least relevant."

Pope created his work in 1712 and entitled it "Messiah. A Sacred Eclogue in Imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*." Alexander inserted texts from the Latin poet's eclogue IV, sprinkling in lines from the prophet Isaiah, and the work totals 108 lines in all. Blanco in his version omits thirty and translates 72. This confirms for us that Sevillian circles first came into contact with English literature through French translations. Blanco's poem (1994: 133-139) is entitled "'Egloga al Mesías." We present here some passages, both from the Spanish as well as from the original English work:

Cantad, oh vos, de la sagrada Elía
Vírgenes venturosas, dulces himnos,
En tanto que las selvas y los prados
Escuchan de mi voz enardecida
Los ecos, que jamás en prado o selva
Tal altos fueron de pastor cantados.

Ye Nymphs of Solyma! begin the song:
To heav'nly themes sublimet strains belong.
The mossy fountains, and the sylvan shades,
The dreams of Pindus and th'Aonian maids,
Delight no more –O thou my voice inspire
Who touch'd Isaiah hallow'd lips with fire!

The translator's poetic inspiration, which reflects the bucolic, Arcadian trend in vogue during the period, can be perceived from the start. We add here three lines which Blanco inserted in hand-written notes:

Cielos, haced bajar vuestro rocío,
Que la Naturaleza posternada
La aguarda ya en silencio respetuoso

'Ye Heavens! From high the dewy nectar pour,
And in soft silence shed the kindly show'r!

Blanco White's version features three lines while the original English had two, though he employed the same hendecasyllabic meter. With some elements changed, it would seem that the English was not the direct source of the translation, and that the Sevillian created his version using an intermediating text in French.

In a journal published in London, *Variedades* (I, 31-38), we find a paper by White entitled "Retazos de la novela intitulada Ivanhoe". The explanation he included denotes that Blanco could have translated Walter Scott's book, but he clarifies in a preliminary note that, although he understood both languages well, Spanish and English, he preferred not to translate the novel because the author did not find the courage to undertake this literary feat. Nevertheless, he wrote about the pleasure he would feel if

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Ivanhoe were translated into the Spanish language. He makes explicit that he translated some excerpts:

> From my perspective, although I am able to understand both languages with almost equal facility, I do not find it within me to undertake such an enterprise. Although it would be most gratifying to see such delightful works in Spanish, I would be hesitant to endeavor to translate even those which seem easiest.

White's view on the (im)possibility of translating a literary work or art was clearly specified in the previous sentences, also included in this article quoted above:

> Apparently these novels have been translated in France - God only knows how! For in my view many of their beauties cannot be translated into any language, just as there are flowers which cannot be picked without them losing their petals.

3. From prose in English to poetry

Blanco honed his English writing by composing prose: first he would draft some sermons in around 1817; later he prepared *Letters from Spain/Evidence against Catholicism/Preservative against Poetry* and quite a few literary articles appearing in *New Monthly Magazine* as well as in the *Quarterly Review*.[4] Blanco White's prose was inspired by the style of the 18th-century, which, after all, was his roots. Nevertheless, the translations we present below reveal the new creative horizons which the Sevillian would explore. Two years after having translated a good amount of poetry from English to Spanish, in 1825 Blanco White (1994: 342) sent a letter to his friend[5] William Bishop with an extensive poem from which we include here a few lines, which he signed and dated on December 16th of the same year, from Chelsea (1-4, 11-18):

> Oh! Do not blame as rash the hand
> Which nurtured in a distant land
> Its native lite can this forsake
> And try the British lyre to wake.
> (...)
> Of Britain, I, a foster child,
> Her noble lyre hast oft beguiled
> The sorrows which must needs attend
> The man who, his ill lot to mend,
> Loses at once, like a strayed dove,
> His rich inheritance of love,
> And wanders, a new house to find,
> Beggar of kindness among mankind.

[4] Among these were the three articles which he would publish on Shakespeare's poetry.

[5] He sent them – 88 articles, to be exact – to his friend W. Bishop on November 30th, 1825 (Llorens, 1972: 299) although the date given by Garnica and Diaz is December, 1825.

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His happiness in the land welcoming him was transmitted and captured through these first steps taken writing poetry in English. He expresses his gratitude to the nation receiving him and the spiritual and emotional state which spurs him to write in stanzas. He does not forget in this initial poetic declaration his first compositions penned on the shores of the Betis, recalling his youth and memories of Seville (25-29):

> For I could once in concert sweet
> The bards of ancient Boetis meet,
> And though not bold, my Spanish rhyme
> Was deemed full soft with theirs to chime.
> Oh smiles of the Castilian Muse!

Blanco White's most remembered sonnet, widely published in anthologies and the one which would bring him fame (Llorens, 1972: 300) is "Night and Death" written on the morning of December 19, 1825. The original idea can be found in one of his notebooks under the title "Memorand for verse Night and Death. We should know nothing of the grandeur and extent of the Universe but for the night. Analogy." This nascent idea would be thoroughly developed by the poet and translator several times.

Coleridge, to whom Blanco dedicated the sonnet, would in his response effusively praise the quality of Blanco White's work, comparing and classing it with the very finest poetic compositions from the likes of Milton and Wordsworth. It should be noted that the English Romantic's response to the Sevillian residing in England would be delayed due to the trying times he was going through:

> The finest and most grandly conceived Sonnet in our Language (at least, it is only in Milton's and in Wordsworth's Sonnets that I recollect any rival), and this is not my judgment alone, but that of the man κατ εξοχχεν φιλοκαλου John Hookham Free[6].

Blanco did not consider having his English poems published. Fate would have it, however, that Coleridge would publish the sonnet, as he sent various pages of sonnets to *The Bijou*, a Christmas almanac along the lines of Ackermann's successful *Forget-me-not*. Among his own poems which he sent in 1828 he would mistakenly include the sonnet by Blanco White, who protested when he found out. But we ought to note the accolades the Spanish writer was garnering as a rising literary and cultural figure of the time.White was then coming to enjoy literary prestige through his poetic translations, as can be gathered from his intercultural activity.

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[6] November 28, 1827, Life, I, 439. Thus documented by Llorens (1971: 303) who added a comment from Leigh Hunt, included in his well-known anthology of English sonnets entitled *The Book of the Sonnet*: "Coleridge pronounced this sonnet 'the best in the English language. Perhaps if he had said the best in English poetry, the judgment might have appeared less disputable. In its language some little imperfections are discernible, which do not detract, however from its singular merits even in that respect, especially considering that the author was not young when he came into England, and that he then spoke English like a foreigner. In point of thought the sonnet stands supreme, perhaps above all in any language. Nor can we ponder it too deeply or with too hopeful a reverence."

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Jose María Blanco White would carry out various translations two years before penning "Night and Death." To these we can add another poetic translation completed in 1833 during his stay in Dublin, along with yet another from 1840, signed from Liverpool, as we shall see shortly.

4. Translations of poetry in the 1920s

The German publisher Ackermann's publication, *Variedades*, appeared in 1823 and served as the forum to divulge the translations which Blanco completed during this period. The first release contained two translations from Provençal and three from English. Among his tasks and undertakings for the journal can be found an early, 129-line translation worthy of the highest praise.

The source text was "On the retreat of the French from the heights of Santarem, in Portugal," whose title was abbreviated in the target text to "Sobre la retirada de los franceses de Santarem" (On the retreat of the French from Santarem). This locative omission ('in Portugal') does not suggest that White (1994: 258-165) translates in a free manner. Let us read the opening of the poem both in the original and in the translation:

> On the proud heights which look o'er Tagus' flood,
> In dread array, the hostile armies stood;
> With jealous vigilance, thro' day and night,
> This hopes the battle, that prepares for flight:
> The Gaelic chief, and his disheartened host,
> Feel the sure failure of their despot's boast;
> Tho' famine urge, attack he dares not try,
> He fears to fight, nor fears he less to fly.
>
> Sobre las altas cimas que se espejan
> Del tajo en la corriente, noche y día
> Las enemigas huestes se observan
> En angustioso afán. Por la pelea
> Esta se agita, aquélla por la huida.
> Burlada, el jefe galo y sus legiones
> De su déspota miran la jactancia,
> Desanimados ya. Rabiosa, en vano
> El hambre apremia: él teme sus horrores,
> Teme la fuga y teme la pelea.

The source text was written by Richard B. Sheridan's[7] 15-year old son. The poem was awarded a prize at the Winchester School and its theme celebrates the retreat

[7] A note of general interest: his father's celebrated work, *The School of Scandal*, was translated by Santander's Joaquin Telesfero de Trueba y Cosío (1799-1835). The title was *La escuela del bueno tono* or *El seductor moralista*. The family's well-to-do situation as merchants allowed him to study in France and England. Upon returning to Spain he had to go into exile overseas. Sheridan's work was received in Spain, later cited in the *Revista y Repertorio Bimestre de la Isla de Cuba* (I, 1831) (*The Island of Cuba's Bimonthly Review & Magazine*) (I, 1831) and had even been reviewed in *El Iris de México* on May 31st, 1826.

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of Massena's army in the wake of threats which said general leveled against England's troops. Blanco (1994: 260) explains that "because of this respect, all the enemies of the French oppression will rejoice upon seeing the lines I offer the public." Nevertheless, the translator and director himself of the *Variedades* journal, where he published the verses, encouraged readers to examine the source poem, which was included in its entirety in the publication. Blanco would write the following which would indirectly convey some thoughts on translation theory while serving to capture the reader's interest and win his sympathy:

> (...) If all those reading my newspaper could enjoy the beauty of the original English, which I shall provide shortly, I shouldn´t dare to present a translation which, in addition to the defects inherent to all translations, and those which I shall never have the talent to avoid, there are those which oblige me to practice this craft deprived of the leisure which these works demand. The translation was done at a moment which should have been spent resting, and is only meant to convey an idea of the angle and main thoughts in the original, for those who can´t understand the language in which it is written (...)

The thorny issue of death and existence, whose depths he plumbs and speaks to during his ecclesiastical period, is one of his work's recurrent themes. *El mensajero de Londres* (or *Las Variedades*) presented - on January 1, 1823 - his version of the well-known monologue from *Hamlet*, whose 33 lines were expanded to 43. The beautiful iambic pentameter is put into Spanish in a groundbreaking work which reads:

> To be or not to be –that is the question.
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them? To die –to sleep
> No more; and by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished. To die –to sleep,
> To sleep! Perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause. There's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life.
>
> Ser o no ser... he aquí la grande duda.
> ¿Cuál es más noble? ¿Presentar el pecho
> De la airada fortuna a las saetas,
> O tomar armas contra un mar de azares
> Y acabar de una vez? Morir... dormirse...
> Nada más... y escapar con sólo un sueño
> A este dolor del alma, al choque eterno

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Que es la herencia del hombre en esta vida...
¿Hay más que apetecer? Morir... dormirse...
¡Dormir! Tal vez soñar... Ahí está el daño.
Porque ¿quién sabe los horribles sueños
Que pueden azorar en el sepulcro
Al infelice que se abrió camino
De entre el tumulto y confusión del mundo?

Blanco also approached the Englishman's plays through literary criticism. He wrote three articles (Garnica & Díaz 1994: 273) on the topic as a well-established writer entitled "The pictorial Shakespeare," "Notes on Hamlet" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream."[8]

As for the translations into Spanish of works Shakespeare composed circa 1601, Blanco's work occupies a special place. We must recognize Blanco White as a true literary great for the reasons which we shall now present. The paragraph which Blanco translated was the first known translation in verse, as in 1772 Ramón de la Cruz prepared an indirect version from J.F. Ducis's French translation, which departed too much from the meanings transmitted by the writer from Stratford-upon-Avon. In 1798 Leandro Fernández de Moratín translated the whole thing in a work distinguished by its elegance and faithfulness to the original, but which was written in classic *prose*. Thus, Blanco's translation presented above, though chronologically the third, was really the first one in verse. Later there would follow four versions appearing during the 19th Century. Carnerero (1825) would translate indirectly from the French; Avecilla (1856) would base his on Moratin's; Jaime Clark (1870-1879) translated from the English; and Macpherson (1873) did the same, but with a final result which was a far cry from the source text.

The third fragment which Blanco White translated from English also came from Shakespeare: the words of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, who upon being banished by Richard II, reflected upon his sentence, alluding to his 'native English'. The translator and anthologer took advantage of this element, adapting it to his situation as one "self-exiled." Blanco made the theme from Richard II his own, using it to voice his own sentiments upon arriving in London (Durán 2005). The translation's theme is based on his desire to speak English with the ease and precision he would like to. The young Sevillian's education included the language of his Irish grandparents, whose accent was frowned upon in genteel English circles. We include a few lines here (Blanco White 1994: 274-275):

(...)
El idioma patrio que he aprendido
Más de cuarenta años, me es inútil
De hoy en adelante. ¿Qué es mi lengua
Ya para mí sino harpa destemplada

[8] The three articles came out in the magazine *The Christian Teacher*. The first in I, 1839 (pp. 322 – 332 and 469-481); the second in the same issue, on pp. 573-580; and the third in II (1840) on pp. 42-53.

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O instrumento sonoro puesto en manos
No acostumbradas a pulsar sus cuerdas?

The language I have learn'd there forty years,
My native English, now I must forgo;
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
Or like a cunning instrument cas'd up,
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony.

Blanco translates the adjective 'English' as 'patrio' in order to adapt and employ the theme to the liking of the translator who – let´s not forget – selects the excerpts as an anthologer, like a kind of etymological gardener choosing flowers from a garden. Blanco exploits Mowbray's question in order to proclaim the Spaniard's voluntary forgetting. The final excerpt shown oozes Blanco's typical desire to own the English tongue:

(…) Pasó el tiempo
De imitar balbuciendo a la nodriza
Y soy ya viejo para tomar ayo.
Si del nativo aliento, de esta suerte
Me priváis, oh mi Rey, daisme la muerte.

I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,
Too far in years to be a pupil now.
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breething native breath?

The fourth translation which he includes in the fledgling journal's debut also came from Shakespeare and the tragedy of Hamlet which the Bard published in 1603. Here he created 96 lines from the 81-line original, going back to Act II, Scene I to capture the adulation, vanity and political affectation of an aging man at court, Polonius, who is described as "An old, vain and nosy courtier." (Blanco White 1994: 276-281). The introduction which the translator created for his *Messenger* says that "Polonius is a complete schemer, a palace gossip, always willing to badtalk his superiors, and no less pompous and profound with those serving him."

Shakespeare, who used Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* as his basis, portrays the importance and gravity with which such miserable fools deal with those most trivial and ridiculous issues, as seen in the dialogue between Polonius and Reynaldo in Denmark, regarding Polonius's absent son, whose whereabouts he tries to discern while remaining at the palace.

You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo.
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.

En extremo discreta, buen Reinaldo,
Será el hacer pesquisa antes de verlo

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Y averiguar qué hace.

When Polonius instructs Reynaldo to not dishonor his son during his investigations in Paris, advising him to investigate his drinking, dueling, swearing, fights and even women, Reynaldo responds that "My Lord, that would dishonour him." Polonius then justifies his request thus:

> You must not put another scandal on him,
> That he is open to incontinency;
> That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quantly,
> That they may seem the taints of liberty;
>
> Sin más ni más… ¡Oh! ¡No! "Cum granu salis"
> Se ha de decir; pero de ningún modo
> Pintarlo disoluto: ¡nada menos!

This translation features some variations from the original text, such as the express "*cum granu salis*" – employed by the Scholastics – which reveals the translator's specific education. Another of Blanco's attempts to transmit the material in a way comprehensible for his readers comes when he translates Polonius's reflection on lying ('See you now; / Your bait of falsehood, take this carp of truth; / And thus do we of wisdom and of reach') thus: '(…) ¿Ves ya claro / cómo con este cebo de mentira / se pesca la verdad como una trucha?' The translation expands upon the original through the use of a *tertium comparationis,* evoking the meaning sought with an example and rendering it more livelier, clearer and more intelligible.

When Reynaldo bids farewell: 'Pol.: God buy you; fare you well. / Reyn.: Good my lord', the social hierarchy involved appears in the translation even more explicitly, as Blanco has the characters say: Adiós y buen viaje. / Rein.: Bésoos la mano', an element which denotes the vassal-lord relationship and which was very prominent in 18th-century Spanish literature.[9]

5. A new translation of English verses in his maturity

In 1840, two decades after the publication of the English-to-Spanish translations just discussed, Blanco presented another poem from Shakespeare's plays. It was penned in Liverpool on February 7, 1840. Firmly settled in England, Blanco translated, into Spanish this time, seven lines from *Twelfth Night.* The fact that now, at age 65, our translator chose to deal with this comedy full of love affairs, indicates a sentimental, grateful and well-adjusted spirit. They come from Act I, Scene I of the work, which portrays the female psyche. Blanco, in his zeal for clarification, entitled the translation "Mujer que corazón tan fino tiene".[10] Due its brevity, we include it here in its entirety:

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[9] Here we must recall the theory of translation which emerged at the close of the 18th Century and would span the course of the following one.

[10] These lines can be found in the *Manuscript of Princeton.*

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O, she that hath a heart of that fine frame
To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
How will she love when the rich golden shaft
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart,
These sovereign thrones, are all suppli'd, and fill'd
Her sweet perfections with one self king!

Mujer que corazón tan fino tiene,
Que así paga la deuda del cariño
A un mero hermano, ¿con qué ardor tan puro
No amará, al punto que la flecha de oro
Haya fin dado al inferior rebaño
De los otros afectos, cuando el trono
Supremo de su pecho, en que residen
Sus perfecciones celestiales tome
En dominio absoluto el rey vendado?

The fact that Blanco White translated Shakespearean verses in different stages of his life reveals to us his veneration for the English writer and his ongoing dedication to his works, and to the craft of translating in general. From the English muse he also translated the aforementioned composition by Richard B. Sheridan´s son.

6. His time as a bidirectional translator of poetry

A series of translations from English to Spanish have led Blanco White to be classified as a unidirectional translator. However, a deeper exploration of his work belies this description, forcing us to reconsider this assessment of his production as a translator. White was, in fact, a bidirectional translator, as the above heading suggests.

In addition to translating the aforementioned English poems into Spanish, other language combinations can be identified in White's body of work. Firstly, the writer (1994: 282) produced a translation of Greek, which came from Julian the Apostate's second epigram. This poem, "*Epigrama al órgano del emperador Juliano el Apóstata*", illustrates the writer's multilingual capacity and sheds light on his mastery of the Greek language. Secondly, we can find a sonnet written in Spanish by Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva (Játiva 1757-Dublín 1837) which Blanco translated into English.

According to archives in the Liverpool Cultural Centre (*Ateneo*), Blanco White had Villanueva's two-volume *Vida literaria,* published in London circa 1825, in his library. White's notes in the book's margins confirm that he read the work very closely.

In 1833[11] Blanco White produced an article, in the form of a review, entitled "Spanish Poetry" for publication in Dublin's *The University Review and Quarterly Magazine.* This review came out the same year in which Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva

[11] Specifically, published on pages 170-172 of the aforementioned *The University Review and Quarterly Magazine*, I.

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published his *Poesías escogidas* in the Irish capital. White included in its pages the English version which he had prepared of the sonnet:

Dame, Señor, que ponga yo en tu mano
Los pasos de mi vida, y de mi muerte
El plazo, y mi leda o triste suerte,
Sin indagar tu impenetrable arcano.
Bástame a mí saber que no fue en vano
Darme luz con que pueda conocerte,
Y ponerme en sendero por do acierte
A subir a tu alcázar soberano.
Fuera de esto ¿quién soy para lanzarme
De tu eterno saber en la alta sima
Y juzgar qué me daña o me conviene?
¿Qué hará mi orgullo sino despeñarme?
Que el que a su propia voluntad se arrima
Sobre caña cascada se sostiene.

Thus, Blanco White is in truth a bidirectional translator, as evidenced in this poem which was also the only complete Spanish-to-English translation of a poem on record by Blanco:

Lord, may I freely to thy care divine
The ordering of my fortunes here resign;
To thee commit the numbering of my days,
Nor seek to question thy mysterious ways.
Enough for me to know 'twas not in vain
Thou gav'st me light true knowledge to obtain,
And sett'st me, out of thy exceeding love
In the sure path that leads to bliss above.
Beyond that, what am I to try to sound
Of knowledge infinite the depths profound?
To dare to judge what suits me or what harms?
Can human pride do aught though up in arms?
Let him who trusts his wayward will take heed;
He leans, alas, upon a broken reed.

This sonnet deals with religious themes and appeals to the Almighty, at the same time it contains a plea to be shown the way to do His will.

7. Some contextual notes on his translations

When at the age 55 the Spanish writer would remember his experiences in his well-known A*utobiography* he would recall the speech from Mowbray, the Duke of Norfolk. It comes from Act I, Scene III of *Richard II* at the moment in which the Duke has just heard the sentence of banishment, and responds to the King. The speech exudes disquiet, despondency, but also learning. The recent arrival in London seized upon these themes to expound upon his parallel situation of "linguistic pros-

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tration". Though White could speak English –with an Irish accent- from childhood, he lacked the fluidity he wished to have, as well as the accent necessary to operate in London's most select social circles. The translator bemoans not being able to use his mother tongue, Spahish: ('El idioma patrio que he aprendido / Más de cuarenta años, me es inútil / de hoy en adelante (...)', 6-8). ("My mother tongue which I learned / For more than forty years, is useless / from this day on.") He refers to his native language as a 'harpa destemplada' (8-11) ("a harp out of tune"):

> (...) ¿Qué es mi lengua
> Ya para mí sino harpa destemplada
> O instrumento sonoro puesto en manos
> No acostumbradas a pulsar sus cuerdas?

These communicative shortcomings, this constant vexaton at having to remain silent, spur him to learn English. He would explain in his *Autobiography* (1988: 222-223) that this is the great misfortune of an expatriate. His lack of a natural mastery of English leads him to describe himself as a "poor insect on the edge of a hole which an antilion is making in the sand." He finishes the cited passage thus: "Si del nativo aliento, de esta suerte / Me priváis, oh mi Rey, daisme la muerte" (18-19).

Jesús Diaz (Garnica & Díaz 1994: 16) explains in the "Introduction" to the *Obra poética completa* (*Complete Poetic Works)* that Blanco was the prodigal son who never returned. José María Blanco Crespo was prolific in Spain before heading overseas, and José María Blanco White was prodigious in England in terms of his cultural production. In his classes of eloquence and poetry and in his Humanities lessons, at Seville's *Sociedad de Amigos del Páis*[12] he heralded a transition which could be seen approaching during the twilight of the end-of-the-century 's rigid literature (1994: 427) and the "emergence of a new literature and a new society." He was already harboring a latent desire to move on from the poetic conventions of the Neoclassical age. Upon arriving in London he founded *El español*, a monthly journal which he himself wrote (Goytisolo 2010).

Blanco was a writer and, of course, a translator in his own right. Let us add a few observations regarding his career as previously discussed. When he arrived to England he attended Campbell's literary circle, and that headed by the publisher Murray, dining and residing at Holland House. But – and here is the unjust paradox – while his literary star was rising in England, in Spain he was gradually forgotten, being attacked at times by moralizing authorities who considered his movements in life as religiously improper.

Menéndez Pelayo would rescue Blanco White from being entirely forgotten in his *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*[13] – though not without a certain pejorative tone. Gladstone, in *La España Moderna* (1894) referred explicitly to the Sevillian's work, and

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[12] A complete "master class" can be read in Garnica & Diaz, 1994: 423-427, in which – in a kind of appendix – they add the article which augured the "new air of Romanticism," and "announced the emergence of the new literature and a new society."

[13] For full corroboration of this see Volume VI, specifically the 1848 edition, pp. 173-212.

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in 1920 Mario Méndez Bejarano published a book on him. Other experts who have made an effort to recognize Blanco's distinguished cultural work – from the late 19th century all the way until the early 21st - include Vicente Llorens, Antonio Garnica, Jesús Díaz and Antonio Ríos, some in Academia, and some from the tranquillity and leisure of the monastery. They stand among those who have served to salvage Blanco White's literary legacy. The present document seeks to explore White's rich cosmopolitan influences and the remarkable series of English translations he left.

The fledgling translator had already sharpened his skills when he translated from French some one hundred lines in his "Égloga al Mesías", whose original version, by Alexander Pope, was entitled "Messiah, A Sacred Egloge". As such, it was an indirect translation of the English poem. Blanco's approach clearly illustrates the interest shared by Seville's literary lights in English literature. This example indicates that the first English poetry which the friends of Seville's *Academia de Letras Humanas* was exposed to came through French translations. Nevertheless, there was also direct contact with English poetry, as carried out by Lista, at least, who translated the poem which Blanco sent him ("Night and Death"), publishing it in 1837. Blanco himself would come into direct contact with English verse when he moved to English soil.

The Sevillian's three-decade stay in England would yield, among many other intercultural creations, an abundance of translations. The range of translations which Blanco White completed from English to Spanish shows his intercultural impetus as well as his predilection for the genius of Shakespeare. Blanco was positively bowled over by the Elizabethan's keen understanding and insight into human nature. The translator, in the heading of his translation of *Richard II*,[14] affirms his inclination towards the Shakespearean world, praising the English poet's merits, beauties and uniqueness. In addition, he explains the gaps inherent to any translation, and discusses how language defines a man´s limits, anticipating the theory of language to be presented by such linguists and philosophers as Wittgenstein (1969: 64) -'Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt'-:

> The merit of the great English poet whose name graces this article is so unique and the beauty of his work, to put it one way, is so closely linked to the language in which it is written, that it is impossible to successfully share it with those who don´t understand English perfectly. Languages can be called dead not only when there is no longer a people who speak them. Those who process them visually, and through the inanimate mediation of the page, are like those who only know a person from his portrait. Only a long stay in a country whose language we aim to learn can provide us with the key to understanding its people's spirit. A hundred thousand memories must arise when we hear certain words if we mean to completely penetrate the meaning of a writer, of a true poet who knew how to use them.

The first exercise in poetry translation which we have presented in this chapter, nevertheless, does not come from Shakespeare, but rather from a very precocious young poet. His first poem translated from English was published in 1811, soon after

[14] Found in the cited volume of *Variedades* (1-1-1823), pp. 74-49.

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his arrival in England, and featured over a hundred lines composed originally by a 15-year old. "Sobre la retirada de los franceses de Santerem" would not be known today if its original author hadn´t been Richard B. Sheridan's son.

With respect to the paragraphs translated from the works of the great Elizabethan poet, two fragments are from *Hamlet*, one from *Richard II*, and another from *Twelfth Night*. Noteworthy is the time elapsed from his translation of the first three parts (1823, in London) until he presented his last translation in 1840, one year before passing away.

He had been a professed Anglican for twelve years and had decided to fully embrace England. To this end he undertook a program of learning and re-education in order to become fully English. He was applauded for his prose, and would then seek success in poetry, which would come with the poems he introduced into the homes of his friends, such as the sonnet "Night and Death," which he would dedicate to Coleridge, sending it both to him, in 1826 – six months after its composition – and to Alberto Lista, whose version was published in 1837 and was the first translation into Spanish, according to the research we have performed and the information which we have been able to analyze.

We refer here to the other road which he took in his bidirectional translations. Let us take the case of Lorenzo Villanueva's sonnet which begins with the line "Dame, Señor, que ponga yo en tu mano." The poem translated by White from Spanish to English evidences his literary prowess, as he embellished it both in terms of sound and meter as well as in style. "Lord, May I Freely" is a product of Blanco White's bilingual education and vividly displays his dual mastery of Spanish and English letters.

If we were to undertake a philological analysis, like conclusions could be drawn. Let us make a few. His "*Soliloquio de Hamlet*" is faithful to the original, both in meter and semantically, despite a few necessary modifications made by White, such as his expansion of the passage by 10 lines, or his extensive series of modulations which we have pointed out. Most remarkable, however, is how the Spanish poet applied an initial rule of meter and maintained semantic equivalence, thus conveying to the Spanish reader all the metaphysical and reflective potency latent in the source text.

The phrases and sentences that contain some modulations and shifts in relation to the original text help us to infer that White applies some Romantic ideas in his approach to the issue of translation. On the one hand, his effort and his way of translating denote individualism and freedom and, on the other, in the same tone that Coleridge, he does not believe in the possibility of translation, or at least, he makes explicit that it is extremely difficult to maintain, in the re-written text, the elements that are inherent in the primary text.[15]

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[15] As we have quoted at the beginning, there is a handwritten mark in his "An Eclogue for the Messiah" where he clarifies that he does not know whether to call translation or imitation to this new poem done by himself, because the name of translation denotes less invention and effort, and the term imitation is too vague and does not denote the link and connection that he always has observed with the original.

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To cap off our analysis of the text from Hamlet we have cited the fragment by Moratín, in which a slowing effect in prose stands out, and whose analysis serves to spotlight the able translation of difficult, opaque excerpts in Blanco's poetic version.

These existential concerns from Shakespeare, which would be taken up in Romantic literature, would delight Blanco White, as they fit perfectly with his worldview and his own burning metaphysical concerns. Blanco was attracted by Shakespeare's "epistemological fury" (Jiménez Heffernan 1996: 30). He presented universal issues and showed, in the words of Borges, how "words are symbols which posit a shared memory" (Borges 1977: 37), so central to Shakespeare's dramatic universe, as well as crucial to the translator and the anthologer.

The English-Spanish translator's time in England would span from 1810 until 1841, with the decade of the 1820's standing out as his most prolific, particularly during the first half. Thus, Blanco White's most fruitful, creative period came during his days in England, during which he would found *El español* and collaborate on periodical publications such as the *Variedades.*

Another facet of Blanco White worthy of attention is his dedication to prose translation. This can be seen in his translations of Pedro de Ceballos, in his Spanish version of *The Book of Common Prayer*, in his prose translations of William Paley, and A.C. Clairaut's French volume on geometry, or even in his English versions of two of his own tales ("El Alcázar de Sevilla" and "Las intrigas venecianas") This work stands in addition to other original works, such as his translations of passages from *La Historia del Gran Tamorlán*, fragments he did from the *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna,* and even his translation of a work in German on cognition: *Theory of Cognition.* These works offer us an impressive display of White's cosmopolitan and intercultural capacities.

The aforementioned works establish Blanco White's as a prolific translator of English. Moreover, he can even be classified as not only bilingual but multilingual, as he translated German and French in addition to English, not to mention his inverse work from English to Spanish. In light of this it is clear that White possessed at least a trilingual mind. According to his *Life*, he dedicated time each day to reviewing and perfecting his command of classical languages, in this way becoming able to read the works of Homer in the original, and to translate an epigram from Julian the Apostate into English.

8. A romantic educated in the "Sevillian Enlightenment"

Jose María Blanco Crespo, first educated within the milieu of the Spanish Enlightenment, lived a good part of his life immersed in and influenced by the Romantic movement in England. He would acquire his earliest cultural notions in Andalusia, with Neoclassicism in full vogue. His family came down from Irish ancestors. In fact, his surname "Blanco" was translated to Spanish from the original English "White". At home his Catholic parents taught him to read using stories from the Old Testament, the lives of the saints and the miracles of Mary. His mother saw

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to it that he learned Latin and English, the latter being a second native language at home.

White studied at a Dominican school where his desire to become a priest or clergymen was well received. He learned Italian in order to compare Luzán's *Poética* with Muratori's *Della perfecta poesia.* He was able to learn French through *Telémaco.* His childhood friend Manuel María de Mármol encouraged him to study Castilian poetry, and he was exposed to Englishman Francis Bacon´s *Novum Organum.* He would form a friendship with Arjona, the fervent defender of classical taste. Blanco White's literary sensibilities were shaped within the end-of-the-century Neoclassical environment.

Nevertheless, Blanco White stands as a transitional figure in the history of our Literature (Garnica & Diaz 1994: 21), the harbinger of a way of thought bridging the *Ancien Regime*, with its political and literary precepts, and a new society of freedoms and progress. His translations reflect this same dichotomy.

Blanco White lived during the era during which English Romanticism was nascent, which serves to explain the nature of the Spanish versions of his tales published in *Forget me not* and in the *Variedades*, as well as the translations included in the pages of the former publication. These works featured elements of nostalgia, magic, the evasion of reality, confession, "autobiographical introspection," "the celebration of the Self", and "identity mystification" (Dietz 1997: 10). Also present was a world of legend approached through the imagination and memory (Zavala 1982).[16] Upon arriving in Britain he would thoroughly embrace his new land´s culture. He featured yet another Romantic aspect within his own nature, as he was haunted by a perpetual sense of dissatisfaction, the crisis of modern man during the transition from the 18th Century through the dawn of the 19th. This crisis prompted him to contemplate existential, metaphysical and theological questions, as he came to incarnate exactly the following "Warning" from Wordsworth and Coleridge (1994: 106) at the beginning of their *Lyrical Ballads*:

> It is the honourable characteristic of Poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves. (...) They should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.

[16] Another indication of White's Romanticism – along with that of the rest of the émigrés – is the historical novel which Telesforo de Trueba would publish in 1829, *The Castilian*, spurred by his previous success with *Gómez Arias* (which he published in 1828, inspired by *La Niña* by Gómez Arias de Calderón). *The Castilian* recreates a medieval setting with content from the popular imagination and poetry based on the reign of Pedro I of Castile, drawing on the chronicles of chancellor Pedro López de Ayala. In 1831 he published *The Incognito* in London, a social portrait, followed by a kind of dialogue entitled *Paris and London.* It is evident how Trueba was influenced by Walter Scott. If we consider the Duke of Rivas' *El moro expósito* and its impact we gain a sharper view of the kind of Romantic escapism cultivated by the émigrés.

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Blanco White - as a Romantic poet, as a man of his time and as a human being – embodies the instability, disquiet and dissidence stirred up by the French Revolution, features which would come to define his efforts on the literary scene and his own, personal spiritual anguish.

In 1824[17] he put forward a doctrinaire defense of imagination, referring to the tales of Juan Manuel and their Oriental model. Blanco White, as a well-versed Romantic, argued in favor of poetic truth, and a sympathy with medievalism[18], traits utterly in tune with the Romantic agenda. Blanco explained it this way:

> The supernatural machinery employed in the preceding tale, or the supposition that by some means unknown the human mind may be subjected to a complete delusion, during which it exists in a world of her own creation, perfectly independent of time and space, has a strong hold on what might be called man's natural prejudices. Far from there being any thing revolting or palpably absurd in such an admission, the obscurity itself of the nature of time and space, and the phenomena of the dreaming and delirious mind, are ready to give it a colouring of truth. The success, indeed, of the tales which have been composed upon the basis, proves how readily men of all ages and nations have acknowledged, what we might call, its poetical truth.

Blanco's literary positions celebrate Romanticism and turn to the imagination of one like Juan Manuel, the medievalism of El Cid, and the simplicity of Jorge Manrique. In *Variedades*[19] he would write the following:

> In most of the Castilian poets, from Garcilaso down to our time, one observes that they rarely say what they want to, but rather what they can. Rhyme, Italian meter (with their setting and lack of flexibility in our language) and a certain false notion of poetic language which does not allow them to say anything but what other poets have said, have deprived them of the freedom of thought and expression. The works of the Spanish poets of the Italian school are a series of imitations and repetitions, beautiful and pleasant at times, but tiring as a whole, without authenticity or a correspondence between what the poet says and what he feels. In Manrique´s poem one feels the absence of some adornment, especially towards the end, but, though neither very passionate nor loving, there is not the slightest sign of affectation in it. We find in it an exact portrait of the author when he wrote it, that is, a brave young man convinced of the truth of those religious beliefs which his father's death served to bolster in him; melancholic but not despondent; in mourning, but with decorum.

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[17] A comment published in Issue XI, 1814, p. 103. Llorens (1979b: 390-391) relates said article to Schlegel's thoughts regarding Macbeth: "Whether in Shakespeare's time people believed in ghosts and witches or not, is totally irrelevant when justifying the poet's employment of preexisting traditions in *Hamlet* and *MacBeth*. (...) On this (human nature) the poet based himself, appealing to the fear of the unknown, the sense of nature's dark side, and the world of the spirit, which the Enlightenment thought it had totally overcome." (*A course of lectures on dramatic art and literature*, London, 1845: 407).

[18] He defended, for instance, the *Song of the Cid* as an early illustration of national genius. (Llorens, 1970b: 401) and a strong bulwark against the decadence of the Modern Age.

[19] Copy I, 1824, p. 150.

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This declaration of his own principles echoes Wordsworth and Coleridge (1994: 108) and their Romantic affirmations. Let us consider the words of Blanco White in light of this paragraph from the English poets:

> An accurate taste in poetry (...) can only be produced by severe thought and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. (...) The tale of Goody Blake and Harry Gill is founded on a well-authenticated fact what happened in Warwickshire. Of the other poems in the collection, it may be proper to say that they are either absolute inventions of the authors, or facts which took place within his personal observation or that of his friend.

Blanco White's literary ideas, both in his poetic work as well as in his literary criticism, reveal a fruitful evolution with its roots found in the classical sensibilities of the Sevillian school of his age. During the first third of the 19th Century he would advance aesthetically from a few outmoded positions – at times wordy and affected – towards the emerging Romantic movement. With his articles of literary criticism as evidence, we can argue that Blanco was truly a pioneer of modern literary criticism in Spain.

Blanco White absorbed the ingredients of English Romanticism and would illustrate those new aesthetic ideas. Some of the hallmarks which would define his literature would be its naturalness, spontaneous flow, the sincerity of its confessions, its organic development, the past, the realm of legend, the need for evasion, defiance of the world, disconformity, spiritual anguish, disenchantment, disquiet, medievalism and imagination. These elements thus tie together, perfectly capturing his work and his character.

His aesthetic notions and thinking contained metaphysical and political doubts, so he changed both his religion and country. His discontent and the inner disquiet of his dynamic spirit spurred him to alter inherent aspects of his life and character. His actions were also born of human and ethical conflicts with Catholic celibacy. He thus forged a new self and identity, which would begin with his double name: Blanco White, the latter recovering his traditional Irish surname.

Blanco was inspired by a decided anglophilia, and from a young age exhibited clear signs of his love for English things, as when he emulated Pope's eclogue, published English poems in the *Correo de Sevilla*, or went to the mat in order to defend Reinoso's *La inocencia perdida*, when Quintana had leveled the severest criticisms at it in a ruthless article published in *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes* despite it being an admirable imitation of Milton's work. These early flirtations with English literature would later come to fruition in Blanco's pen. When he lived in England his dual nature would reach its peak. Romanticism enthused him, just as it did the Schlegel brothers. Blanco's writing was also marked and inspired by the verses of Shakespeare, in the same way that the Germans were taken with Romanticism in full swing.

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9. Conclusion

Blanco White represents the epitome of cultural fusion between Spanish and English letters, and his work presents a vivid portrait of Anglo-Spanish interculturalism. The consonance between his life and work represents a harmonious unity which perfectly illustrates the nature of his era.

Blanco White's life spanned from Seville to Cadiz to Madrid, and another stage lasting over three decades in England. Blanco's career, thus, features two well-defined, stages. The first period was one of a Spanish life lived in Seville, marked by his theological studies and his service as a priest, and by his involvement in the cultural and literary events of the day. The second phase encompasses his other cultural, religious and literary life, this one in Great Britain, defined by a voluntary exile – a decision born of his sense that he was not free intellectually or as a person in his country, despite the affection he harbored for the city of his birth.

During this self-exile he would dedicate a good part of his time to different intercultural and cultural tasks, specifically the translation of English poetry. Among the texts which the author elected to translate, numerous fragments of Shakespeare stand out, with the plots of these works at times even mirroring Blanco's own life.

Jose María Blanco White's anglophilia encompassed both writing directly in English, as well as his contributions to English culture through different journals of the era. With respect to his translation work, the fragments he translated from English to Spanish and vice versa were both truly remarkable.

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