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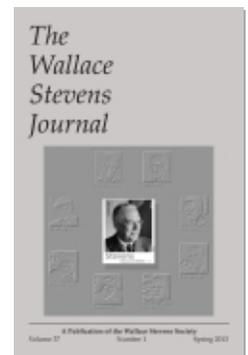
De la simple existencia: Antología poética by Wallace Stevens, and: *La roca* by Wallace Stevens, and: *Poemas tardíos* by Wallace Stevens, and: *Ideas de orden* by Wallace Stevens, and: *Las auroras de otoño y otros poemas* by Wallace Stevens (review)

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Wallace Stevens Journal, Volume 37, Number 1, Spring 2013, pp. 119-122
(Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsj.2013.0011>



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reading both versions they will be able to strike a balance, as in a single chord of different notes, enjoying both the intimacy of the particular and the grandiose effect of the whole.

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De la simple existencia: Antología poética.

By Wallace Stevens. Translated into Spanish by Andrés Sánchez Robayna. Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2006.

La roca.

By Wallace Stevens. Translated into Spanish by Daniel Aguirre. Barcelona: Lumen, 2008.

Poemas tardíos.

By Wallace Stevens. Translated into Spanish by Daniel Aguirre. Barcelona: Lumen, 2009.

Ideas de orden.

By Wallace Stevens. Translated into Spanish by Daniel Aguirre. Barcelona: Lumen, 2010.

Las auroras de otoño y otros poemas.

By Wallace Stevens. Translated into Spanish by Jenaro Talens. Madrid: Visor, 2012.

In the last few years, Spanish readers have been treated to an unusually rich selection of Wallace Stevens' writings, all made available in bilingual editions. The relatively small number of books that Stevens published during his lifetime turns the five collections of translations listed above into a substantial selection from his works. Not only can the Spanish reader now find translations of a sizable number of canonized poems, from "The Idea of Order at Key West" and "The Man with the Blue Guitar" to "The Auroras of Autumn" and "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," he or she can also enjoy Spanish versions of Stevens' major prose writings, whether they be the essays collected in *The Necessary Angel* or epigraphs from "Adagia." That a poet's personal collection of aphorisms has been translated may itself be regarded as a meaningful indication of the stature he has achieved in a foreign country.

There are several explanations for the interest Stevens has aroused in Spanish readers and, above all, poets. The most important one, it seems to me, is his defining concern with the relations between poetry and philosophy. Such a concern has been typical of an important strand in Spanish poetry during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Characteristically, Andrés Sánchez Robayna, one of the poet-translators under review here, entitled a talk he gave a

few years ago about a selection of twentieth-century Spanish poets, "Poesía y pensamiento" [Poetry and Thought]. In Spain, the cross-fertilization of these two spheres has resulted in a poetic lineage that has been most fruitful. Quite a few Spanish poets have looked to British romantic poetry, for example, as a philosophical poetry (see Eugenia Perojo Arronte's contribution to *The Reception of S. T. Coleridge in Europe* [London: Continuum, 2007]). Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry has been regarded among Spanish admirers as a form of secular meditation, with its own reflective pace and tone. Stevens' analogous interest in meditative poetry and substitutions for religion fits this mold particularly well.

One of the first explicit references to the American poet's works appears in a collection of essays by José Ángel Valente (1929–2000) published in 1971 under the title *Las palabras de la tribu* [The Words of the Tribe]. Early in this book, Valente quotes from the introduction to *The Necessary Angel*: "One function of the poet at any time is to discover by his own thought and feeling what seems to him to be poetry at that time" (CPP 639). Valente, who spent four years as a Visiting Lecturer at Oxford University, kept up a sustained friendship with José Lezama Lima, the Cuban poet-editor who collaborated with Stevens' epistolary friend José Rodríguez Feo on the magazine *Orígenes*. In addition, Valente always acknowledged Louis Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954) as a fundamental source of inspiration. Martz, as we know, also published various essays on Stevens, and it seems plausible that Valente was familiar with at least some of this work as well. With Stevens, Valente may be said to have shared ideas about decreation, the role of the imagination in poetry, the ascendancy of romanticism, and the relations between painting and poetry.

In recent decades, it is Sánchez Robayna who has written most extensively on Stevens. His interest in the American modernist is consistent both with his own poetics and the ties that bind him to Valente. Not only was Sánchez Robayna sought out by Valente as his personal advisor whose task it was to keep the aging poet from repeating himself, the younger poet also coedited Valente's collected works. In 1980, Sánchez Robayna published his first gathering of Stevens in translation, *Poemas* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés), and he wrote on several occasions to reflect on Stevens' importance. He was by no means the only Spanish poet to show himself susceptible to Stevens' influence: most poets who emerged in the 1970s would acknowledge the American poet as instrumental in forging their poetics. If Spanish poets of the Fifties valued content over form (with important exceptions, such as Valente), poets of the Seventies tended to choose foreign poets as their models, especially when these gave pride of place to form and language. As was the case in the U.S. before the historical turn in Stevens criticism, Stevens was viewed as a proponent of pure poetry for whom the poem functioned principally as an artistic artifact.

Sánchez Robayna's most recent gathering of translations was published in 2003 as *De la simple existencia: Antología poética* [Of Mere Being: An Anthology of Poems], reissued in 2006 as a paperback. The anthology, which has been revised in the course of a workshop on literary translation taught by Sánchez Robayna himself at the University of La Laguna, comprises work from all of Stevens' published volumes, in addition to some of the "Adagia." It thus

intends to offer a wide-ranging perspective on the poet's literary output, even if the balance is clearly uneven. With thirty-one poems, *Harmonium* is best represented, while only six poems from *Ideas of Order* and two from *The Auroras of Autumn* are included. Nor do we find such staples of the Stevens canon as "The Idea of Order at Key West," "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," or "The Auroras of Autumn" among the selection. By and large, Sánchez Robayna manages to translate the poems with close attention to the recreation both of Stevens' ideas and his typical literary devices. In his prologue, he offers an updated view of Stevens' writings in which he emphasizes the importance of the imagination in the poet's creative process, arguing that reality is not essentially important in a poetry in which biographical facts are not on display.

More recently, Daniel Aguirre has set himself the daunting task of translating Stevens' poetry and prose in its entirety. Between 2008 and 2010, he has published three installments that are the Spanish equivalents of *The Rock*, "Late Poems," and *Ideas of Order*. To the section of "Late Poems" that we find in the Library of America edition of the *Collected Poetry and Prose*, he has also exceptionally chosen to add "As You Leave the Room." Both *Poemas tardíos* and *Ideas de orden* are accompanied by forewords in which the translator, who is a lecturer at Harvard University and has also published Spanish versions of W. B. Yeats and John Ashbery, explains the context in which the books were written. In addition, he gives us a brief explanation of the basic translation principles he has applied. The main purpose of the translations, he tells us, is to be as idiomatic as possible in Spanish.

Finally, Jenaro Talens, yet another poet (besides a professor of literary theory at the University of Valencia), has compiled a brief but representative number of poems in an anthology entitled *Las auroras de otoño y otros poemas* [The Auroras of Autumn and Other Poems]. This gathering, too, is accompanied by a preface in which Talens sketches his view of Stevens' poetry. Like other poets of the Seventies generation, he starts by emphasizing the independence of Stevens' poems from all referents. But by the end of his preface he modifies this claim somewhat: despite a lack of explicit confessionalism in Stevens (which is what Talens appears to have meant throughout) he concedes that the reader will not find poems made of abstract concepts but distillations of a man who has lived in a particular context.

Talens compiles a choice selection of 16 poems culled from *Harmonium*, *Ideas of Order*, *The Auroras of Autumn*, and *The Rock*. After "The Auroras of Autumn," which surprisingly kicks off the book, the reader finds "Sunday Morning," while the concluding poem is "Final Soliloquy." Although Talens is radically interested in how a poem can be theoretical, he does not translate "Notes" nor, for example, "Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself." Nevertheless, he does include a handful of poems about poetry, most notably "The Ultimate Poem Is Abstract" and "Metaphor as Degeneration." Overall, he seems to prefer shorter poems, with "The Auroras" and "The Owl in the Sarcophagus" as principal exceptions.

Each in their own ways, the three translators have turned out appealing books. Sánchez Robayna deserves credit for having been the first to translate Stevens in Spain. (For lack of expertise, I am ignoring the book-length transla-

tions into Spanish that have appeared in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.) His anthology is still a major achievement that is reissued from time to time. Talens manages to give a more concentrated if still capacious view of Stevens, while Aguirre is engaged in the praiseworthy task of translating all of Stevens' collected writings. These three translators seem to agree fundamentally about Stevens' poetics, which explains why their conversions of the poet into Spanish have so many affinities and are often so similar in poetic effect.

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