

Blanco White's Translations from *El conde Lucanor*: Two Medieval Spanish Tales in Romantic Britain

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This paper analyses Joseph Blanco White's English translations of tales XI and XLIV of Don Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor* (c. 1331-1335), which were published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1824. In these fairly free translations, Blanco rewrites and recontextualises the tales by updating and adapting them to the knowledge and expectations of the target readership. His translation decisions, paratexts and the articles on *El conde Lucanor* that he also published in *Variedades; o Mensajero de Londres* in 1824 shed light on his ideas on Spanish literature and national identity as well as on his role as commentator and disseminator of Spanish culture in Britain. His translations construct a particular representation of Spain where he underlines those aspects that he believes to be genuinely Spanish, while also including some stereotypical elements of the Romantic image of Spain in Britain.

Keywords: Joseph Blanco White; *El conde Lucanor*; Don Juan Manuel; British Romanticism; Anglo-Hispanic relations; translation

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Las traducciones de Blanco White de *El conde Lucanor*: dos cuentos medievales españoles en la Gran Bretaña romántica

El presente artículo analiza las traducciones al inglés de los cuentos XI y XLIV de *El conde Lucanor* (c. 1331-1335) de don Juan Manuel que José María Blanco White publicó en la revista *New Monthly Magazine* en 1824. Se trata de unas traducciones bastante libres en las que Blanco reescribe y recontextualiza los cuentos, actualizándolos y adaptándolos a los conocimientos y expectativas del público al que se dirigen. Las traducciones, sus paratextos

y los artículos sobre *El conde Lucanor* que Blanco publicó en *Variedades; o Mensajero de Londres* también en 1824 reflejan algunas de sus ideas sobre la literatura y la identidad nacional española y dan prueba del papel que desempeñó como comentarista y divulgador de la cultura española en Gran Bretaña. Sus traducciones construyen una particular representación de España que incide en aquellos aspectos que considera genuinamente españoles, pero al mismo tiempo integran algunos elementos estereotipados de la imagen romántica de España en Gran Bretaña.

Palabras clave: José María Blanco White; *El conde Lucanor*; Don Juan Manuel; Romanticismo británico; relaciones anglo-hispanas; traducción

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1810, in the midst of the Peninsular War, José María Blanco Crespo (1775-1841), a Spanish priest of Irish descent, left Spain, where he would never return. He set sail for England, where he would live in voluntary exile for three decades and adopt the name Joseph Blanco White. His grandfather, William White, had changed the family name to Blanco when he moved to Spain in the early eighteenth century, but Blanco preferred to use both the Spanish and the English name together, a decision that perfectly illustrates his dual identity. He converted to Anglicanism—and then to Unitarianism—and became acculturated if not thoroughly assimilated into British society, even claiming that thinking in Spanish was “a source of internal pain” (Blanco 1845, 225-26; Murphy 1989). However, Spain still figured prominently in his thoughts and works. He edited periodicals for the Spanish and Spanish American public—*El Español* (1810-1814) and *Varietades; o Mensajero de Londres* (1823-1825)—and contributed articles on Spanish manners, politics and literature to British periodicals. These articles include the series *Letters from Spain*, which first appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1821 and was then successfully published as a book in 1822. In all these texts, Blanco presents himself as a legitimate commentator on Spanish affairs and encodes Spain specifically for the British audience. Although scholars have explored his representations of Spain and Spanish national identity (Alberich 1993; Moreno Alonso 1998; Garnica 2004; Schwab 2013; Andreu Miralles 2016), they have paid less attention to his role as critic and disseminator of Spanish literature in Britain, even when they have examined his ideas on literature and the influence that he exerted on the Spanish liberals exiled in London in the 1820s (Llorens 1968, 386-423; Durán López 2010; Peñas Ruiz 2011).

Blanco believed that Spanish literature and culture were in a state of decline, which he attributed to the imitation of foreign trends and the “intellectual tyranny” to which Spain had been subjected since the sixteenth century (Blanco 1824a, 115). He was very critical of Golden Age writers, except for Cervantes, but he felt attracted by Spanish medieval literature, where he found a more natural expression of the national genius (Llorens 1968, 400-403; Durán López 2010, lxvi-xcii). He was particularly enthusiastic about Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348) and his work *El conde Lucanor* (c. 1331-1335), a collection of tales conveying moral lessons. Blanco translated into English two of these short stories—“Lo que sucedió a un deán de Santiago con don Illán, el mago de Toledo” (tale XI) and “Lo que sucedió a don Pero Núñez el Leal, Ruy González de Ceballos y a don Gutierre Ruiz de Blanquillo con el conde Rodrigo el Franco” (tale XLIV)—and published them in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1824. His translations, which are preceded by two brief articles also authored by him, are actually adaptations in which he rewrites and recontextualises the stories for the British Romantic readership, taking into account their knowledge and expectations. He thus participates in a process of creative appropriation that illustrates his own ideas on literature and translation as well as his interpretation of Spanish history, literature and identity.

In order to explore these issues, this article is articulated in three parts: first, it briefly discusses the reception of *El conde Lucanor* and, more generally, Spanish

literature in Britain; second, it analyses the purpose and target readership of Blanco's translations, considering their paratexts and the articles on Don Juan Manuel's work that he also published in *Varietades; o Mensajero de Londres* in 1824; and third, it examines Blanco's translation strategies for recontextualising and adapting the tales to a contemporary British audience.

2. *EL CONDE LUCANOR* AND SPANISH LITERATURE IN BRITAIN

When Blanco published the translations of tales XI and XLIV of *El conde Lucanor* in 1824, hundreds of Spanish liberals had just arrived in England following the collapse of the constitutional government and the restoration of absolutism in Spain in 1823. The Spanish revolution of 1820 and the establishment of a liberal regime aroused both fears and expectations among the British, who renewed their interest in Spanish affairs. A few years before, due to Britain's involvement in the Peninsular War (1808-1814), Anglo-Spanish relations had already taken a new direction, and Britons' enthusiasm and better knowledge of Spain also had an effect on literature, where new Romantic figurations of the country emerged to reformulate old tropes and stereotypes (Saglia 2000; Almeida 2010; Valladares 2015; Saglia and Haywood 2018; Laspra and Beatty 2019). This reappraisal of Spanish history, culture and identity led to a modest but growing interest in Spanish literature in Britain, as reflected in the reviews and translations of Spanish texts published in British literary magazines (Saglia 2019; Perojo Arronte and Flores Moreno 2022). Spanish-related materials were particularly conspicuous in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which played an important role in the diffusion of Spanish literature from 1821 to 1825 (Saglia 2002, 50). In those years, under Thomas Campbell's editorship, the *New Monthly Magazine* published several poems and short stories inspired by Spanish history, articles on Cervantes, translated passages from Calderón's *La Cisma de Inglaterra*, a four-part study on modern Spanish theatre by Manuel Eduardo Gorostiza, and Blanco's *Letters from Spain* and his translations from *El conde Lucanor* (Saglia 2002, 54-55).

Although Iberian medieval history had captivated the imagination of Romantic writers—as attested by Walter Scott's *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), Robert Southey's *Roderick the Last of the Goths* (1814) and Felicia Hemans's *The Abencerrage* (1819), among others—the knowledge that the British had of Spanish medieval literature was basically limited to the legend of El Cid and the ballads. Before 1824, Don Juan Manuel was virtually unknown in Britain, even though copies of *El conde Lucanor* (in Spanish) circulated among British book collectors. As Blanco explains in the article that precedes the translation of tale XLIV (1824b, 31), he had access to a copy of the 1575 edition of *El conde Lucanor*, the first printed edition of the text, thanks to Stephen Weston, an antiquarian and prolific writer interested in European history and Oriental languages. Moreover, Blanco consulted the copy of the 1642 edition owned by Francis Douce (1757-1834), a former keeper of manuscripts at the British Museum, as he also

notes in the first of his two pieces on Don Juan Manuel in *Variedades; o Mensajero de Londres* (1824d, 310). Those were the only existing printed editions of *El conde Lucanor* until 1839, when Adelbert von Keller published a new Spanish edition in Stuttgart, meaning that Don Juan Manuel's work was a rare book back then, and most Spanish-speaking readers were also unfamiliar with it.

With these articles and translations, Blanco undoubtedly contributed to the popularisation of *El conde Lucanor*. His translation of tale XI achieved wide circulation as it was reprinted in several magazines and collections in both Britain and the United States.¹ However, these were not the first tales of *El conde Lucanor* translated into English. A translation of tale XXXV, "Lo que sucedió a un mancebo que casó con una muchacha muy rebelde," is included in Stephen Weston's *Short Notes on Shakespeare* (1808, 11-13). Weston, who had lent Blanco a copy of the 1575 edition of *El conde Lucanor*, translates the tale to demonstrate the similarities between it and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Then, in 1828, tale XXXV was again translated, this time by Telesforo Trueba y Cosío, another Spanish liberal exiled in London, who published it in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (503-506). Trueba's translation was reproduced in Thomas Roscoe's *The Spanish Novelists* (1832), which also contains translations of tales IX, XX, XXXVII and XLVIII (12-40). The first complete translation of *El conde Lucanor* was James York's *Count Lucanor: or, The Fifty Pleasant Stories of Patronio*, published in 1868 and then re-edited with illustrations by Stanley L. Wood in 1888. More editions followed in 1889, 1894, 1896, 1899 and 1924, which suggests that York's translation, advertised as a work by "the Spanish Boccaccio," enjoyed considerable success in the late nineteenth century, several decades after Blanco's early attempt to introduce Don Juan Manuel's work in Britain.

3. TWO TALES, TWO AUDIENCES, TWO PURPOSES

Blanco's diffusion of Don Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor* is also a dual process since just a few months after the translations of tales XI and XLIV appeared in the *New Montly Magazine*, Blanco reproduced the original tales in *Variedades; o Mensajero de Londres* (1824d, 1824f). As Almeida (2006) points out, *Variedades*, which was published in London by Rudolph Ackermann and distributed in the recently independent Spanish American republics, is a "transatlantic publication" that "fuses British, Spanish, and Latin American cultures to create what [Blanco] called 'Literatura Anglo-Hispana'" (2006, 439-40). Although Blanco was always uncomfortable with the clearly commercial purpose of Ackermann's publishing house (Roldán Vera 2003, 68, 72), *Variedades* provided him with a platform to

¹ Blanco's translation of tale XI was reprinted in: *The Athenaeum, or Spirit of the English Magazines* (Boston, 1824); *The Casquet of Literary Gems* (Glasgow, 1828); *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* (London, 11 June 1834); *Lays and Legends of Various Nations*, edited by William John Thoms (London, 1834); *Leisure Hours* (Boston, 1835); *Waldie's Select Circulating Library*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1836); *The Casket, Flowers of Literature, Wit and Sentiment* (Philadelphia, 1837); *Fireside Book. A Miscellany* (Philadelphia, 1837); *Popular Tales and Legends* (London, 1843); *The Catholic Weekly Instructor*, vol. 3, no. 5 (Derby, 31 January 1846); *The Young Man's Offering. Comprising Prose and Poetical Writings of the Most Eminent Writers* (Boston, 1849); *Penny Readings in Prose and Verse* (London, 1866); and *The Library of Choice Literature* (Philadelphia, 1881). See Durán (2010, 319-22).

discuss his ideas on literature and act as a disseminator of English and Spanish letters in the New World. Apart from advising his Spanish-American readers to study and follow English literary models, he published articles on Shakespeare and Scott that contained translated passages from *Ivanhoe*, *Hamlet* and *Richard II* (Blanco 1823, 1823-1824; Durán López 2009). Regarding Spanish literature, Blanco's articles mostly deal with medieval texts, including the chronicles, Jorge Manrique's *Coplas* and Don Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor*. Most interestingly, the pieces preceding tales XI and XLIV in *Varietades* are not mere translations of those in the *New Monthly Magazine*. In both periodicals, Blanco explains the structure and purpose of *El conde Lucanor* and includes a brief account of Don Juan Manuel's life, underlining the fact that he was both erudite and warrior, but then he focuses his attention on different issues. This proves that Blanco was consciously writing for two separate audiences and pursuing different purposes.

The articles introducing the tales in *Varietades* and the *New Monthly Magazine* are essential to understand why Blanco decided to translate the two texts he chose. The first, "Lo que sucedió a don Pero Núñez el Leal, Ruy González de Ceballos y a don Gutierre Ruiz de Blanquillo con el conde Rodrigo el Franco" (tale XLIV), is not in fact an obvious choice. It tells the story of three noblemen, Don Pero Núñez de Fuente Almejir, Don Ruy González de Ceballos and Don Gutierre Ruiz de Blanquillo, who escorted Count Rodrigo on his journey to Jerusalem: he had leprosy and wanted to die in the Holy Land. After his death, the three noblemen returned to Castile with their lord's bones so that they could be buried in Osuna. When they arrived in Tolosa, Don Pero volunteered to duel on behalf of a lady who had been accused of adultery. The lady had not had sexual intercourse with anyone other than her husband, but had thought about doing so, so God helped Don Pero but contrived to make him lose an eye in the duel because he did not consider the lady to be totally innocent. After being generously rewarded by the lady's family, the three noblemen continued their way to Osuna, where they were very warmly received. When they reunited with their families, Don Pero wrongly believed that his wife was laughing at him for being blind in one eye, and she felt so upset about her husband's false assumption that she stuck a needle in her own eye to demonstrate her sympathy and love for him. The moral of the story is that one should remain loyal to one's friends.

Blanco did not, however, choose this tale for its moral lesson, but for its romantic portrayal of Spanish manners, as he explains in the article preceding the translation in the *New Monthly Magazine*. In it, he refers to Bouterwek's analysis of *El conde Lucanor* in *Geschichte der spanischen Poesie und Beredsamkeit* (1804)—a laudatory but superficial analysis in Blanco's opinion—and laments that he had chosen the first tale in the collection when there were other stories that were more appealing for "a professed admirer of the romantic" (1824b, 31).² In Blanco's view, "[a] regular history of Spain could hardly furnish the imagination with a more striking sketch of the original Spanish

² In all probability, Blanco read the English version of Bouterwek's work, *History of Spanish and Portuguese Literature*, which had been published in 1823. Bouterwek reproduces tale I, "Lo que sucedió a un rey y a un ministro suyo," and argues that *El conde Lucanor* contains "no trace of romantic extravagance" (Bouterwek 1823, 38-41).

character” than tale XLIV, thus implying that Spaniards could be irrationally loyal and generous (31). The reference to Bouterwek is omitted in *Varietades*, but Blanco remarks that the most interesting tales in *El conde Lucanor* were those set in Spain as they provided lively depictions of Spanish national manners (1824d, 312).

Blanco regards *El conde Lucanor* as both a literary work and a historical source of information about Spanish medieval history. In fact, Blanco’s first article in the *New Monthly Magazine* on Don Juan Manuel is published under the heading “Studies in Spanish History.” His ideas are connected with the historiography of the Enlightenment as expounded by Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume and Gibbon, who were interested in “civil history” and argued that the historian did not simply compile facts but reconstructed the history of society (Trevor-Roper 2010, 1-8). However, Blanco’s approach to history was also—and strongly—influenced by Romantic historicism. He saw Spanish medieval literature as a sign of the times and a truly spontaneous expression of the national genius (Llorens 1968, 400-403). He conceived *El conde Lucanor* as a faithful portrayal of fourteenth-century Castilian society and a genuine representation of the Spanish national character.

By publishing this short story in the *New Monthly Magazine* and *Varietades*, Blanco was contributing to an existing transnational debate on Spanish identity. As part of a wider reappraisal of Spain in Northern Europe during the Romantic period, the British reassessed their perceptions of Spain on account of their increasing interest and better knowledge of the country. At the same time, Spanish-Americans were starting to forge their own identities as a way of completing their separation from the metropolis, where the crisis of the Old Regime also led to a process of self-examination in terms of Spanish history and culture. In this and other articles about Spain published in British periodicals, Blanco regarded himself as an authority on Spanish matters and provided British readers with his own interpretation of Spanish literature, manners and politics, even though he had not set foot in Spain since 1810 and his knowledge of the current state of the country was consequently limited. This is well reflected in his negative review of Valentín de Llanos’s *Don Esteban; or Memoirs of a Spaniard* (1825), published in the *Quarterly Review* (1825a), which gave way to a controversy about the Spanish national character that involved Blanco, Llanos and Antonio Alcalá Galiano. These authors and other Spanish liberals exiled in England provided the British public with their own representations of Spain and tried to define a new liberal Spanish national identity (Muñoz Sempere 2018, 256). Blanco’s texts on Spain should thus be regarded as an attempt to control the narrative(s) about Spain at a time when new images and interpretations proliferated in British print culture.

The other tale from *El conde Lucanor* that Blanco selected is “Lo que sucedió a un deán de Santiago con don Illán, el mago de Toledo” (tale XI), one of the most popular stories in the collection.³ It is a tale about the Dean of Santiago’s ungratefulness to Don Illán, the

³ Don Illán suddenly starts to be called Don Julian in the third paragraph of Blanco’s translation. This change cannot be Blanco’s decision as the character retains his original name at the beginning of the story, so it must be a printer’s mistake caused by the similar spelling of the two names. Moreover, British readers would be

magician who had taught him necromancy and helped him advance his ecclesiastical career until he was appointed Pope. Don Illán remained loyal to him, even though the Dean did not keep his word and never rewarded him for his services. At the end of the story, Don Illán and the Dean suddenly return to Toledo to the exact moment when the Dean had asked Don Illán if he could become his master: the story of the Dean's ascent to the papacy had been just Don Illán's vision to show him that he would be terribly ungrateful if he became his master. Consequently, Don Illán refuses to take him on as a pupil.

In the *New Monthly Magazine*, this tale is preceded by a short article in which Blanco celebrates the simplicity and imaginative power of medieval literature (1824c, 97-98). In *Variedades*, he explores these ideas further in an article entitled "Sobre el placer de imaginaciones inverosímiles," in which he acknowledges the importance of imagination in artistic creation and argues that the pleasure that readers derive from fictional works set in imaginary worlds with magical creatures and supernatural phenomena is natural and inherent to our human condition (1824e, 414). The article is central to understanding Blanco's literary ideas, and scholars have underlined its importance as an early defence of imagination and fantastic literature in Spanish literary criticism, also suggesting that Blanco had assimilated Coleridge's theory of imagination (Llorens 1968, 388-92; Romero Tobar 2010, 43-44). These ideas, however, were mostly ignored in Spain and Spanish America, where Romanticism had only timidly entered the literary debate, and had found staunch opposition from the Neoclassicists (Flitter 1992).

Although in both periodicals he celebrates the power of imagination, in *Variedades* Blanco complains about the insipidness of Spanish literature and makes some recommendations to Spanish writers. Blanco observes that Spanish medieval literature, influenced by its connections with the Islamic tradition, had featured exotic tales full of supernatural elements and had thus paved the way for the excesses of chivalric romances. For Blanco, in the early seventeenth century, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* had abruptly put an end to those excesses and, by doing so, had destroyed the imaginative power of Spanish literature. Blanco's opinion of Cervantes is ambivalent: although he admired *Don Quixote*, he felt that it had contributed to the intellectual lethargy that the Habsburg dynasty had imposed (1824e, 414). He also believed, though, that this situation could be changed and that the use of supernatural elements other than the well-worn references to classical mythology could revive Spanish letters and open up new creative possibilities. In other words, Blanco argues that Romantic models could contribute to the regeneration of Spanish literature, but these models were not restricted to contemporary authors since examples of imaginative literature could already be found in the medieval tradition (1824f).

In the article "Sobre el placer de imaginaciones inverosímiles," Blanco underlines the connections between Spanish medieval literature and the Oriental tradition. According

more familiar with the other name as Julian, Count of Ceuta, was one of the central characters in the chronicles and fictional accounts of the Muslim invasion of Iberia (711-718), including Robert Southey's epic poem *Roderick the Last of the Goths* (1814) and Walter Savage Landor's tragedy *Don Julian* (1812).

to Blanco, tale XI is a reworking of a Turkish tale, “The History of Chec Chahabeddin” (1824d, 418), a short story that he also translates into Spanish and inserts in *Variedades* between the above-mentioned article and Don Juan Manuel’s tale. “The History of Chec Chahabeddin” is one of the tales included in *Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des visirs: Contes turcs* (1707), presumably written in Turkish by Chec Zade and translated into French by François Pétis de la Croix. This work was translated into English as *Turkish Tales; Consisting of Several Extraordinary Adventures: with the History of the Sultanes of Persia, and the Visirs* in 1708, and in the following decades “The History of Chec Chahabeddin” was reprinted in several English magazines and anthologies, including Joseph Addison’s *The Spectator* (no. 94, 18 June 1711). Blanco does not include this short story in the *New Monthly Magazine*, but he does refer to it in a note, where he argues that Don Juan Manuel was the first author to adapt this tale “to European customs,” an idea repeated in *Variedades* (1824c, 103; 1824d, 417-18). While he acknowledges the legacy of Al-Andalus in Spanish culture, he also presents Spanish medieval literature as part of the European tradition. By doing so, he opposes the perception of Spain as “a non-European Europe, a non-Western West” that had spread in northern Europe since the Reformation (Iarocci 2006, 15).

Blanco selects the same tales from *El conde Lucanor* in both periodicals, but he introduces them differently in the *New Monthly Magazine* and *Variedades*. The paratexts show that he was particularly aware of the context of publication and target readership of the two periodicals, and accordingly adapted the materials and focused on different issues. This is also reflected in his English translations of the tales, which are specifically aimed at contemporary British readers, as the following section examines.

4. RECONTEXTUALISING THE TALES

For Blanco, translation was not simply the transposition of words from one language to another, but a more complex process in which the translator rewrites the text in another language and within a different cultural framework. He discussed these ideas in the commentaries that he frequently added to his own translations, thus confirming that he was particularly concerned about the translatability of literary works. As early as 1798, he submitted a Spanish translation of Pope’s “Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue, in Imitation of Virgil’s *Pollio*” to the Academia de Letras Humanas in Seville, preceded by a note in which he explains that he did not know what to call his work as neither translation nor imitation were accurate terms:

No sé si llamar traducción o imitación a esta pieza mía, porque el nombre de traducción da a entender menos invención y trabajo propio que lo que yo quisiera, y el de imitación es demasiado vago y no expresa cierta ligazón que siempre he observado con el original. Yo no quiero apropiarme cosa alguna que haya debido a otro, pero tampoco quiero verme defraudado de nada que me pertenezca, especialmente en este género de obras en que el

amor propio se interesa, no sé por qué razón, más que en otro alguno. Es verdad que en mi égloga raro pensamiento se encuentra que no esté al menos indicado en la de Pope, mas siempre me he valido de estos pensamientos de un modo que no me ha quitado cierta clase de originalidad. (Blanco White 1798, n. p.)

[I do not know whether to call this piece of mine a translation or an imitation, because the word translation implies less invention and personal work than I would like, and the word imitation is too vague and does not express a certain connection that I have always established with the original. I do not want to appropriate anything that I owe to another, but I do not want to see myself deprived of something that belongs to me, especially in this kind of work in which pride is involved, I do not know for what reason, more than in any other. It is true that in my eclogue one does not find any idea that is not at least indicated in Pope's, but I have always made use of these ideas in a way that is not devoid of a certain kind of originality. (Blanco White 1798, n. p.; my translation)]

In Blanco's view, translation involves a certain degree of invention and originality, and translators therefore always leave their imprint on the target text. In addition, they inevitably transform the text as they transpose it to a different culture. Aware of the cultural dimension of the translation process, Blanco believed that cultural differences were the main challenge that the translator had to face. In the first of the three articles devoted to *Ivanhoe* in *Variedades* between 1823 and 1824, where he renders some passages from the novel into Spanish, he argues that it was harder to translate from English than from French (1823-1824, 32). Obviously, as Romance languages, French and Spanish have certain similarities, but he was not simply considering their genetic relationship. According to Durán López, what Blanco meant was that rendering French texts was easy because Spain and France had a common political, cultural and religious background, whereas translating from English into Spanish was a challenge that involved translating from the language of freedom into that of despotism and superstition (2009, 252-53). Translatability was thus connected with the differences in the cultural frames of reference of the author, the translator and their target audiences.

When translating tales XI and XLIV of *El conde Lucanor* into English, Blanco was clearly bearing in mind the potential readers of his translations. He was conscious that he was translating a fourteenth-century Spanish text for a nineteenth-century British readership, and, as he explains in the paratexts of his translations, this necessarily requires some degree of adaptation. His English renditions of these tales are not literal translations but rather updated retellings adapted to the tastes and expectations of contemporary British readers. He acknowledges that his version of tale XI was a "free translation" (1824c, 98), and explains that he had also exercised "considerable freedom" when translating tale XLIV because "a literal translation from antiquated Spanish would preserve nothing of the original style but its quaintness" (1824b, 35). His translations demonstrate that he deliberately refused to preserve the archaic language of the tales and rewrote them following the style and conventions of contemporary

prose fiction. Whereas Don Juan Manuel's style is concise and plain, Blanco uses a more colourful and flowery language, adding descriptions and explaining some of the characters' actions and motivations in further detail.

Most notably, Blanco's translations do not include the dialogues between Count Lucanor and his adviser Patronio that provide the framework of the tales. In Don Juan Manuel's work, each short story is preceded by a brief introduction in which Count Lucanor asks Patronio for advice on a particular situation, and Patronio tells him a tale exemplifying how he should behave. After listening to Patronio's exemplum, Count Lucanor writes two verses that encapsulate the moral of the story. By omitting these verses and dialogues, Blanco undermines the moral function of Don Juan Manuel's work and decontextualises the narratives. This decontextualisation, which also involves isolating the tales from their context of production, entails the process of recontextualisation through which the translator "rewrites a source text in terms that are intelligible and interesting to receptors, situating it in different patterns of language use, in different literary traditions, in different cultural values, in different social institutions, and often in a different historical moment" (Venuti 2007, 30). Venuti's understanding of decontextualisation and recontextualisation in translation is in tune with Linell's theory of communication (1998). Linell argues that in communication speakers extract aspects of discourse (e.g. linguistic expressions, concepts, stories or values) from a given context (decontextualisation) and insert them in another context (recontextualisation). For Linell, recontextualisation is "never a pure transfer of a fixed meaning" as it involves "transformations of meanings and meaning potentials" (1998, 155). In the fields of translation and adaptation, as Greenall and Løfaldli (2019) highlight, recontextualisation thus inevitably implies the transfer and transformation of a given text—in this case, tales XI and XLIV from *El conde Lucanor*, which Blanco rewrites to relocate them in a new context.

Apart from omitting the dialogues between Patronio and the Count that frame the narratives, Blanco expurgates certain passages under the pretext that they may offend his readers' sensibilities, although most likely his decision was dictated by his own notions of good taste. In tale XLIV, Count Rodrigo—wrongly—believed that his friends were revolted by his deformities caused by leprosy, but they denied it and drank from the water they had used to clean his ulcers to prove their affection for him. In Blanco's translation, however, they simply "covered his hands and face with kisses" (1824b, 33). In a note, Blanco explains that he was "obliged to depart from the facts mentioned in the original, which, though extremely characteristic, and really heroic from their motive (*sic*), are too disgusting to be told in our days" (33). Similarly, he must have thought that it was inappropriate to mention that in order to carry the Count's remains more easily, the three noblemen were advised to boil the corpse to separate the flesh from the bones, so Blanco just alludes to "means... to hasten the destructive process of the grave" (33).

Blanco also modifies the passage where Don Pero's wife sticks a needle in her eye. He does not indicate how the woman had hurt herself, but for melodramatic effect he

adds that her face was covered in blood when she returned to her husband's chamber and hugged him tightly, trying to comfort him. The narrator in Blanco's translation—a more intrusive narrator than that of Don Juan Manuel's original narrative—comments that her behaviour was “a striking illustration of that vehemence, bordering on savageness, which is still found in the best feelings of a Spaniard, when too much exalted,” hoping that the reader will excuse him “for the shock” caused by the scene (34-35). Although Blanco uses the story to illustrate the loyalty and generosity of the Spanish people, he also presents them as passionate, primitive and uncivilised, reinforcing firmly rooted notions of Spanish backwardness and establishing an implicit contrast with the moderation, refinement and self-control exhibited by the British.

As discussed above, Blanco believed that *El conde Lucanor* and, in particular, tale XLIV were a faithful depiction of Spain, but he decided to emphasise the medieval character of the narrative, recreating a recognisable medieval setting for the British contemporary public. Clearly inspired by Walter Scott and the representations of the Middle Ages in Romantic historical fiction, Blanco rewrites the scene of the duel and transforms the plain account of the events in Don Juan Manuel's tale into a vivid description of a medieval tournament, as the comparison of the two passages below shows:

Desque entraron en l'campo, ayudó Dios a don Pero Núñez, et venció la lid et salvó la dueña, pero perdió y don Pero Núñez el ojo, et assí se cumplió todo lo que don Pero Núñez dixiera ante que entrasse en el campo. (Don Juan Manuel 2003, 232)

When Don Pero Nuñez, laying aside the ragged clothes in which he was travelling, had buckled on the armour and mounted the horse which the lady's relations brought forward, he well might have spared himself the trouble of asserting his knighthood by a certificate. Knight and gentleman were stamped on his every look and motion. The battle was fierce, and for some time doubtful. The enraged French knight, unexpectedly thwarted in his plans of revenge, fought with uncommon fury, and had once nearly unhorsed his opponent by driving the lance through the bars of the Castilian's helmet. But the latter kept his saddle, in which for a few moments he had appeared to totter; and roused by the blow to a decisive effort, laid the Frenchman at his feet. Nuñez, upon raising his beaver, was found to have lost an eye, according to his own prediction. (Blanco 1824b, 33-34)

This creative reformulation of the narrative is even more conspicuous in tale XI, where Blanco projects a Romantic image of Spain that is completely absent in the source text. At the beginning of the story, the dean's arrival in Toledo provides Blanco with an opportunity to offer a brief description of the city. Keen on detail, he informs us that Don Illán's house “stood on the brink of the perpendicular rock, which, now crowned with the Alcázar, rises to a fearful height over the Tagus” (1824f, 99). Blanco does not portray Toledo as it had been back in the Middle Ages, but as it was in the nineteenth century, and in particular, as it is depicted in Edward Hawke Locker's *Views in Spain* (1824), to which he refers in a footnote (99). Blanco recreates the Spanish setting using the pictorial representation of a

British artist and alluding to the Alcázar, a landmark that could be identified by British travellers and readers of travel literature or literature on Spain. References to well-known elements of Spanish culture act as signposts that guide the British reader and to a certain extent respond to a strategy of indigenisation. Hutcheon (2016, 150), who borrows the term *indigenisation* from anthropology, uses it to refer to those adaptations where there is intercultural encounter and accommodation. In his translations of the tales from *El conde Lucanor*, although Blanco is apparently determined to present an authentic account of Spanish manners and national character, he is also providing a representation of Spain that conforms to British figurations of Spain at the time.

Indigenisation strategies are particularly noticeable in tale XI. At the beginning of the story, Blanco adds a touch of *costumbrismo* to recreate the manners of the Spanish people. He describes how Don Illán treats the Dean to a lavish meal consisting of *olla* [*podrida*] (i.e. a Spanish stew containing meat and vegetables) and capon and washed down with an immoderate amount of *tinto* wine from Yepes (1824f, 99). References to Spanish gastronomy are usually present in travel books and even in fictional works set in Spain, so some British readers would have been probably familiar with the *olla* and maybe with the *tinto* too, but nevertheless, these borrowed terms served to add local colour to the narrative. This scene illustrates that Spaniards were hospitable and companionable, but the tale also alludes to less positive Spanish stereotypes. When the Dean of Santiago is appointed Pope, he is so infuriated by Don Illán's constant but fair requests that he threatens to report him to the Inquisition. British readers would have immediately thought of the Spanish Inquisition, which was created in 1478, and not of the medieval Inquisition operating mostly in France and Italy from the late twelfth century on. Blanco must have referred to the latter, although he was probably aware of the associations of the term *Inquisition* in Britain and used it to allude to the bigotry of the Catholic Church, which the dean also represents. This character embodies some of the traits of the Spanish national character that he had identified and condemned elsewhere, namely hypocrisy and pride (Blanco 1822; 1825a, 210-13).

This portrayal stands in stark contrast to the Romantic image of the Spanish people provided in his translation of tale XLIV, but these apparent contradictions also reveal the tensions existing in the Romantic figurations of Spain in Britain. The anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish propaganda that spread across Protestant Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had notably influenced representations of Spain in Britain until the Peninsular War (1808-1814), when the British reconsidered their views. The barbaric, tyrannical and intolerant nation of the so-called Black Legend then became imagined as a heroic and exotic land where the spirit of chivalry had survived (Saglia 2000, 19-61; Iarocci 2006, 12-30). These romantic figurations coexisted with more critical portrayals of Spain, fuelled by the restoration of absolutism under Ferdinand VII in 1814 and again in 1823 which provided British writers, journalists and caricaturists with new opportunities to revisit the *topoi* of the Black Legend (Medina Calzada 2019, 959-62). At the same time, the Spanish Inquisition featured in works

written by the Spanish liberal exiles in London, who contributed to disseminating a negative image of the Spanish monarchy while presenting Spaniards as an oppressed but heroic people (Muñoz Sempere 2008, 127-51; 2018, 259).

Furthermore, Blanco participates in the vogue for Spanish Orientalism in British Romanticism. As Saglia (2000) has extensively studied, Moorish Spain, thoroughly explored by contemporary scholars and historians, was fictionally recreated in ballads, metrical tales, short stories and theatrical performances. Although these Spanish-Moorish themes are not central in Blanco's translation of tale XI, he does make a few allusions to Islamic Iberia that are absent in the source text. For example, Blanco presents Don Illán's maid as a girl of Moorish descent, and he repeatedly refers to her as "the Moorish maid" or "the Moorish servant" (1824f, 99-100, 103). Moreover, instead of being appointed Bishop of Toulouse, the Dean is named Archbishop of Seville, Blanco's hometown. Blanco, however, does not offer a romantic depiction of Seville as he did in his short story "The Alcázar of Seville," published in the literary annual *Forget Me Not* (1825b), but rather describes it as a rich see that King Ferdinand III of Castile had "rescued from the Moors" and supported so that its church would "rival the first cathedrals in Christendom" (1824f, 102). By referring to these events, which took place in the mid-thirteenth century, Blanco sets the story in the context of the wars between the Iberian Christian and Muslim kingdoms that traditional Spanish historiography calls the *Reconquista*.

None of these changes modify the plot of the tales substantially, but they do illustrate the ways in which Blanco recontextualised them and promoted a romantic image of the Spanish past and national character in tune with contemporary figurations of Spain in Britain.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Blanco's translations of tales XI and XLIV of *El conde Lucanor* show that he understood translation as a creative process through which the translator rewrites the text in another language, within a different context and for a new audience. However, he also regarded translation as a form of dissemination (Ruiz Casanova 2000, 410). His translations from *El conde Lucanor* and the strategies he used to recontextualise them thus respond to his desire to impose and spread a particular interpretation of Spanish literature and Spanish national identity in Britain. Although he was not a prolific translator and some of his very few translations from Spanish into English remained unpublished,⁴ his translation activities and his role as commentator and disseminator of Spanish matters in the British press, which go beyond his famous *Letters from Spain*, should be considered in the analysis of his ideas on Spanishness and, more generally, in terms of their impact on the debates on Spanish identity among Spanish liberals. Although their circumstances were different, Blanco and

⁴ Blanco translated Ruy González de Clavijo's *Embajada a Tamorlán* (1406) in 1822 and some passages of *Crónica de don Álvaro de Luna* (c. 1453) in 1824. The manuscripts of these translations are kept at the University of Liverpool.

the Spanish refugees who arrived in England after 1823 participate in the redefinition of the Spanish national identity from their condition as exiles (Muñoz Sempere 2018, 256). In Blanco's case, his process of self-analysis is extremely complex. As a Spaniard by birth who was well acquainted with Spanish history, literature and manners, he believed that his opinion and understanding of Spanish affairs was more valid than that of others, even though Spain had changed since he left in 1810. At the same time, he had been resident in England for more than a decade and was influenced by the foreign context *from* which and *for* which he wrote and translated. This is the reason why his representation of Spain integrates what he regarded as genuine traits of the Spanish national character with certain stereotypical elements that could be easily recognised by the British public. Furthermore, his translations of and articles on *El conde Lucanor* should also be considered in the study of the reception of Spanish literature in Britain and Anglo-Hispanic cultural encounters, especially inasmuch as they show that periodical publications played a key part in the diffusion of Spanish culture in Romantic Britain.⁵

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