

THE WASTE LAND IN SPANISH A HUNDRED YEARS LATER: THE CASE OF CLAUDIO RODRÍGUEZ*

Natalia Carbajosa

Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena (Spain)

ABSTRACT

This article explores Claudio Rodríguez's approach to Eliot's poetry through his unpublished translation of *The Waste Land*. It also considers Rodríguez's translation work within the wider context of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets during the twentieth century, an influence deriving largely from the repeated translations of *The Waste Land*. Unlike other renowned Spanish poets from the 1950s, my study tackles the significance of Rodríguez's contribution to the translations of Eliot into Spanish by focusing on his initial reluctance to undertake the task and on the conceptual divergence he felt vis a vis the Anglo-American poet's poetic principles.

KEYWORDS: Spanish translations of *The Waste Land*, Eliot's influence on twentieth-century Spanish poets, Claudio Rodríguez, conceptual divergence.

THE WASTE LAND EN ESPAÑOL CIEN AÑOS DESPUÉS: EL CASO DE CLAUDIO RODRÍGUEZ

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora el acercamiento de Claudio Rodríguez a la poesía de Eliot a través de sus traducciones inéditas, entre las que se encuentra la de *The Waste Land*. Concretamente, aborda el trabajo de traducción de Claudio Rodríguez dentro del contexto más amplio de la influencia de Eliot sobre los poetas españoles durante el siglo xx a raíz de las constantes traducciones de *The Waste Land*. Además, y a diferencia de otros poetas renombrados de los 50, Claudio Rodríguez se acerca a Eliot no por admiración sino por una divergencia conceptual de los principios poéticos del angloamericano.

PALABRAS CLAVE: traducciones al español de *The Waste Land*, influencia de Eliot en los poetas españoles del siglo xx, Claudio Rodríguez, divergencia conceptual.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2022.85.14>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 85; octubre 2022, pp. 211-226; ISSN: e-2530-8335



No other contemporary poem has been translated into Spanish as often as *The Waste Land*, a fact that illustrates the consolidation of Eliot's international influence in Spain and in Spanish-speaking countries (Barón 1996). The Puerto-Rican Ángel Flores and the Mexican Enrique Manguía were the pioneering translators of this enduring poem, while an anonymous fragment of "The Fire Sermon," translated into Catalan and attributed to Marià Manent, was also published in 1927 (Young 1993). Flores and Manguía published their respective versions as early as 1930, after a detailed epistolary interchange with Eliot (Garbisu 2017). With all their deficiencies, these early renderings, respectively entitled *La tierra baldía* and *El páramo*, produced a revolution in the realm of Spanish poetry, one comparable only to Rubén Darío's inauguration of *Modernismo* in its Hispanic version at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹

The long road from those tentative beginnings to the most recent versions of *The Waste Land*, published in Spain by Andreu Jaume (2015), Caballero Cebrián (2017), José Luis Rey (2017), and Luis Sanz Irlles (2020), together with partial renderings such as Jordi Doce's "El entierro de los muertos" (2018), is marked by an overwhelmingly wide range of new translations. Among these, we find a multitude of versions translated by poets and/or scholars, published by prestigious presses in bilingual editions or in Spanish, with critical introductions and profuse annotations, or modestly included in small magazines, fanzines, and in the most varied written and online media. The poem appeals to both highbrow and lowbrow poetry readers, including counter-cultural movements. In the twenty-first century, and beyond Spanish frontiers, *The Waste Land* has become a motif of graphic novels and films, as well as a constant reference for many artistic treatments of war, ecology, and dystopias.

As early as 1989, academics such as Bernd Dietz and Luisa Fernanda Rodríguez undertook a study of the existing translations. Among these, literary critic and scholar Teresa Gibert carried out an exhaustive comparative textual analysis of the ten best-known versions of *The Waste Land* in Spanish available over six decades, starting with Flores's and Manguía's.² In her study, Gibert appropriately compares

* The author would like to thank the *Seminario Permanente Claudio Rodríguez* and the Claudio Rodríguez archive from the *Fundación Jorge Guillén* for their invaluable help, and especially Miguel Casaseca and Marta Valsero. I am equally indebted to Claudio Rodríguez's widow, Clara Miranda, for her permission to reproduce documents from the archive. The research resulting in this article relates to the project "T.S. Eliot's Drama from Spain: Translation, Critical Study, Performance (TEATREL-SP)," funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades and by the European Regional Development Fund (PGC2018-097143-A-I00).

¹ Spanish *Modernismo* derives from nineteenth-century symbolism and does not exactly coincide in dates or aesthetic purposes with Anglo-American Modernism, although its conception of art has a cosmopolitan and experimentalist vocation which it shares with the Anglo-American avantgarde.

² Among these studies, Bernd Dietz's and Gibert's stand out. She focuses on the best-known full translations of the poem by Manent, Aguirre and Valverde, among many others. There are other interesting complete translations, such as José María Álvarez's –a major poet from the *Novísimos*



translation preferences, confirming the difficulty, given the wide diversity of possible choices, of finding a definitive version for this monumental poem. In fact, the *tour de force* that Spanish translators have undertaken over decades with *The Waste Land* echoes that of their counterparts in other European countries (Barón 1996) and underlines the difficulties of translating avant-garde poetry into Spanish (Gallego Roca 2001).

Eliot's permanent allure has crystalized over decades into varied, even opposing views and appropriations of his oeuvre by Spanish poets and translators. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan contends that Eliot's poetic and critical writings brought about the renewal of Spanish poetry, similar only to the revolution caused by the influence of French literature in the nineteenth century: "Through Eliot's example, Spanish poets realized that the use of a narrative mode opened up the possibility of a philosophical poetry, which was meditative rather than traditionally lyrical, and written in a lower linguistic key" (2007, 141).

This study does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets to the present day, but to specifically analyze Claudio Rodríguez's relationship with Eliot's oeuvre. Nevertheless, before focusing on Rodríguez's reception and translation of *The Waste Land*, I will offer a general overview of the Spanish poets of differing generations who have affinities with Eliotian poetics.³

Contemporary to Eliot, 1956 Nobel-prize poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958) is a fundamental figure in Spanish letters, one whose bearing upon later generations has never waned. Jiménez began his poetic career under the aegis of *Modernismo*, a movement characterized by an aesthetic of escape from reality into dream states, the cultivation of nostalgic landscapes, and sensual rhythms and sounds. His poetic evolved later towards a terse, austere expression that relied on a highly intellectualized idiom. He finally founded a poetic language and a style of his own that left its imprint on most twentieth-century Spanish poets. Despite his scant knowledge of English, Juan Ramón Jiménez tried his hand at translating Eliot and Pound in the 1930s (2006), with a view to introducing new foreign influences into Spanish poetry.⁴ Furthermore, in his move towards a poetry of intellectual abstraction, away from the lyrical effusiveness of his beginnings, Jiménez saw himself—in purpose, content and mode of expression—as akin to Eliot (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 143).

Generation— published in the poetry magazine *Barcarola* in 1987, which he entitled *El yermo*, later reprinted as *Tierra asolada* in *Renacimiento: revista de literatura* (2008).

³ For a closer account of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets, see especially Fernando Ortiz (1985), Emilio Barón (1996), Eugenio Maqueda (2003), Howard Young (1993), and Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan (2007), among others.

⁴ More specifically, Jiménez translated "Marina," "La Figlia che Piange" and some fragments from *Ash Wednesday* into prose. Always in collaboration with his multilingual wife, Zenobia Camprubí, he translated other English-speaking poets such as Robert Browning, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, W.B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound.



Not unlike Jiménez, the 1927 Generation poets, also called *The Silver Generation* –Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Jorge Guillén, Dámaso Alonso, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Cernuda, Pedro Salinas and Miguel Hernández, among others– hailed Eliot’s avant-garde poetry and reinforced the social and cultural role assigned to the poet and critic (Rosell 2009, 83). These poets, strongly influenced by contemporary foreign aesthetics, changed the language of Spanish poetry, combining popular traditions with experimental verse of an irrational, surrealist bent. A case in point was Luis Cernuda, who exiled himself to the UK, lectured at Cambridge University, and later emigrated to the US, where he taught at Mount Holyoke and Amherst College. Cernuda’s knowledge of Anglo-American poetry was thorough, and in 1958 he published in Mexico the study *Pensamiento poético en la lírica inglesa del siglo XIX*, still a key reference in English studies. As in the case of Jiménez, Cernuda adopted Eliot’s philosophical and impersonal poetics, rejecting the pervasive and emotional rhetoric that had cluttered Spanish poetry prior to the cultural innovations of the 1920s (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 147).

Spanish poetry following the Civil War (1936-1939) is divided into poets who went into exile –Juan Ramón Jiménez, Luis Cernuda, León Felipe, and most of the 1927 Generation– and those who remained in Spain, among whom Luis Rosales stands out (1920-1992), followed by Luis Felipe Vivancos, Leopoldo Panero, and Dionisio Ridruejo. These poets entered the post-war era with a poetic style modelled on classical traditions from the Renaissance and the Spanish *Golden Age*. They followed in the footsteps of the sixteenth-century sonneteer Garcilaso de la Vega and sometimes conveyed nostalgic views of Spain’s glorious past. From the 1940s, other key poets, such as Blas de Otero (1926-1979) and Gabriel Celaya (1911-1991), introduced what is now known as “social poetry;” a combination of popular rhythms and direct speech through which they denounced political and economic injustice. These poets served as the closest model for the generation of the 1950s. Moreover, those 1927 poets who did not go into exile, such as Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990) and Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984) –both still active and highly influential during the 1940s– together with Carlos Bousoño and Eugenio de Nora, and others –opted for an existentialist *poesía del desarraigo* (“poetry of uprootedness”) based on surrealist visions and an irrational use of language. All of these trends paved the way for the following generations, whose affinities with Eliot’s poetry and thought were to be intensified.

The most significant postwar literary movement, made up of both poets and novelists, was in effect the Generation of the 1950s, some of whose members were also active in the 1960s. As children of the Spanish Civil War, the poets of this generation –Jaime Gil de Biedma, José Ángel Valente, Francisco Brines, Claudio Rodríguez, Ángel González, José Agustín Goytisolo, José Hierro, Antonio Gamoneda, and others– cultivated a more subversive personal style, perhaps lacking the religious connotations of some of their predecessors, but not impervious to the social realities of their time and the quest for the spiritual. They proposed a poetic language of visionary, cryptic and metaphysical tones, often blended with colloquial or anti-rhetorical strategies from everyday experience. They also showed clear connections with the avant-garde of the 1930’s.



Thanks to the “Colección Adonais” in Rialp Editions, founded in 1943 by Juan Guerrero Ruiz, many of the poets coming of age in the '40s and the '50s who belonged to different poetic movements could read T.S. Eliot and other foreign poets in translation (Guillén Acosta 2016). Among these, the most enthusiastically Eliotian figure was probably Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929-1990), who was indebted to *The Waste Land* as well as to Eliot's criticism (1980). Likewise, poet and translator José Angel Valente (1929-2000) made Eliot (1953) the focus of some of his key criticism (Peinado Elliot 2003; Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 1995). Together with Biedma and Valente, Claudio Rodríguez (1934-1999), who also belonged to the Generation of the 1950s, approached the poetry of T.S. Eliot from a singular viewpoint.

The most enthusiastically Eliotian movement of the 1970s was the *Novísimos* Generation, a group that comprises poets still active today, such as Pere Gimferrer, Antonio Colinas, Luis Alberto de Cuenca, Jaime Siles –the author of the most recent essay about Eliot and Spain (2021)– Luis Antonio de Villena, and José María Álvarez. They turn to popular culture for inspiration and are deeply knowledgeable about foreign poetry; besides Eliot, they admire Pound, Constantine Cavafis, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Unlike their predecessors, the *Novísimos* read Eliot “as a poet whose work blended high and low culture and whose literary achievements they could use within the context of a pop worldview” (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 151).

Claudio Rodríguez was born in 1934 in the small rural town of Zamora, whose landscape and people remained a constant presence in his poetry. He studied Philosophy and Literature at the University of Madrid, where he lived with his wife, Clara Miranda, for most of his life. Having published only five volumes of poetry, he is now considered one of the most prominent names of the second half of the twentieth century. A precocious poet, in 1953 Claudio Rodríguez obtained the prestigious literary award *Adonais* for his visionary book of Rilkeian inspiration *Don de la ebriedad* [“Gift of Inebriation”]; throughout his life he was to receive many important awards, such as the *Premio Nacional de Poesía* (1983), *Premio Príncipe de Asturias de las Letras* (1993) and *Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana* (1995). In 2008, Shearsman Press published all his poetry collections, translated by Luis Ingelmo and Michael Smith. Anglo-American Hispanists such as Philip Silver, Louis Bourne and Michael Mudrovic –whose comprehensive study of Rodríguez's oeuvre *The Transgressive Poetics of Claudio Rodríguez* (1999) has not to date been surpassed– have paid close attention to his poetry. However, with the exceptions of Dionisio Cañas (1988), Antonio Rivero Taravillo (2018), and Luis Ingelmo (2018), Claudio Rodríguez's facet as a translator of Eliot is scarcely mentioned within the extensive critical corpus devoted to his work.

Although Claudio Rodríguez belongs to the generation of the 1950s, the recognizable influences on his own poetry have always been a matter of debate. This is basically due to the originality of Rodríguez's poetry, which remains unparalleled in the history of Spanish literature (Sánchez Santiago 2006). In fact, the unique quality in Rodríguez's poetry has been partly attributed to his constant reading of English poets at a time when very few Spanish poets were reading English (Doce 2007). Especially in his two first books, *Don de la ebriedad* (1953) and *Conjuros*





["Conjurings"] (1958), Rodríguez's visionary impulse and hymnic expression, as well as his treatment of nature, bear the imprint of such English poets as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Dylan Thomas.⁵

Claudio Rodríguez lectured at the University of Nottingham between 1958 and 1960, and at Cambridge University from 1960 to 1964. During those years, he became a close friend of his fellow-poet Francisco Brines, who lectured at Oxford and who also came under the influence of English poetry in general, and of Eliot in particular. Rodríguez read English poetry thoroughly, mostly Shakespeare, the Romantic and the Metaphysical Poets, and he maintained a keen interest in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Carbajosa 2009). English poetry "influenced the rigor of my poetic construction, and my access to the poem," he affirmed in a 1971 interview with Federico Campbell (Yubero 2004, 222).⁶ He believed that English poetry had a more orderly structure, in its conception and structural development, than Spanish. In addition, Rodríguez's stay in England allowed him to distance himself from his own country and its values. According to Dionisio Cañas (1988, 69), the English influence is reflected in the new themes that Rodríguez introduces in his third book, *Alianza y condena* (1965).

Rodríguez's English readings, mixed with his preference for the Spanish mystics and for a poetry with an irrational component, conferred a singularity on his new verse (Rodríguez Padrón 2011). During his stay in England, he personally met some English poets, among them Ted Hughes and Eliot. By 1966, when Rodríguez received the prestigious Spanish Critics' Award for the book partly written in England, *Alianza y condena* ['Alliance and Condemnation'] (1965), he had brought his English adventure to a close and moved to Madrid. In the same year, commissioned by a Spanish publisher whose identity was never revealed, he undertook the task of translating all of Eliot's poetry, with the exception of the *Four Quartets*.

Rodríguez's personal library, which includes his copy of Eliot's Faber edition of *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, is currently part of the Claudio Rodríguez Archive at the *Jorge Guillén* Foundation in Valladolid. The translated versions that Rodríguez consulted and annotated are available too: *Tierra baldía*, translated by Ángel Flores and published in Barcelona in 1930, and *La tierra baldía*, translated by José María Aguirre and published in Madrid in 1965. Besides these editions, Rodríguez had access to several anthologies of Eliot's poems in Spanish: *Poemas T.S. Eliot* (1946), edited by poets Dámaso Alonso and Leopoldo Panero, and *Poesías reunidas* (1978), translated by José María Valverde for Alianza Editorial. This edition was considered canonical until it was supplanted by Viorica Patea's bilingual edition

⁵ M.^a Antonia Mezquita Fernández highlighted Rodríguez's poetic affinities with William Blake (2006), William Wordsworth (2017) and Dylan Thomas (2021).

⁶ "La poesía inglesa ... me ha influido en el rigor de la construcción, en el acceso al poema." What Rodríguez meant by "el acceso al poema" ("the access to the poem") remains unclear. He was always reluctant to speak about his own poetry and always did it in very concise, elusive terms. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

of *La tierra baldía* for Cátedra Letras Universales. Because of its ample annotations and book-length analysis of the poem, this constitutes the most complete academic interpretation of the poem to date in Spanish Eliotian circles. Unfortunately, Claudio Rodríguez, who died in 1999, did not have access to this edition.

The Claudio Rodríguez Archive also contains a considerable amount of handwritten and typed sheets with different versions of all the Eliot's poems save *Four Quartets*. Rodríguez decided to translate the title of *The Waste Land* as *La tierra yerma* instead of the more common appellation, *La tierra baldía*. Besides *The Waste Land*, the archive includes versions of: *Prufrock and other Observations*, "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," *Ariel Poems, Unfinished* and *Minor Poems, Occasional Verses*, and even the *Choruses from The Rock*. For all these poems there seems to be no finished version; the typed manuscripts contain numerous handwritten corrections, multiple options, and deletions. Some of Rodríguez's translations were published in the literary supplement of the *ABC* national newspaper in 1988: "El entierro de los muertos," "La figlia che piange," "El cultivo de los árboles de Navidad," "Un canto a Simeón," "Histeria," "Miércoles de ceniza" and "El viaje de los Magos."

More than twenty years elapsed between Claudio Rodríguez starting to translate Eliot and publishing a three-page version in the *ABC* cultural supplement. Rodríguez's painstaking "philosophy of composition" led him to constantly revise his own poems and discard countless versions over the years. He was as fastidious in translating as he was in composing his poems, with his collected poetry amounting to only five published titles: *Don de la ebriedad* (1953), *Conjuros* (1958), *Alianza y condena* (1965), *El vuelo de la celebración* ["The Flight of Celebration"] (1976) and *Casi una leyenda* ["Almost a Legend"] (1992); given his meticulous composition process, it is more than probable that he proceeded in the same way with Eliot's translations and that he was still intermittently working on these translations decades after being commissioned for them. It is also very possible that the publishers may have dropped their initial project (García Jambrina 1993, 28). Claudio Rodríguez himself introduces a preliminary note in his *ABC* translations, "Because the beginning will remind us of the end" ("*Porque el principio nos recordará el fin*"). Each one of the words included in this note is evidence of Rodríguez's particular approach to Eliot's concept of poetry, as well as his linguistic choices. Rodríguez himself confesses: "the impulse that drove me to that translation was not that of my affinity with his poetry, but quite the opposite: that of my divergence, yet not remoteness, which still exists, vis a vis his oeuvre. It is an exercise or a discipline that broadened and changed the extent of my knowledge of language and of my vital experience" (*ABC* 1988, vii).⁷

⁷ "...el acicate que me movió a la traducción no era el de mi afinidad hacia su obra poética, sino todo lo contrario: el de mi divergencia, no lejanía, que aún existe, hacia su entidad. Ejercicio o disciplina que ampliaron y cambiaron la órbita de mi conocimiento del lenguaje y de mi experiencia vital."



This approach to Eliot's oeuvre categorically differs from that of other Spanish poets of his generation –Biedma and Valente– and their unwavering fascination with the Anglo-American writer. In this case, it is the original “divergence” of the two poets’ poetic principles that motivates Rodríguez’s enduring perception of Eliot. To that effect, in the 1971 interview with Federico Campbell, the Spanish poet expressed himself even more categorically: “For me, Eliot’s translation has been a mental exercise. I would have rather translated another kind of poet. All of Eliot’s ideological, literary principles are opposite to what I thin ... Consequently, my translation cannot be vibrant. I cannot take an objective position on Eliot... In contrast, Dylan Thomas and I are quite like-minded in the irrational, magical view of reality” (Yubero 2004, 224).⁸

There seems to be a change between these dismissive remarks from 1971 and the more appreciative tone in the note to the 1988 publication in *ABC*. Even if Eliot’s influence on Rodríguez was exerted by means of a *via negativa*, his constant attention to Eliot’s poetry, which continued until his death in 1999, is evidence of an alternative (“divergent”) story of poetic affinities and counter-affinities. According to Luis Ingelmo, “[Rodríguez’s translations] reveal a translator in a permanent state of alert to his own words, not so much because they were the reproduction of Eliot’s poetry as because he was fully aware that he had created an unusual creature, that is, a genuinely Claudian creation” (2007, 64).⁹

To prove his point, Ingelmo focuses on the second part of Rodríguez’s introduction to his *ABC* translations, where the poet explains his own linguistic choices. Following the crucial statement that translating Eliot meant for him an “exercise or discipline that enlarged and changed the orbit of my knowledge of the language and of my vital experience,” Rodríguez continues: “Now that I reread these translations, I think that I have invaded too much with my Castilian linguistic habits, especially regarding the fluency of reading. Anyway, let them serve as accompaniment to the great poet, to the everlasting poetry.”¹⁰

Rodríguez’s translations of Eliot differ from those of other poets and translators in one other way: except for the poems published in *ABC*, Rodríguez’s unpublished translations of Eliot’s poems cannot be considered finished “texts,” which poses an added problem to their interpretation. Instead, they must be

⁸ “Para mí la traducción de Eliot ha sido un ejercicio mental. Yo hubiera preferido traducir otro tipo de poeta. Todos los presupuestos ideológicos, literarios, de Eliot son lo contrario de lo que yo pienso [...]. De ahí que mi traducción no pueda ser vibrante. No puedo tener una posición objetiva respecto a Eliot [...]. En cambio, Dylan Thomas es muy afín a mí en la visión irracionalista, mágica de la realidad.”

⁹ “...presentan a un traductor en permanente estado de alerta con sus propias palabras, y no tanto porque fueran la reproducción de la poesía eliotiana como por tener plena conciencia de haber gestado una criatura insólita, es decir, una creación genuinamente claudiana.”

¹⁰ “Ahora que releo estas traducciones creo que he invadido demasiado con mis hábitos lingüísticos castellanos, sobre todo en la fluidez de la lectura. En fin, sirvan como acompañamiento al gran poeta, a la poesía imperecedera.” Faithful to his elusiveness, Rodríguez does not explain exactly what he has “invaded.”



conceived as “ante-texts,” as the term is known in pre-textual or genetic criticism (*crítica genética*), which is very different from textual criticism (Blasco 2011). Unlike the finished oeuvre, a corpus of ante-texts comprises all the versions available in the “writer’s workshop,” obviously of a provisional nature. Ante-texts are valid for the exploration of the process of creation and translation, which means that writing or translating is an unfinished process, not a goal. They cannot be assessed by critics in the same way in which they approach published work. With this in mind I am going to compare the first part of “The Burial of the Dead” (“El entierro de los muertos”) as it appeared in the *ABC* 1988 edition, with the only ante-text of this section available in the Claudio Rodríguez’s archive:

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm’ aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s,
My cousin’s, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (Eliot 2015, 55).



I. *El entierro de los muertos*¹¹

El más cruel de los meses es abril, que hace brotar
lilas en la tierra muerta, tejiendo
memoria y deseo, dando vida
con la lluvia de primavera en las perezosas raíces.
Nos abrigó el invierno, mientras cubría
la tierra con nieve olvidadiza, nutriendo
una pequeña vida con tubérculos secos.
Y el verano nos sorprendió, llegando en el Starnbergersee
con un aguacero; nos metimos en los soportales,
y luego seguimos bajo el sol, y entramos en Hofgarten,
tomamos café, y durante un rato hablamos.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch
Y siendo niños, pasando una temporada en casa de mi primo el Archiduque
me llevaban en trineo,
y yo tenía miedo. María, le decía,
agárrate bien, María. Y nos deslizábamos por las pendientes.
Una se siente libre en las montañas.
Leo casi toda la noche, y me voy al sur cuando llega la noche.

¿Qué raíces arraigan, qué ramas crecen
en estos pétreos escombros? Hijo del hombre,
tú no puedes decirlo, adivinarlo, porque sólo conoces
un montón de imágenes rotas, donde el sol reverbera,
y el árbol muerto no cobija, ni el grillo da solaz,
ni da rumor de agua la árida piedra. Bajo
esta rojiza roca sólo hay sombra,
(entra bajo la sombra de esta roca rojiza)
y así te enseñaré algo que es diferente
tu sombra siguiéndote de prisa por la mañana
o tu sombra alzándose al atardecer para hallarte;
y te mostraré el miedo en un puñado de polvo,
.....

The translation includes the same typo in the version published in *ABC* and in the ante-text: a comma after “polvo” (“dust”) instead of a full stop. In addition, there is a telling discrepancy between the ante-text and the published version: while the ante-text translates the phrase “and go south in the winter” as “me voy al sur cuando llega el invierno,” the published version, inexplicably, introduces what can only be considered as a transcription error: “me voy al sur cuando llega la noche.” Apart from that, only two expressions differ in both documents. For the translation of “the cricket [gives] no relief,” the published version translates “ni el grillo da solaz,”

¹¹ Extracts from the translation published in *ABC* in 1988.



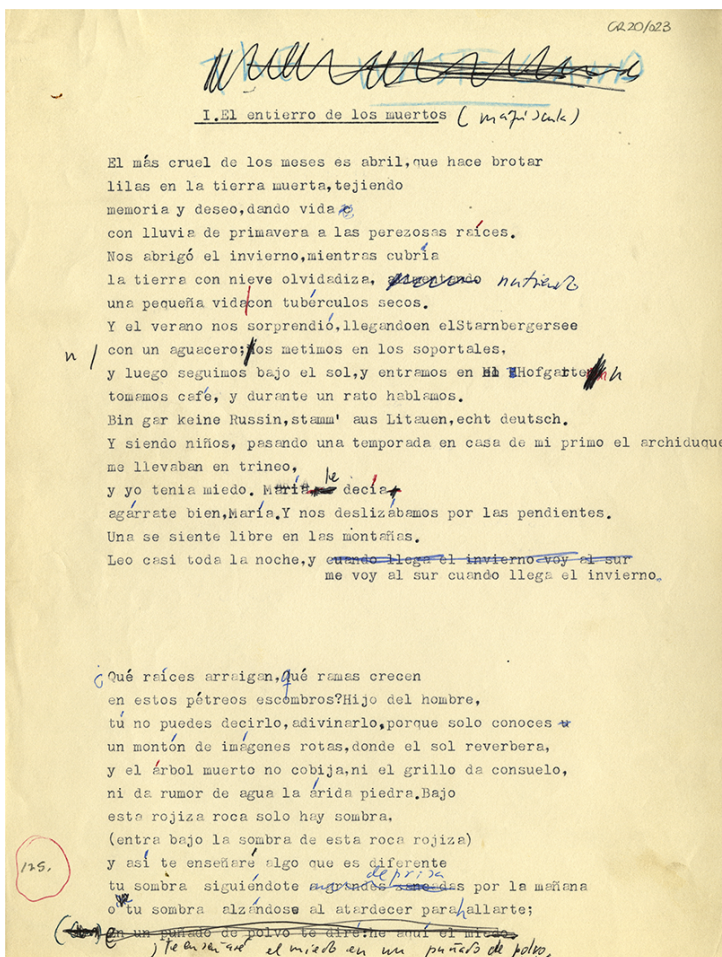


Figure 1: Document CR 20/023 from the Claudio Rodríguez collection, Jorge Guillén foundation archive (ante-text), page 1 of 3 (unknown date).

while the ante-text reads “ni el grillo da consuelo.” Likewise, “I will show you fear in a handful of dust” is translated as “te mostraré el miedo en un puñado de polvo” in the published version, while the ante-text reads “te enseñaré el miedo en un puñado de polvo.” These minor differences allow us to conclude that the ante-text provides a significantly advanced state of the translation while still subjected to final modifications closer to the moment of publication –possibly decades later– and that it basically served as the model for the published text. Unfortunately, the remaining parts of *The Waste Land* survive only as ante-texts and cannot be contrasted with published versions.



Concerning the translation style of these opening lines of *The Waste Land*, Rivero Taravillo (2018) affirms that they reflect Rodríguez's own poetic style by their combination of personal poetic choices of rhythm and meter. The predominance of the 11-syllable rhythm in longer lines that incorporate enjambment ("El más cruel de los meses es abril, / que hace brotar / lilas en la tierra muerta, tejiendo"), plus the concepts rendered in pairs ("memoria y deseo") and the use of parallel expressions ("y tomamos café, y durante un rato hablamos") sound Eliotian and Claudian at the same time, and can be compared with the following verses from *El vuelo de la celebración*, equally based on paired concepts and structures:

Llega otra vez noviembre, que es el mes que más quiero
porque sé su secreto, porque me da más vida...
("Noviembre")

Esta iluminación de la materia,
con su costumbre y con su armonía...
("Salvación del peligro")

Bearing in mind Rodríguez's original "divergence" from Eliot's poetry, a further matter of debate would be to what extent his translations of Eliot have influenced his own poetry. Barón (1996) highlights some Eliotian traits in three poems from Rodríguez's last book, *Casi una leyenda* (1991); namely, "Nocturno de la casa ida" ["Nocturne of the House Gone"], "Manuscrito de una respiración" ["Manuscript of a Breathing"] and "El robo" ["The Theft"]. According to Barón, Eliot's influence manifests itself merely as a slight accent ("un cierto deje") not found in Rodríguez's previous books (116). In turn, Miguel Casaseca (2014) has established a more definitive connection: he has studied the imprint of "The Hollow Men" in Rodríguez's "El robo." Based on the parallel analysis of stanzas in both poems, Casaseca confirms that Rodríguez appropriated the technique of the "dramatic monologue" from "The Hollow Men," which he incorporated into the structure of his poem. Both in Eliot's and in Rodríguez's verses, the main characters share identical features: "a tense tone, imprecations and commands to the split "you," run-on sentences, chaotic enumerations, questions and exclamations, a structure in which the discourse is undone in a state of almost systematic doubt" (iv).¹²

Inversely, the trace of Rodríguez's poetic lexical preferences is visible in some of his translations of Eliot. The ante-text 20/025 of "El sermón del fuego" ("The Fire Sermon") translates the Spenserian line "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song" as "Suave Támesis, fluye mansamente, hasta que acabe mi canto." The predominant choice for the translation of "song" in most of the Spanish versions of *The Waste Land* is "canción," although the option "canto" is also present. In Claudio Rodríguez's case,

¹² "[T]ono tenso, imprecaciones y órdenes al 'tú' desdoblado, oraciones suspendidas, enumeraciones caóticas, interrogaciones y exclamaciones, una estructura en la que el discurso se desdice en un estado de duda casi sistemático."

there can be no doubt about his reasons for using “canto,” since this is a crucial term in all his books and in his conception of poetry. Indeed, it is precisely in the book that he finished while he was focused on Eliot’s translations, *El vuelo de la celebración* (1976), that Rodríguez writes, in Hölderlinian fashion: “Miserable el momento si no es canto” (“Miserable is the moment, if it is not a song”). Confirming this idea, in a 1995 interview with Juan Carlos Suñén, Rodríguez asserts: “In the song I am a prisoner of words, but at the same time I am free in them” (Yubero 2005, 231).¹³ By “song,” Rodríguez conceives a whole system of breathing, paced by the human step—he “wrote” his first book, *Gift of Inebriation*, while going for long walks in the surroundings of his hometown—which conforms with the musicality of the poem. Spenser’s famous line, transplanted to *The Waste Land* to offer due contrast between the past harmony of the river and the gloom of the present, keeps in its “run softly” cadence the foundational roots of Rodríguez’s conception of “canto.”

The translation options for *The Waste Land* by Claudio Rodríguez can be added to the countless versions already published and analyzed by critics. At the same time, they join the tradition of Spanish major poets and translators of different generations who have fallen under the sway of T.S. Eliot as one of the most recognizable influences of the twentieth century. Moreover, from a textual perspective, Rodríguez’s corpus of Eliotian translations can only be considered as ante-texts, so their provisional status documents Eliot’s influence on the Spanish poet as well as the traces of Rodríguez’s own poetic style in his translations.

Claudio Rodríguez’s translations of *The Waste Land* and, for that matter, of the rest of Eliot’s poetry, deserve critical attention primarily for one unusual reason: that the perspective through which Claudio Rodríguez approaches this translation assignment—which has been termed as “conceptual divergence”—differs utterly from that of other Spanish poets. Rodríguez belongs to the lineage of the visionary poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Rilke, Hölderlin, and Rimbaud. In his poetry we do not find Eliot’s sorrowful Philomel, but Shelley’s invisible lark, or the wise owl that gives access to the ineffable during its long vigils (Carbajosa 2020). At the same time, Eliot’s impersonality, sifted through Juan Ramón Jiménez’s poetic principles, reflects the main ontological challenges present in Rodríguez’s poetry, which are refined in his final book, *Casi una leyenda* (1991), in which he simultaneously approaches innocence vs. knowledge, death vs. regeneration, the domestic vs. the mythic. As Rodríguez expressed in 1992 upon entering the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, in a speech entitled “Poesía como participación: Hacia Miguel Hernández,” “[t]he poet must give up his personality and, undoubtedly, his originality, even if he remains unaware of it” (2004, 134).¹⁴

Given Eliot’s influence on a series of generations of Spanish poets, the unique, intriguing nature of this literary relationship between two central poets of

¹³ “En el canto, yo estoy preso en las palabras, pero al mismo tiempo, en ellas, soy libre.”

¹⁴ “El poeta necesita, aunque no lo sepa, renunciar a su personalidad y, desde luego, a su originalidad.”



contemporary Western poetry is worth a closer look. To that end, the translation of *The Waste Land* by Claudio Rodríguez, a poet whose uniqueness within Spanish contemporary poetry remains unquestioned, seems an appropriate point of departure.

Reviews sent to the author: 30/05/2022
Revised paper accepted for publication: 01/07/2022



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