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REVIEWS

Yehudá Haleví. Ed. and trans. Juan Gil-Albert and Máximo José Kahn.
Madrid: Júcar, 1987. 172 pages.

The collection "Los poetas" published by Ediciones Júcar has made available to the general, literate, Spanish-reading public the life and works of poets of the widest possible range: from Rosalía de Castro and Góngora to Wordsworth, Mao Tse Tung, and Virgil. To this eclectic collection has recently been added a charming volume on Judah ha-Levi, one of the luminaries of twelfth-century Spanish culture: peripatetic doctor, philosopher, Jewish apologist, and poet widely admired in his own time. The considerable Introduction as well as the thirty-nine poems in translation are, however, both less than a scholarly enterprise and far more: the fruit of a labor of love and mediated poetic communing among three Spanish writers who share(d) an ambivalent relationship to a homeland, loved yet abandoned, and to a culture by which they were in decisive ways alienated and yet inextricably bound.

The two modern poets who rewrite Judah (*translate* is an even more inadequate term than usual in this case: the back cover says "transcreando"), and bring him and his turbulent but remarkable times to life in the Introduction, are themselves eclectic intellectuals and writers of the Generation of '27, Máximo José Kahn and Juan Gil-Albert. Beyond intellectual breadth, ideological commitment, and poetic sensibilities, however, the three share the shaping experience of diaspora, of longing for a homeland perhaps lost, perhaps merely alive in their poetry. Thus, the twentieth-century Sephardic Jew appointed by the Republic during the Civil War as ambassador to Greece, who later died in the diaspora of Buenos Aires, and the strongly engagé anti-Fascist writer who met Kahn in the Mexico that was others' land of exile, are peerless "transcreators" for us of the poetry of the twelfth-century Toledan who died at Jerusalem's doorstep.

Judah ha-Levi's poems seamlessly forge the traditions of love and sacred poetry. From a poem entitled "La santa ciudad":

Oh joyel, felicidad del mundo
 brotado de las manos de David!
 Por Ti se va consumiendo mi alma
 en la lejana tierra de Occidente . . .
 Deja que tus piedras estreche sobre mi corazón
 y la cubra de besos:
 el sabor de tu polvo
 me es tan dulce como la miel.

The modern Spanish rendering tenderly evokes the potentially duplicitous simplicity of the Hebrew as well as its rich intertextual ties with the range of traditions embodied in both the Song of Songs and in Provençal *canço* such as Jaudré Rudel's *amor de longh*, not to speak of the great tradition of mystical poetry in Spanish that would flourish in subsequent centuries.

Others might lament the lack of all critical apparatus, notes, bibliography, strict positivist erudition in the "historical" Introduction, and so forth. But this "extraño libro" as Gil-Albert dubs it in the opening line of the Preface, is a vibrant evocation of a remarkable man and his transcendent, still-living poetry for all those not likely to dig into the drier (and quite scarce) modern versions of this twelfth-century Spaniard who wrote in Hebrew but whose poetry resonates feelingly for his two twentieth-century mediators and for all those—and we ought to be numerous—who take advantage of their efforts.

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Translation and Poetization in the "Quaderna Vía." Study and Edition of the "Libro de miseria d'omne." Por Jane E. Connolly. Madison: The Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987. vii+249 páginas.

Aunque el *Libro de miseria de omne* había sido objeto de una impresión reciente (ed. P. Tesauero, Pisa, 1983), el magro y reducido estudio que la acompaña dejaba sin planteo no pocas cuestiones. De ahí, la importancia de la obra de Connolly, quien intenta ir al grano de los problemas esenciales en dos capítulos de valor muy desigual que siguen a una sucinta introducción, donde resume las opiniones anteriores sobre la obra (i-vii).

En el primero (1-53), se concentra en las relaciones del *Libro* con la fuente latina (*De Miseria conditionis humanae*, de Inocencio III), para asentar, frente a la sumisión completa defendida por Artigas y otros, la