

J. Isaiás Gómez López, ed. 2010: *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos. Estudio preliminar, traducción y notas*. Almería: U de Almería. 369 pp. ISBN 978-84-8240-955-9.

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The publication of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* signals a major change in the traditional approach not only to reading but also to teaching the literature of Modernism, at least in Spain. Now, more than a hundred years after Modernism started to crystallize, if we take as the time-reference Virginia Woolf's famous claim in her essay 'Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown' (Bowlby 1992: 69-87), we still think of Modernism in England as a fascinating catalogue of works by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, the authors generally included in undergraduate syllabi. Of course, the Auden circle, the Sitwell clan and even the modernist little magazine culture may come as appealing side orders to complete the banquet. However, Rebecca West, Katherine Mansfield, Nancy Cunard, Wyndham Lewis, Ford Madox Ford and Roy Campbell, to quote a very few relevant names, do not ever get a tenth of the space and time devoted to this canon when, in fact, they are the essential pieces with which to complete an intricate jigsaw whose main figures cannot be fully understood without their presence. The consolidation of a Modernist canon from an early moment, often established by contemporary critics and friends of those who were 'canonised', has certainly been a problem for its opening up to different voices. Somehow, the famous literary family tree, Fry-Woolf-Bell-Strachey-Grant, and those 'relatives' attached to it, from Eliot, Spender and Coward to Carrington, Sackville-West and Sitwell, have overshadowed those who were equally remarkable writers.

Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell (1901-1957), born in the Natal District of South Africa, soon became an eccentric figure in British intellectual circles, but, like his close friend Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), he participated in both anthologies and informal meetings. Many years later, in *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (1979), Henry Regnery remembered how T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and Roy Campbell had been the key figures to change the literary scenario in London. And yet, the two latter have remained outcasts, not because of a lack of talent but due to their ideological and character flaws. Over decades, scholars such as David Wright (1961), Rowland Smith (1973), John Povey (1977), Peter Alexander (1989) and Joseph Pearce (2001; 2004) have published a number of studies mostly based on the traditional approach of 'life and work', but Campbell's work, it must be admitted, has not enjoyed many followers in the academic world. In fact, a search in the British Library Integrated Catalogue reveals

only two Ph.D. dissertations. The fact that they were finished in 1977 (P. F. Alexander) and 1982 (Geoffrey Laurence Haresnape) demonstrates that the South African poet has not been a favourite subject for scholarly research in many years. In Spain, as far back as 1958, poet and translator Aquilino Duque published *Poemas de Roy Campbell* in the distinguished series Adonais, printed by Rialp, but his edition has been out of print for some time. Apart from these translations into Spanish, which certainly do justice to Campbell's poems, the only contribution to the field, *España y la guerra de 1936 en la poesía de Roy Campbell*, was published in 1959 by Esteban Pujals Fontrodona. In 1957, the year Roy Campbell died, Pujals had presented in King's College (University of London) his second thesis, *Spain and Spanish Themes in Modern English Poetry*, Campbell being one of the main authors included in his study.

Now, more than fifty years later, Gómez López's bilingual compilation manages to demonstrate that the literary production of some of these lesser known figures of Modernism was rich, profuse, and fruitful. One of the main virtues of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* is, as its Spanish title indicates, a balanced selection of poems, chosen from nine of Campbell's books, which results in the outstanding figure of almost one hundred pieces printed in English, each with its Spanish translation on the facing page. As in *Roy Campbell. Selected Poems* (2001) by Joseph Pearce, Gómez López has organized his selection in chronological order, which helps the reader to follow not only the poet's changes in poetical moods and patterns but also in his trips to South Africa and around Europe, particularly during the inspirational periods he spent in France, Spain and Portugal. This collection is, therefore, comprehensive and —given the recent history of absences described— well timed.

Campbell's right-wing ideology and his support of Franco are responsible for the Spanish readership's general lack of acquaintance with his work. Gómez López's suitably developed 'estudio preliminar' or introduction (35-84) chaperons the reader, unfolding a well-documented narrative. Given the significance of Spanish culture in Roy Campbell's work, this compilation has an added value for those readers interested in the poet's interpretations of the Spanish mental and physical landscape. Big cities such as Barcelona, but also smaller cities like, for instance, Toledo, where Campbell met Laurie Lee, fascinated the poet, and the evidence of his constant attraction to the country can be easily traced in his poems. The compiler's choice of six poems from *Talking Bronco* (1946), four of them related to a Spanish subject, reflects this. From 'San Juan de la Cruz' to 'On the Martyrdom of F. G. Lorca', Campbell's unconditional love for Spain is developed both through his poems and his generosity towards Spanish culture. As a consequence of the hostile atmosphere prior the Spanish Civil War, the Carmelites of Toledo gave Campbell the manuscripts of St. John of the Cross, which he preserved on their behalf. As they had tragically sensed, seventeen brothers were killed and their suffering is bitterly portrayed in the poem 'The Carmelites of Toledo'. When the Popular Front killed the monks, they searched Campbell's house but were unable to find the manuscripts, which he had hidden in a truck and fortunately managed to keep safe. When the Campbell family fled Spain,

however, they were not so lucky and had to leave everything behind. The poet's life of flight ended in 1957, when he died in a car accident in Portugal.

Campbell's life was as intense as his poetic works. The first book Gómez López has chosen for *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* is *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924), using a fragment starting from the second paragraph of part II consisting of four stanzas. This was Campbell's first published book, and was very well-received (it was published simultaneously in England and in the United States). In this work, Campbell's verse retains much of the flavour of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, with powerful descriptions of a utopian world and biblical poetic imagery:

The Ark is launched: cupped by the streaming breeze,
The stiff sails tug the long reluctant keel,
And Noah, spattered by the rising seas,
Stands with his great fist fastened to the Wheel.
Like driven clouds, the waves were rustling by
Feathered and fanned across their liquid sky,
And, like those waves, the clouds in silver bars
Creamed on the scattered shingle of the stars. (90)

*El Arca ha sido botada; impulsada por la llorosa brisa
las tiasas velas tiran de la reticente quilla,
y Noé, salpicado de la creciente mar,
con su gran puño permanece al gran timón pegado.
Como nubes pilotadas, las olas iban susurrando,
plumadas y aventadas por su líquido cielo,
y, como aquellas olas, las nubes en lingotes de plata
adornando los dispersos guijarros de las estrellas. (91)*

French Symbolism is also palpable in the lines of this first book, however “bad Rimbaud” Campbell considered them later on. The second book in this compilation is *The Wayzgoose* (1928), from which Gómez López has translated a section of its rhyming couplets. Its title, a word of unknown origin, describes the annual summer dinner that master printers gave their employees, typically around St Bartholomew's Day (24 August). But in this satirical long poem, Campbell brings the reader face to face with racism in Africa and the lack of African representation in the world: “My words, O Durban, round the World are blown/ Where I, alone, of all your sons are known”; “Mis palabras, ¡oh! Durban, por el Mundo vuelan/ donde yo, solo, de todos tus hijos soy conocido” (96-97). *Adamastor* (1930) is the third book in order of appearance, a work that embodies Campbell's identity dilemma. Poems about the African peoples (‘The Zulu Girl’ and ‘A Veld Eclogue: The Pioneers’, the latter not included in this collection), exotic animals (‘The Zebras’ and ‘To a Pet Cobra’) and English high society (‘Home

Thoughts in Bloomsbury’) draw both a mental and physical map of Campbell’s comings and goings.

The year *Adamastor* was published Lewis had cast Campbell in the amusing role of Zulu Blades in his polemical novel *The Apes of God* (1930), a fierce satire on the London literati, “intellectuals without intellect” (17), in the words of the South African poet in *The Georgiad*. Campbell wrote a review praising this caustic novel, for publication in *The New Statesman*, but it was rejected. Following this, the two friends launched *Satire and Fiction*, the first issue in the series of *Enemy Pamphlets*, which never went beyond number 1 and included a prologue, ‘The History of a Rejected Review’, by Campbell. Actually, *The Georgiad* (1931), a fragment of which Gómez López has chosen as the fourth section of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos*, can be read as a verse sequel to *The Apes of God*. Both caused uproar in British intellectual circles but a deadly silence among those who were so harshly attacked. Campbell vividly invoked their attitudes in various fragments of *The Georgiad* (not included in this bilingual edition): “For vainly may a Lewis sweat his brains, / The masterpiece in darkness still remains” (14), and “when Lewis writes, suppresses the reviews” (54). This is, in fact, what happened to the proofs of *Wyndham Lewis*, a book by Roy Campbell scheduled to appear in 1932 in the Dolphin Books series published by Chatto and Windus. Withdrawn from publication in June 1932 (page proofs were printed in April 1932), the book was lost for decades; until the 1980s there was no record of a single surviving copy and the first edition was only published in 1985, edited by Jeffrey Meyers.

The close friendship between Roy Campbell and Wyndham Lewis and its significance in the most combative section of Modernism in the British Isles are, sadly, underrepresented in the introduction to this edition. Gómez López concentrates on Campbell’s hatred towards the Bloomsbury Group, basing the roots of his intense loathing on the sexual relationship between the poet’s wife, Mary, and Vita Sackville-West. His narration of facts is consistent and well documented regarding the Nicholsons, but *The Georgiad* again speaks for itself: “How Nicholson who in his weekly crack / . . . At the mere thought of Lewis goes quite blue” (54). As can be read in Lewis’s first autobiography, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), beyond Mary’s relationship with Vita, both writers had despised most personalities from the Bloomsbury Group for a good number of years.

Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos also includes a sound selection of poems from *Flowering Reeds* (1933) and *Mithraic Emblems* (1936), such as ‘Toledo (July, 1936)’, ‘After the Riots, Toledo, March, 1936’, ‘Poems for Spain’, ‘To my Daughters in the Bullring’ and ‘The Alcazar Mined’. Very personal interpretations of the Spanish situation are exemplified by ‘Christ in Uniform’ and ‘To all Fascists and Communists from a Vaquero’, which caused a great scandal amongst English left-wing writers. *Flowering Rifle* (1939), the book of poems where Campbell’s radical right-wing ideology is confirmed, is present in this collection through the translation of fragments from parts one and four. His support to Franco was undoubtedly a source of disgust. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that various conservative, right-wing writers of the time have all been judged under

the same light whereas differences among them were in fact substantial. For instance, contrary to Pound, both Lewis and Campbell explicitly expressed their hatred of Hitler in both written and oral forms before the Second World War started; both also abhorred Communism. Lewis donated a picture for the Spanish Republican cause and wrote a book in 1939, *The Hitler Cult*, to apologise for what he had written in the 1930s; Campbell enlisted in the Second World War against Germany. Thus, the historical situation is too complex to be reduced to labels. While it is a fact that both writers were reactionaries (Campbell was anti-Semitic, and both scorned homosexuals), this should not prevent accurate editing and documenting of their works for present and future reading and study.

From the twenty-nine poems contained in *Talking Bronco* (1946) Gómez López has selected six: 'The Clock in Spain', 'San Juan de la Cruz', 'On the Martyrdom of F. García Lorca', 'The Carmelites of Toledo', 'Snapshot of Nairobi' and 'Luis de Camões'. These poems are directly related to Campbell's work as a translator (he also translated Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*). And, as a special feature, Campbell also included his translation of 'En una noche oscura', by St. John of the Cross, in this volume. 'Talking Bronco', from the homonymous book, contains some of the most intense lines written by Campbell, such as the opening couplet of the poem: "In human history, and rightly so,/ The Final Word is with the knockout blow". The final section of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* contains three poems from *The Collected Poems of Roy Campbell II* (1957), 'La Mancha in Wartime', 'Ballad of Don Juan Tenorio' and 'Félibre', a poem dedicated to French poet Frédéric Mistral (1843-1914), who wrote his poetry in Occitan.

As far as the editing of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* is concerned, a proof-reader would have spotted some minor errata. The most important of them are only noticeable because they are related to the titles of books, such as *The Flaming Terrapin*, printed in Spanish with two different translations throughout the book (*La tortuga de mar en llamas* and *La tortuga de mar llameante*), and *Talking Bronco* (*Hablando bronco*, *Hablando blanco* and "hablante bronco"). The title of this later book, which rather translates as "caballo salvaje parlante", has special significance since, as Roy Campbell himself explained in a section called 'Glossary for Civilians', included in the final pages in the Faber and Faber edition, it was an "epithet used to describe the author by a leading poet of the Rear" (1946: 91). Gómez López traces the epithet to Stephen Spender's callous criticism of his previous book, *Flowering Rifle* (1938), from which Campbell took the insult to transform it into the title of his 1946 book.

The publication of *Roy Campbell. Poemas escogidos* is as provocative as it is necessary, an essential work in Spanish that gives an inclusive picture of Modernism in England but also in the various countries where Campbell lived. An author absent in Andrew Sanders's *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (1994) — a much used textbook in Spanish universities — as well as from many libraries and collections, Campbell is well presented in Gómez López's comprehensive introduction, which comforts the unacquainted reader while broadening lesser-known aspects of Campbell's life and literary experiences. This edition also contains a bilingual prologue by Terry Risk, one of Campbell's American

editors. Endnotes are illustrative and a concise bibliography is included. It is not difficult to appreciate Gómez López's painstaking work in introducing through his own compilation an unfamiliar author to the Spanish readership. It is indeed a meritorious effort.

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