



# Where Roy Campbell stands

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Although critical interest in Roy Campbell's work remains lively and his place in South African literary history seems secure, he is not a vital presence in the new South Africa; his work has become peripheral to metropolitan English literature, a small manifestation of a more general shift in global culture. Where then does Roy Campbell stand? Is there a new context for his work? In a review of a range of criticism from the first decade of the 21st century, this article finds that Roy Campbell's work can be rewardingly read in the context of the Graeco-Roman classical inheritance that he embraced and the Romance culture in which he settled. This recognition has both enriched the resonance of Campbell's poetry and aligned him with other artists who have been re-absorbed into Europe as the colonial appropriation of Africa recedes.

**Waar staan Roy Campbell?** Al bly kritiese belangstelling in die werk van Roy Campbell nog steeds lewendig en sy posisie in die Suid-Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis veilig, is hy nie 'n lewende aanwesigheid in die nuwe Suid-Afrika nie. Sy werk staan op die periferie van die metropolitaanse Engelse letterkunde, 'n klein voorbeeld van 'n meer algemene verskuiwing in wêreldkultuur. Waar staan Roy Campbell dan nou? Is daar 'n nuwe konteks vir sy werk? In 'n oorsig van 'n keuse uit die kritiek van die eerste dekade van die 21ste eeu, bevind die outeur dat Roy Campbell se werk met vrug gelees kan word in die konteks van die Grieks-Roomse klassieke erfenis wat hy omhels het en die Romaanse kultuur waarin hy hom gevestig het. Hierdie erkenning verryk die weerklank van Campbell se poësie en plaas hom in die geledere van ander kunstenaars wat weer onder die Europese dak ingebring is namate die koloniale toe-eiening van Afrika verbygaan.

## Introduction

Since 1994 there has been a shift in the situation of Roy Campbell. Accepting him as a modernist with H.I.E. Dhloomo and N.P. van Wyk Louw, *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* does not question his centrality (Voss 2012). But elsewhere there has been on the one hand a marginalisation, a recognition that he may not be central to the *new* South Africa, just as he has been sidelined in the English literary metropole (van Schalkwyk 2007); on the other hand, there is a recognition (or re-acknowledgement) that Campbell's work is deeply implicated in, perhaps determined by, the continuing binaries of economics, race and gender (Bethlehem 2006). This article, reviewing some of the past decade's work on Campbell, will argue that whilst he remains a South African poet, his colonial imagination has come to terms with a new global sense of European culture.

## In the family

The memoirs of Campbell's daughters contribute to the range of critical and interpretive responses. For those with interests in literature, the South African diaspora or the pathology of the family, these accounts of lives lived through trying times offer rewarding reading. Roy Campbell died in Portugal in 1957. By 1970, Tessa, his younger daughter, still living in Sintra, was working on her memoirs. In about 1985 a final version, Tessa's only copy, was sent to a London publisher. Peter Alexander (1982) quotes from this version of Tessa's memoir in his biography of Campbell. It was lost and she had to begin again from scratch. The next year the memoirs of Anna, Tessa's elder sister, were published by Typographeum (of Francetown, New Hampshire) in an edition of only 150 copies. In 2006 Michael Hanke included a chapter ('Flight from Toledo') of Tessa's memoir in *Campbell and the Romance Countries* (Hanke 2006:143–151). Now, in what seems the happy outcome of a complicated process, Judith Lütge Coullie (2011) has edited the sisters' memoirs side by side. This is much more than an academic exercise. Professor Coullie is an authority on southern African life writing, she has written about the poet's own autobiographies and jointly edited a CD of Campbell material and, as she acknowledges, in the course of preparing this edition she

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became a friend of Tessa Campbell, who died in December 2006, having survived her sister by four years. The editor's apparatus is helpful and she writes sympathetically of these complex testimonials, which offer recuperative *apologiae* for the writers' parents but succeed also in telling the moving story of sometimes sad and difficult individual lives in an often disorderly family.<sup>1</sup> *Remembering Roy Campbell* joins a number of other interventions which work together to shift our perspective on the poet. For all these reasons the book is to be welcomed.

Anna's memoir, which opens *Remembering Roy Campbell* (see Coullie 2011), fulfils the promise of its subtitle: *Poetic Justice*. Her preface begins with Roy's death, makes something of the fact that he died on Shakespeare's reputed birthday, recalls Campbell's 'lonely fight against Marxism' (in a sense these are both Cold War documents), and takes comfort from the fact that he died 'in a state of grace' and that Sintra would not be his last resting place, since 'the South Africans want their greatest poet to be buried in what was ... the part of this planet that he loved most'. As the editor says, this reinterment is 'unlikely to be a priority in the new South Africa', and the tension reveals something about the current status of Campbell as a poet and about the relocation of his achievement by recent criticism and scholarship. Tessa's story, whose title *In the Shadow of a Poet* suggests the complexities of the father-daughter relationship, opens more conventionally with her answer to the question of where she was born, either in north Wales or in a stable. The detail also glances at the sisters' unconventional upbringing and at Tessa's slightly mystical self-image (like her mother and her son she experienced a life-changing vision in childhood), as against Anna's more forthright down-to-earth persona. The narratives continue to develop these two contrasting, loving personalities, each with a distinct, complementary perspective on their flamboyant parents and the wayward life they gave their children.

Both daughters write enthusiastically of Mary and Roy, whose courtship and marriage are romantically described, especially by Anna ('he saw before him the incarnation of his dreams'), and their life-long devotion, despite the acknowledged extra-marital liaisons – Mary's relationship with Vita Sackville-West is described by Tessa as both 'extraordinary friendship' and 'affair' – is not ascribed only to the conversion to Catholicism. Mary emerges as the more forceful and decisive partner, although her difficulties are acknowledged. Anna quotes Philip Heseltine and Rob Lyle (Anna's second husband) on the poet's 'deeply intellectual imagination', defends *The Georgiad* as aimed to destroy the 'racket' of Bloomsbury's subversive domination of the English literary scene, and finds support for her judgment of her father as democratic and courageous in Uys Krige and Desmond McCarthy, but regrets his imitation of Wyndham Lewis's 'cynical contempt for some people'. Tessa writes more graphically of the poet's alcoholism, but

sympathetically ('His sense of guilt came from his drinking'), and quotes Uys Krige on his 'common touch'. In one chapter, 'Dreamer or Realist?', Tessa offers a summary defence of her father, which is perhaps best epitomised in the sentence: 'There were always two sides to his way of thinking'. At moments in the narrative we seem to see Campbell clearly, in his 'fundamental loneliness' (Krige, quoted by Anna) or 'a natural simplicity in his possessions and habits' (Tessa).

Recalling their 'nomadic existence', Anna writes that 'it was hard to hold on to essentials' and the two memoirs together give a lively, poignant picture of this life, in which the daughters sometimes suffered 'an excess of freedom' and lived 'like pagans' until the conversion (Anna). In Provence, Tessa describes 'a pantheistic existence', but a critical moment comes when the flight from Toledo makes the family 'refugees'. The sudden shifts in the Campbells' life made for many such moments and the daughters did suffer, each in her own way. During World War II Anna seems to have almost collapsed physically, to have gone through depression and contemplated suicide, whilst Tessa succumbed to anorexia nervosa which led to alienation and time in an asylum, and attempted suicide. Peter Alexander (1982:212) writes that 'Campbell's lifelong fear of going mad himself also made him inclined to distance himself from Tessa'.

Both daughters are ready to be frankly critical of their parents. Anna's love of and loyalty to her mother were unwavering, but Mary was nonetheless 'an unusually unworried sort of parent ... a past master at relegating her duties to others and making you feel guilty into the bargain'. The parents would go off alone. At Long Barn on one occasion Tessa was 'outraged at such neglect'. In Provence the girls would be left with neighbouring peasant families. Mary's high-handed and inconsistent intervention meant that 'every time we were just becoming independent, she would interfere and muddle us all up again'. Anna's second marriage to Rob Lyle seems to have liberated her, but Tessa remained dependent on Mary, who threatened to disinherit her if she followed her husband to Germany: 'My mother should never have done that. No'.

There is more to these intra-familial relationships than psychology. Tessa writes that her parents 'came from the same background socially'. Walter Garman, Mary's father, a north-country doctor:

employed a lady's maid, a kitchen maid, a housemaid, a scullery maid, a chauffeur, a butler, a cook, a gardener and a housekeeper, Mrs. Fowl, who used to do the shopping every day. After the children were born, the staff expanded to include a nursery maid, Ada Newbould, and a governess, Miss Thomas. (Connolly 2004:6)

Miss Elizabeth Thomas, known as Tony, 'was always coming to the rescue' in the Campbells' lives, 'she was always on hand at moments of crisis'. In Musgrave Road and elsewhere in Durban, Campbell grew up in a household of Zulu servants and as a child 'was cared for by a devoted Zulu nurse, Catherine Mngadi' (Alexander 1982:5).<sup>2</sup> Both Mary

1.The book has been indifferently proofread. Although published in Hamden, Connecticut, my copy is marked 'Printed in Australia': on demand, I believe, so perhaps corrections can still be made within this edition.

2.The servants in *The Mamba's Precipice*, which Anna calls 'a very revealing piece of autobiography', include Zulu coachmen, nurses and caretakers, Indian cooks and a Mauritian gilly.



and Roy, then, grew up as members of the servant-employing class, and as soon as they were able they sought, even in hard financial times, often thanks to 'the money from South Africa', to replicate such households in their own, and servants are a constant presence in the daughters' reminiscences. Anna recalls 'our new *bonne* ... our latest governess ... our maids ... our groom Rodrigo ... my private maid Dolores ... the maids'. In South Africa the girls were tended by Black nurses. Mary told Anna that 'the picturesqueness of the Africans – like your nanny, for instance – made the Whites pale into insignificance', a comment that suggests something about a sense of both race and class. Soon after the family settled in Altea in early 1934, Tessa writes, 'It was not long before we got a maid to help, and everything fell into place'. The class-consciousness this suggests comes out more strongly in Anna, who writes that in the course of the family's flight from Spain, 'It was awful to be loose again among the *canaille*'. Ironically Anna's first husband was a Spanish nobleman, the Viscount Jaime Cavero de Carondelet, whilst Tessa married Ignatius Custudio, a miner's son.

The sisters' reminiscences carry a strong sense of their distinctive culture, not surprising given the accomplishments of the parents. They speak 'three different languages'. Apart from their father's works and those he translated, Anna refers easily to Dostoevsky, the Comtesse de Ségur, Bulgakow, Hugo and Lamartine; Tessa to Goethe, Mistral and Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>3</sup> In Martigues, Tessa writes, 'After a few years we had deep roots there. As a child of eight I had already felt that my life was there'. In 1938 Campbell yearned 'to go back home to Toledo, where we belonged'. In post-war London, at the nadir of her suffering, asked by a Polish refugee doctor, 'What do you most want in the world?' Tessa replied that she 'wanted to go to a sunny, Latin country'. Eventually the family settled in Portugal, where they are all buried. This Campbell culture (a wayward reconciliation of pagan and Christian) is perhaps summed up in the name of the Campbells' Pyrenean mountain dog, Sarah. Tessa recalls that she was named by Mary 'after the Sarah of the Bible', whilst in Anna's account, the dog 'was entirely black, hence her name'. The Black Sarah is the patron saint of gypsies whose shrine in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, capital of the Camargue, is a site of pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup>

The two daughters face up to the fraught question of their father's politics, but reluctantly. Anna blames Wyndham Lewis for getting 'Roy interested in politics, a soul-destroying business'. Tessa writes: 'It is a shame to bring Fascism and Communism so often into this book'. The daughters' defence rests largely on the argument that their father's political allegiance, which they seem to share, was that of a 'militant anti-Marxist', for whom, in Spain as elsewhere, 'the only

consistent strife, the only sustained fight, was between Christianity and atheism'. (Tess). Although there is no wishing away some of the poet's reactionary utterances, his political consciousness was less systematic than his daughters' defence suggests: 'Campbell had no theoretical political views, he had only personal likes and dislikes' (Alexander 1982:144). The poet's allegiances of family, neighbourhood, class and religion shifted throughout his life, and, as Wyndham Lewis wrote, 'such politics as go with these predilections and antipathies he has, but it would be difficult to give them a name. He certainly is neither a fascist nor a communist' (quoted by Anna, p. 264). Campbell's Francoism, which seems to have weakened after the publication of *Flowering Rifle* in 1939 (Campbell 1939), was religiously motivated, although none the less political for that. In another revealing glimpse, reported to Peter Alexander (1982:213) by Rob Lyle, Campbell confessed: 'I don't believe in anything. At heart I'm a complete anarchist. ... I believe in comradeship and in standing shoulder-to-shoulder with my fellow-men'. Although he may be using 'anarchist' in a general rather than a programmatically political sense, the term does seem to suit aspects of his persona: his local loyalties<sup>5</sup>, his antipathy to the 'great, blind, inhuman, mechanism, the State' (Campbell 1988a:93), his ideal of self-supporting work.<sup>6</sup>

## A European revaluation

For an Anglophone reader Michael Hanke's (2003) *Roy Campbell, ein Solitär: Interpretationen seiner Versdichtung* (Roy Campbell, a solitary: interpretations of his poetry<sup>7</sup>) gives a glimpse of what seems to be an ongoing, if low-key debate on Campbell in German scholarship. Although Campbell's verse was taken up in three anthologies in the 1960s and 1970s, Hanke judges that some 'honest literary scholars are all exerting themselves to suppress interest' in Campbell. This may be a post-World War II reaction to the poet's reputed fascism, which Hanke himself addresses, and corresponds to other judgements of the poet's standing, like Phil van Schalkwyk's (2007:154) account of how Campbell has 'fallen out of favor'. This book is a substantial revaluation of a rewarding poet. Hanke (2003:20) reads the poems 'as biographies *en miniature*', whose 'motivational basis and substance' tend to disappear in the legends (his own and others') of his life, and the caricatures of his personality.

Hanke's (2003) review of Campbell criticism makes possible the recognition of the achievement of Rowland Smith's monograph of 1972, and Peter Alexander's biography of

5. Whilst South Africa may have remained Campbell's 'patria' (fatherland), Spain became his 'madre patria' [motherland] and 'patria adoptiva' [adoptive country], as Toledo was his 'patria chica' [home town].

6. I know of no evidence that Campbell read Kropotkin (1898:39, 41, 43), but the anarchist's views may at times have appealed to the poet: 'J'arrive maintenant au principe fundamental de l'anarchie – la négation de l'Etat, de la loi et de toute autorité. ... L'ex-serf tombe dans la servitude économique pour s'affranchir de la servitude personnelle ... la vie économique d'une nation ... est dirigée par les efforts spontanés des millions d'êtres qui trouvent, inventent, appliquent les forces de la nature à la production.' [I come now to the fundamental principle of anarchism – negation of the state, of law and of all authority. ... The ex-serf falls into economic servitude in order to throw off the yoke of personal servitude ... the economic life of a nation ... is directed by the spontaneous efforts of millions of beings who find, invent, apply the forces of nature to production.] (author's own translation).

7. 'Solitär' may carry implications of brilliance, as in the diamond.

3. Anna's idiom is perhaps the more marked. She uses World War I terms such as 'blacklist' [of deaths reported in the press], and 'comforters' (songs like 'Pack up your troubles'); French terms like 'poutarque' [a Martigues dish made of tuna roe] and 'horripilant' [exasperating], the latter of the Dawn Brigades who killed 16 000 people during the first month of the Spanish Civil War, a story which the 'salon communists' would not believe.

4. Sarah was the servant (or companion) of the three Marys, who came ashore at the mouth of the Rhône after a miraculous voyage from the Holy Land and for whom the little town is named (Garrett 2006:86). Roy Campbell refers to Sarah in *Taurine Provence* (Campbell 1988a:53).





1982. Much of the other high-profile work on Campbell is unreliable, as is much of Campbell's own 'autobiography', so that Hanke's interpretations which are grounded in a reading of the poet's life must deal with both the Campbell legend and the establishment view (handed down from Bloomsbury) of 'that fascist'. Like the daughters' memoirs this book is partly an *apologia* for the life, but more substantially a valiant answer, in the face of often dismissive judgements, in which Hanke sees a contrast between the views of Campbell's poet colleagues and those of literary scholars, to his own question about the poet: 'Generally, is it worth the trouble to commit oneself to a reconsideration of his works?' (p. 11). Hanke's positive response begins with the view that 'Campbell occupies a special place in the lyric poetry of the 20th century' (p. 23), and it is on the lyric poetry, especially the sonnets, that he concentrates, although most of Chapter 4 ('Poems of the Spanish Civil War') is devoted to *Flowering Rifle* (see Campbell 1939). Campbell 'seldom wrote without humour and self-irony' and often recklessly, but Hanke argues that 'only in one point is he in earnest: where it concerns his philosophical position, his relationship with religion and politics' (p. 25).

In Hanke's account five key experiences stamped Campbell's life and his poetry and contributed to his status as outsider. The *Voorslag* crisis induced both an arrogant awareness of (or claim to) his own ability, already attested to by the success of *The Flaming Terrapin*, and a melancholy acceptance that his native land had given up on him. The marriage crisis undermined the poet's familial confidence and isolated him from the English literary establishment. The conversion to Catholicism healed the marital wounds and, from deeply experienced conviction (without sin or guilt) evoked by his love for Mary, or by his sense that the Spain of his imagination was his new earthly and spiritual home, gave him a commitment that lasted for the rest of his life. The Spanish Civil War, briefly perhaps, extended this commitment to the political, although it hardly developed his political consciousness, and his Francoism, unjustly in the view of many, branded him a fascist. In political and social terms it isolated him further, from both right and left. World War II, the last stage in the life of this solitary, subjected him to the rigours of army discipline, and to isolation from his wife and daughters, who had their own hardships to face; at the same time it initiated a rapprochement with the English literary establishment, although it was in Spanish and South African academic circles that he was more honourably recognised.

To each period professor Hanke devotes a chapter in which he discusses representative poems: his readings are always illuminating and sometimes provocative. Under the heading 'Nature and Society in the South African lyric', which aptly sums up the *Voorslag* years, he discusses particularly 'The Zebras' and 'The Serf', the latter as *paysage moralisé*. More surprising is his discussion of three poems of Provence, in a chapter on Campbell's battle with Bloomsbury, and its consequences. Hanke shows that 'Canidia and Priapus', a sonnet derived from Horace (first published amongst the 'Early Poems' in 1957), 'The Road to Arles' (from *Flowering*

*Reeds* 1933) and 'The Palm' (from *Adamastor* 1930) are all responses to Mary's affair with Vita Sackville-West, in which Campbell was able to transmute, through humour or the discipline of art, his personal suffering. Hanke begins his treatment here with a discussion of modernist obscurity, but the reader needs no access to Campbell's personal marital history to be touched by the power of these poems. Their combination of classical inspiration (Horace, the myth of Diana and Actaeon) and a modernist French example (Valéry) was to become characteristic. Chapter 3 deals with two poems from the period between the Campbells' conversion and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, covering the pastoral and religious motifs characteristic of this brief moment of the poet's life. 'After the Horse Fair' evokes the idealised pastoral and hierarchical Spain to which Campbell gave his allegiance, a country of his imagination, according to Mayta Gómez (2007), although the poet's image carries its own conviction'. 'The Fight', derived from the hint of an aerial dogfight in Apollinaire's 'Les Collines' (1918), is an allegory of Campbell's conversion, which he later projected as his prophecy of the outcome of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>8</sup>

The next chapter offers the sonnet 'Toledo, July 1936' and *Flowering Rifle* (Campbell 1939) as representative of Campbell's Civil War poems. The sonnet may anticipate how Campbell's sympathies would fall, but it shows no explicit political alignment, no denunciation or accusation. Its commitment is spiritual, to what Toledo (and Athens, and Rome) stand for: even if all three are threatened with destruction, they will burn as 'sacred cities of the mind' and *in* the mind. The analysis of Campbell's satirical epic, his 'Poem from the Battlefield of Spain', virtually ignored like almost everything Campbell wrote after *Adamastor*, is Hanke's riskiest moment. He gives a careful account of the difficult political context of the outbreak and initial conduct of the war. Campbell was not completely alone in his support of Franco, although almost isolated by the English-speaking world, and his Manichaeic opposition of good and evil, life and death, Christianity and atheism, Nationalist and Republican, was echoed by religious and other leaders in the Europe of the time.<sup>9</sup> In the course of his *apologia*, Hanke defends both Campbell and Franco against the charge of fascism, although as regards Franco this may be disingenuous and depends on pedantic definition. Campbell's sympathies turned *fascistic*, perhaps under the influence of Lewis himself, with the writing of *Wyndham Lewis* (Campbell 1988a) in 1932:

The illusion of personal 'freedom' and 'independence' exists no more in the liberal-democratic state than it does under the

8. In an earlier work, 'Zone' from *Alcools* (1911), Apollinaire (1965) had identified Christ as an aeroplane:

C'est le Christ qui monte au ciel mieux que les aviateurs  
Il détient le record du monde pour la hauteur  
Pupille Christ de l'oeil  
Vingtième pupille des siècles il sait y faire  
Et changé en oiseau ce siècle comme Jésus monte dans l'air  
[Christ who flies higher than the aviators  
And holds the world's record  
Christ pupil of the eye  
Twentieth pupil of the centuries he knows his business  
And changed to a bird this century ascends like Jesus] (translation: Anne Hyde Greet, p. 4)

9. I rely on Helen Graham (2005) for an overall sense of the conduct of the War. She argues that the military rebellion initiated the violence and dictated 'a manichean narrative of the Civil War' (p. 133) and its apocalyptic rhetoric.



perfectly open dictatorial rule of Leninism or fascism. ... The dictatorial rule of a vigorous and intelligent minority is the only possible answer to the ever-growing chaos consequent upon liberal-democratic reform. (p. 25)<sup>10</sup>

The intellect of the white man, perhaps the finest and most victorious force that the world has seen. (p. 28)

The racial solution indicated in Hitlerism is not entirely to be despised (if not necessarily to be swallowed whole). (p. 29)

But Campbell split from Lewis, and apparently from fascism, with the outbreak of war in 1939. Nonetheless, it is at least arguable that in backing Franco rather than the Second Republic, Campbell chose the ethically inferior cause. Some English writers, George Orwell and Graham Greene among them, although not pro-Franco as Campbell was, briefly, were more circumspect than Campbell's explicit opponents, Auden, Day-Lewis, MacNeice, Spender and MacDiarmuid, who managed to excuse or blink at the 'necessity' of violence.

*Flowering Rifle* (see Campbell 1939) was published by Longman Green in 1939, having been rejected by T.S. Eliot for Faber. Hanke identifies the form of *Flowering Rifle* (in its final version) as 'a sequence of variations on a dual satirical theme (the opposition of good and evil, wisdom and folly etc.)' (p. 170): the apocalyptic conflict and the simplifications of satire ('man' vs. 'wowser') are licensed because, for Campbell, 'what is at stake is an a-temporal conflict transcending the Spanish war' (p. 177). For the most part, the *sequence* of variations does not seem to be significant (in which respect there is a strong argument for the influence and example of Lucan's *Pharsalia*), but Hanke focuses on a passage from the last book of the poem, a characteristic moment of self-reflection, in which Campbell revisits the Blakean warning that we become what we hate:

And if his soul into the flesh could strike,  
Each in the other conjures up his like.  
...  
And one by hate, the other by disgust  
So unified, by smoke so densely screened,  
You scarce can tell the angel from the fiend. (Campbell 1985:586, vv. 115–116, 119–121)

The initially partisan beholder cannot keep the opponents apart: Campbell's (1985) self-image – 'the Man, clear-cut against the last horizon' – of *The Flaming Terrapin* is losing 'profile and identity' (p. 208).<sup>11</sup> Perhaps we should trust the poet's unwitting admission of self-doubt, rather than the autobiographer's bravado.

Hanke's last chapter is devoted to 'The Poetology of the Late Lyric' and discusses four poems from the final critical period of Campbell's life, WW2 ('San Juan de la Cruz', 'Luis

10. Similar sentiments are expressed by writers perhaps not readily thought of as fascist. Walter Lippmann (1889–1974) argued that 'for democracy to survive, elites needed to be in charge and the general public kept in check by the comforting illusion that it actually played a significant role in governing society, "so that ... each of us may live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd"' (quoted in Adams 2012).

11. Campbell's line recalls the Spirit of the Hour's vision in Shelley's (n.d.) *Prometheus Unbound*:

The man remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself. (III.iv, ll. 193–197)

Shelley's lines are 'full of Lucretian echoes' (D. and P. Fowler, in Lucretius 1999).

de Camões', 'The Skull in the Desert' and 'Vision of Our Lady of Toledo'), none of which has any English reference or setting. In that as in other respects they are characteristic: for a traditional sense of form, which grounds their bravura display of style and register, and for their religious motive. They are 'a last precipitation of Campbell's understanding of the art of poetry as the sublimation of suffering' (p. 45).

## Campbell's Catholic Spain

Although Hanke is careful to read individual poems in their distinct historical contexts, he maintains a modernist conception of the integrity and continuity of the poet as subject. The book argues strongly for its presentation of Campbell 'as colonial writer, outsider, tradition-aware conscious artist and, politically and philosophically, as a conservative Catholic' (p. 42). Naturally, too, the poet's daughters recall him in a similar way: changeable and unpredictable, perhaps, but a coherent personality. Mayta Gómez (2007:21) dispenses with this view of Campbell, seeing him in postmodern terms as 'no unified, coherent subject', of incoherent politics, whose life must be read in synchronic rather than diachronic terms, which she uses to analyse and contextualise Campbell's relationship with Spain and the Civil War.

In Gómez's (2007) argument, Campbell's knowledge of Spain was poor, his understanding of Spanish history, politics and society confused, and he himself out of context there. Having arrived in the country by chance and uninformed, and eventually settling in Toledo, Campbell, perhaps with the security of his new-found Catholic faith, and still under the influence of Lewis, dropped the burden of 'liberalism' and returned to the quasi-aristocratic colonial ideology of Natal. Spanish peasants took the place of the Zulu 'boys' and 'maids' who had served him there, and he became their Don Quijote. Campbell's (1985) Spain was:

a place that conformed to his own views and philosophy ... a timeless, bucolic Spain, a pre-industrial paradise free from the evils of progress and industrialization (rather than a backward country struggling to rid itself of the remnants of feudalism). (p. 25)

This aligns the poet with Franco and the Nationalist rebels' 'determination to eradicate the political and cultural challenge of "disordered modernity" which ... [*the Republic*] opposed to their own preferred world of 'natural' order and hierarchy' (Graham 2005:76). As the rebels sought to destroy the Spain of the Republic in battle, Campbell erased it in his imagination.

Gómez (2007) gives a distinctive account of Campbell's Catholicism. *Mithraic Emblems* does not, in this reading, reflect 'a spiritual journey ... that needs Christianity to make sense of paganism, but rather one that needs paganism to make sense of the newly-acquired Christian faith' (p. 26). Campbell simply incorporates Christian symbology into his own pagan outlook. The dogmatic and aesthetic fusion of pagan myth and Christian imagery is very clear in *Flowering Rifle* (Campbell 1939) and other poems of Spain.<sup>12</sup>

12. Campbell's 'journey towards Christian faith' was a distinct version of the 'pilgrimage' (Kirk 1971:137–138) taken by a number of other writers of the time. Thinking only of Anglophone (and male) examples, in addition to Campbell and Eliot, Kirk mentions G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Edwin Muir, Paul Elmer More and Evelyn Waugh.



Rimbaud is a distinct presence behind *The Flaming Terrapin* and by the time of *Adamastor* (1930) French poetry was the poet's primary inspiration: Rimbaud again in 'The Zulu Girl', Victor Hugo, rather than Byron, in 'Mazeppa'. *Campbell and the Romance Countries*, edited by Michael Hanke (2006), explores some aspects of the poet's biographical and, to a lesser extent, imaginative connections with France, Spain, and Portugal. The book opens strongly with Peter Alexander's biographical and critical 'Campbell and France'. This gives an account of the poet's experience of the French language, the country and its literature, from his choice of French (significantly over Dutch) for his matriculation at Durban High School, to the award of 'the crown of the *Socii* of the Felibrige (a society of Provençal poets) at Avignon in 1954' (p. 21).<sup>13</sup> Most contributions are readings of individual poems of Spain and Provence, and indirectly, of Portugal, in Rudolf Sühnel's essay on Campbell and Camões.<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Meihuizen (2007) writes: "'Horses on the Camargue": Equestrian Energies in Europe', Paul Goetsch on 'Poetological Themes in Campbell's Poetry'. In one essay, Michael Hanke returns, in English, to 'Canidia and Priapus' as 'a brilliant literary camouflage' (p. 120). In 'Aspects of Campbell's Poetic Diction' Graham Pechey shows how richly Campbell, 'settled as he is by now in the part of Europe that is nearest to Africa' (p. 72), assimilated both his South African vocabulary and his 'post-political' imagination to his new-found home.

## The classical heritage

Almost as if to complete our sense of Campbell's discovery of and identification with Mediterranean culture, John Hilton (2007) offers extended coverage of the poet's knowledge of and debt to Greek and Latin myth and literature. This is an excellent essay – fair about the controversies and paradoxes of Campbell's personality and achievement, with a clear sense of context, learned and observant – which manages to make us read Campbell in a new way.

The poet was at first resistant to classical models, perhaps in rebellion against his '*plagosus Obilius*', the Durban High School headmaster A.S. Langley, but was later attracted to 'an ideology of classicism' (p. 136) in a context in which both left and right called on the classical tradition: *The Flaming Terrapin* rejects 'bookish muses' and 'their northern kind' for the 'Muse of the Berg, muse of the sounding rocks'. Campbell eventually espoused a more traditional, less aesthetic classicism than his mentor Lewis, who turned away from Hellenism to the classicism of Egypt and Japan. Hilton shows how deeply classical images later came to permeate Campbell's imagination, 'even in his most vividly personal poems' (p. 141), so that in imagination he is both Orpheus and, more surreptitiously, Priapus (whose fart drives the witches from the garden). Campbell finds classical models for all his modes: from satire (Juvenal, Horace) to epic (Lucan). His early allegiance to Lucretius was challenged by his conversion to Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> His knowledge was wide

13. This makes a worthy companion piece to Rowland Smith's essay of 1970.

14. The subject is fully and richly covered in Nicholas Meihuizen's (2007) *Ordering Empire*. See also Ferreira and le Roux (2009).

15. John Hilton does not mention Lucretius. For a brief note, see Voss (2005).

and reached into some obscure Hellenistic texts, so that in his defence of Wyndham Lewis, for example, he could draw on 'specific ... Roman *exempla* to illustrate his argument' (p. 145), an argument which for Campbell was also a defence of those who 'are trying to save what they can of the wreck of European civilization' (Campbell 1988b:398).

In the Mediterranean lands where he made his home, particularly Provence, Campbell studied, looked for and lived in imagination in the Roman past. 'What are we civilized Europeans but the Roman Empire?' he asked, as an admirer of the civilizing power of Roman colonisation.<sup>16</sup> He undertook marine archaeological research in the Bay of Foz, near Martigues, and recognised classical survivals in the regional languages and cultures he came to know. Like Olive Schreiner, he consulted Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* throughout his life, but his identification was with 'what is immediate and personal rather than what is abstract' (p. 150): a provincial, perhaps, rather than an imperial allegiance. In conclusion, Hilton, arguing that Campbell's conversion to Roman Catholicism was the final move that clinched his commitment to the classical tradition, sees in the sonnet 'Toledo July 1936' the same continuity of spirit observed by Hanke: Athens, Rome, Toledo.

Although not published in his lifetime, Campbell's most extensive homage to the classical past was his translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which he may have been working on in the last years of his life. In 1954 he returned to South Africa to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Natal. In the welcoming party at Durban airport was Bill Payn (Alexander 1982), to whom Campbell addressed a poem, probably written at about this time:

*To my ex-Schoolmaster, Bill Payn of the D.H.S.*

You say you are no poet, but  
You're more than one, great Bill!  
The whetstone, though it cannot cut,  
Can sharpen swords that will.<sup>17</sup> (p. 232)

Campbell derived the image from Horace, via his own translation. In the *Ars Poetica* it occurs in a context in which Horace is discussing *ingenium* [native talent] as against *ars* [art or τέχνη]. As at other points in the poem (e.g. the introduction and conclusion), Horace is dealing with the idea of poetry as creative madness, barred to those guided by prudential calculation. On the authority of Democritus, writes Horace, many would-be poets over-value *ingenium* against *ars*: for himself, in Campbell's translation, 'I'll be the whetstone that can sharpen steel/Although it cannot cut'. There are some significant shifts of emphasis. The irony of Horace's self-portrait is gone: where the Roman poet speaks of *munus et officium* [office and duty], *opes* [powers], Campbell has 'duties ... task' and develops (perhaps) the Loeb translation's 'stores' (Horace 1929:477) into a military image of 'ammunition and ... rations'.

Eric Gillett is just in his estimate that Campbell's 'translation of the *Ars Poetica* is lively enough but it has not the

16. Campbell in a letter to C.J. Sibbett, 1926, from Gardner and Chapman (1985:68).

17. Published among the 'Later Poems' (1939–1956) in Campbell (1957).





inevitability of a classical or a definitive version' (quoted in Parsons 1981:208). Perhaps this is because Campbell could neither identify completely with the context from which Horace's poem emerges and to which it continues to refer, nor actively transpose the poem into a context of his own. And Campbell ventured into the same measure, the heroic couplet, adopted by some of his predecessors, Jonson, Byron and Conington, for example. Campbell's translation is in a very general sense an instance of *translatio* – a transferral of the Roman *imperium* – or perhaps rather *translatio studii*, a transferral of learning (already passed from Athens to Rome and on to 'Europe'). Horace's poem preserves the substance of the debate within Hellenism, by Stoics and Epicureans, over the means, the effects and the duty of poetry. Like Aristotle's *Poetics*, the *Ars Poetica* represents at once the culmination and the terminus of a development. After Horace there are no more Roman didactic poems on the art of poetry. Why should Campbell have turned to this poem? We could say that in this way he could take his revenge on Langley and re-identify with Oxford. Perhaps, in the sixth and what was to be the last decade of his life, he recognised in Horace a poet with whom he could sympathise: in translating the Roman he could express much of what he had learned about his own art.<sup>18</sup> Among Campbell's impressive predecessors, Jonson identifies whilst Byron transposes. Campbell, with his often proclaimed allegiance to the 'equestrian nation' might, for example, have found a point of contact for himself in the equestrian and pedestrian hierarchy of Roman society.<sup>19</sup>

Certain details of Campbell's translation suggest that the work is still in draft form: there is some awkward repetition of image, confusion of reference and perhaps a reliance on the Loeb translation (Horace 1929; first published in 1926). But the moment at which Campbell may speak most personally through Horace is in what he omits from the original. Horace's poem concludes with a coda on the madness of the poet, in the course of which he raises the example of Empedocles, who leaped to his death on Mount Etna. Poets should not be saved from such self-destruction. Nor is it clear, says Horace (1929), how a man comes to be a poet, and thus mad. Two possible explanations are offered:

utrum

minxerit in patrios cineres, an triste bidental  
moverit incestus (pp. 470–472)

[Has he defiled ancestral ashes or in sacrilege disturbed a hallowed plot?]

The 'bidental' was a shrine enclosing a place which had been struck by lightning, at which according to custom, a young sheep was sacrificed, and Jonson's (1963) translation suggests both his learning and his forthrightness:

Whether he piss'd upon his father's grave;  
Or the sad thunder-stroken thing he have  
Defil'd, touch'd (ll. 671–673:319, 321)

18. John Hilton, in personal correspondence, suggests that the combination of lyric and satire is the point of affinity between the two poets.

19. For Horace's (1929:379–380) 'ludere qui nescit', Campbell's version 'the man who's weak at sport' (p. 525) may betray a South African emphasis, where Jonson (1963:565) and Conington (1874:560) use 'games,' whereas Byron (1952:635–638) specifies hunting, swimming and boxing.

Whereas Byron's (1952) 'Allusion' offers a taboo perhaps closer to that poet's heart and conscience:

Dosed with vile drams on Sunday he was found,  
Or got a child on consecrated ground. (pp. 835–836)

Horace's lines here may touch the moral imagination of a poet deeply. Campbell omits them from his translation.

## Campbell's querencia

Early in his 'Introduction' to *Ein Solitär* Michael Hanke (2003:16) asks an important question: 'In which literary historical context does his [Campbell's] work belong?' Whilst acknowledging the South African roots of Campbell's poetry, the book's general approach, which is backed up by Tessa's and Anna's memoirs (Coullie 2011) and by John Hilton's (2007) essay, suggests that in its French, Spanish and Portuguese models and in its mining of the imaginative riches of Greek and Roman myth and literature, Campbell's work, almost presciently, shapes for itself a post-colonial neo-European context, into which the poet incorporates South African features and creatures.<sup>20</sup> This argument, if that is what it is, is not fully taken up in *Campbell and the Romance Countries*, but it has been put before. In 'Roy Campbell, Lorca and the Civil War', M.E. Williams (1988) argued that both Lorca, and Campbell in his own way, were victims of the Civil War, to which Campbell prostituted his name in the writing of *Flowering Rifle*, partly because he was not 'politically astute', of 'little political judgment'. Helen Graham (2005) writes of 'the intimate links between mass political mobilization, cultural change, and individual identity/subjectivity in the 1930s' (p. 147): in certain historical contexts it seems more difficult to be a person than in others, and the lyric poet's work is a record of the struggle to be his or her own person. Williams argues further that what Lorca and Campbell shared was 'their common understanding of a European poetic tradition' (p. 105). This is the answer to Williams's (1988) question: 'What is Campbell's *querencia*?' (p. 104). The Spanish word implies both 'homing instinct' and 'favourite and frequent place of resort'. In the bullring the bull may find both a natural and an accidental *querencia*:

A *querencia* is a place the bull naturally wants to go in the ring: a preferred locality. That is a natural *querencia* and such are well known and fixed, but an accidental *querencia* is more than that. It is a place which develops in the course of the fight where the bull makes his home. (Hemingway 2002:122)

Whilst there are clear arguments, such as those put forward by Phil van Schalkwyk (2007), for Campbell's liminality, I believe that it is worth considering that this still South African, if liminal, poet found both his natural and his accidental *querencia* in bringing a colonial sensibility 'to a European poetic tradition' (Williams 1988:106).<sup>21</sup> Ironically,

20. Campbell's Spanish landscape, of *Mithraic Emblems*, for example, is landmarked by fink, sprew, kaross, berg, commando, spoor, veld, voet-ganger, kopje, dorp, trek. Louise Bethlehem (2006:38–54), arguing from an analysis of Stephen Gray's archipelago hypothesis, suggests that Campbell, via the Adamastor myth, is caught in a colonial (Eurocentric?) and phallo-centric, if ambiguous self-figuration.

21. Simone Kadi (1994, p. 656) sketches a different trajectory for the European-educated Australian Catholic poet Christopher Brennan (1870–1932): 'Grace à ses deux maîtres, Baudelaire et Mallarmé, Brennan a introduit une sensibilité française dans la littérature australienne' [*Thanks to his two masters, Baudelaire and Mallarmé, Brennan introduced a French sensibility in Australian literature.*] (author's own translation). As regards the timing and conditions of form on which Campbell enters the European tradition, Jackie Wullschlager's (2012:8) view that Campbell enters the European tradition, Jackie Wullschlager's (2012:8) view of Lucian Freud (1922–2011) seems helpful: 'Freud was ... a belated artist. He chose



as Professor Coullie (2011:301) reports in her last footnote to *Remembering Roy Campbell*: 'Tess said sadly that her grandchildren and her niece Francesca's children (RC's great-grandchildren) are hardly able to read English and thus do not know RC's poetry'.

## A poetry of resonance

Michael Hanke (2003) points out, with characteristic precision, that 'The Serf' is the one poem of Roy Campbell's that can be exactly dated, to the day. The hero of this, one of the political poems of 1926, is identified by Hanke, as he is by most commentators, ethnically, as Zulu (p. 67). The poet, however, identifies him by his function as 'ploughman', implicitly as tribesman, and by his 'timeless, surly patience', as a serf, which gives the post-1917 poem its title, indicating the poet's focus on his critique of imperialism (p. 63). This complex of references suggests a mundane, global political concern, something wider than colonial fear, and illustrates the mythic resonance of Campbell's best verse.

Perhaps in this poem we can recognise what the poet, in the argument I have been moving towards, acknowledged as sources of inspiration: the classical tradition and modern Romance culture. The medium of the serf's power is the plough, which is also the instrument of his labour.<sup>22</sup> In *The Description of Greece* Pausanias (2010) reports that at the battle of Marathon:

there happened to be present a man of rustic appearance and dress. Having slaughtered many of the foreigners with a plough he was seen no more after the engagement. When Athenians made enquiry at the oracle the god merely ordered them to honor Echetaeus (He of the Plough-tail) as a hero. (1.32.4, p. 73)

In London in 1894 Piotr Kropotkin delivered a lecture under the title *Les Temps Nouveaux*, which was published in the anarchist journal *La Révolte* of Jean Grave, and reprinted as a literary supplement to its successor, which bore the same title *Les Temps Nouveaux*, in 1898. The reprint carried as a frontispiece a Camille Pissarro coloured lithograph – known as 'Le Labour' (ploughing) or 'La Charrue d'Erable' (the maple-wood plough) – a ploughman behind his plough drawn by two horses. Was Campbell, in 'The Serf' recalling, anticipating or imagining Pausanias, Kropotkin and Pissarro? The point is rather that the poem draws on (or reaches towards) such sources of energy: its power is in its resonance.<sup>23</sup>

(Footnote 21 continues ...)

to work at the end of a tradition. ... The choice liberated him, as it has always freed deliberate followers of late styles ... to risk a tightrope act of baroque excess, intensity and idiosyncrasy'. Phil van Schalkwyk (2007:135) offers a different reading: 'Although showing technical virtuosity and occasional inventiveness, he [Campbell] persisted in working in traditional forms, which had come to be regarded as outmoded. His florid language coupled with his technical self-assuredness and over-ingeniousness made him strike the wrong chord with those favouring the alienated, restrained and economic mode of expression current at the time'.

22. Campbell may be remembering Shelley: *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem*, III, 106–112.

23. This may be a surprising alignment but Bruce Stewart's (2007) conclusions on Joyce seem to me to recall Campbell. Joyce's acknowledgement of Flaubert and Ibsen 'did not signify an allegiance to one or other continental tradition so much as a commitment to ... an imaginative activity which disintegrates norms and standards in its attention to the sheer "whatness" of experience and language. The post-colonial concept of hybridity perhaps suggests the most comprehensive explanation of his essentially provisional methods as the writer reflecting a political, cultural, and psychological reality which is radically unstable and which affords no easy foothold to the consensual style of the liberal conscience' (Stewart 2007:122–123).

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