
The Neglected Poetry

MARIA LUISA GONZÁLEZ BIOSCA

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

2019

ENGLISH IN THE WORLD SERIES

GENERAL EDITOR

Antonia Sánchez Macarro
Universitat de València, Spain

ADVISORY EDITORIAL BOARD

Professor Enrique Bernárdez
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Professor Anne Burns
Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Professor Angela Downing
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Dr Martin Hewings
University of Birmingham, Great Britain

Professor Ken Hyland
University of East Anglia, Norwich, Great Britain

Professor James Lantolf
Penn State University, Pennsylvania, USA

Professor Michael McCarthy
University of Nottingham, Great Britain

Professor Eija Ventola
University of Helsinki, Finland

© Maria Luisa Gonzalez Biosca
© 2019 by the Universitat de València

Design and typeset: Celso Hdez. de la Figuera
Cover design by Pere Fuster (Borràs i Talens Assessors SL)
Cover image: Intérprete Salomon escribiendo a máquina. Aragón 1938
© (Archivo Fotográfico AABI)

I S B N : 978-84-9134-434-6

D. L : V-1232-2019

Printed in Spain



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	9
Photographs	15
Illustrations	17
Introduction	19
Preliminary	25
1 First Clues	29
1.1. <i>The Beginning</i>	29
1.2. <i>Development of the Research</i>	31
1.3. <i>Selection of the Poets from the XV International Brigade</i> ---	32
1.4. <i>Selection of the Retrospective Poets</i>	33
1.5. <i>Selection of the Poets who supported the Spanish Republic from Abroad</i>	33
2 The Intervention of the International Brigades: The Answer to a False Agreement of Non-Intervention--	35
2.1. <i>The World-Wide Political Scenario</i>	35
2.2. <i>The Diplomatic Trench</i>	38
2.3. <i>Let Who is Free of Sin Throw the First Stone</i>	39
2.4. <i>The International Brigades Stand Up for the Spanish Republic: The Answer to a Farce</i>	43
2.5. <i>Knowing the XV Brigade: Who were they?</i>	45
2.6. <i>After the Battle: The Withdrawal of the Volunteers</i>	48
3 A Sea of Papers: The International Press in The Spanish War	51
3.1. <i>The War Correspondents</i>	51
3.2. <i>The Press of the International Brigades in English</i>	54



4	Literary Influences	57
	4.1. <i>The Impact of the First World War Poetry on the Brigadists</i>	57
	4.2. <i>Influence of Imagism and Aesthetic Currents of the Early Decades of the 20th Century</i>	61
	4.3. <i>Overview of some Canonical Poets' Influence on this Poetic Legacy</i>	63
5	Anthology and Stylistic Analysis	67
	5.1. <i>Corpus of the Brigadist Group and Stylistic Analyses</i>	67
	5.2. <i>Corpus of the Retrospective Group and Stylistic Analyses</i> ---	143
	5.3. <i>Corpus of the Abroad Group and Stylistic Analyses</i>	177
6	Conclusion	225
7	Bibliography	231
	7.1. <i>Cited and Complementary Readings</i>	231
	7.2. <i>Literary Webpages</i>	237
	7.3. <i>Libraries and Newspaper Archives</i>	238
	7.4. <i>Photographic Archives</i>	240
	7.5. <i>Miscellaneous</i>	241
Annex: Biographical Notes on the Poets and Information about the Publication Dates of the Poems		243
	<i>Brigadist group</i>	243
	<i>Retrospective group</i>	272
	<i>Abroad group</i>	280



Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to show my appreciation to the person who woke my interest in poetry, Peter Vickers, who had been my teacher of Phonology at the University of Valencia. I had asked him about some poets for a literary paper and then he suggested poets from the First World War. Peter recited Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" by heart. I can still hear the echo of his voice.

I would also like to thank Concha de Sena, the person who put me in touch with Dr. Antonia Sánchez Macarro, a lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Valencia, who I am grateful to for her guidance and advice in the early stages of my research. My greatest thanks, however, go to Dr. Juan José Martínez Sierra who was enthusiastic about my research project since the very first moment I presented it to him, and who encouraged me to compile this Anthology.

This Anthology owes its origin to a research project that took nearly four intensive years of research, preparation, deceptions and enlightenments, but eventually I believe it has led to fruitful work.

I sincerely appreciate all the unnamed people in the archives and libraries who have kindly helped me.

To my daughter Aitana and her father Francisco

IN SPAIN, and almost only in Spain, there still lives a spirit to resist the bureaucratic tyranny of the State and the intellectual intolerance of all doctrinaires. For that reason, all poets must follow the course of this struggle with open and passionate partisanship.

Herbert Read supports the Spanish Republic
in the survey *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (1937)

If we are to preserve the heritage of our fathers, we must be prepared to fight as the gallant loyalists of Spain fought and died, holding back with their bodies and blood for two and a half years the flood of barbarism that swept over Europe until they succumbed to the strange indifference of democratic nations in whose defense they were valiantly fighting. World War II began in Spain 1936.

Claude G. Bowers,
former Ambassador of the United States of America in Spain
1933-1939.

My Mission to Spain. Watching The Rehearsal for World War Two
New York, November 1953 (foreword vi)



Photographs

Photograph 1. The Canadian Dr. Norman Bethune set up the Servicio Canadiense de Transfusiones de Sangre in December 1937. He led his refrigerated field ambulance to the dressing stations at the frontline, to perform preserved blood transfusions to the wounded soldiers. Dr. Bethune poses besides the ambulance in Valencia. <http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/spainespagne/media/bethune_photos_hd.aspx?lang=spa>.

Photograph 2. Major Robert Merriman Chief of Staff of the 15th International Brigade, Mars 1938. Photograph by Harry Randall: XV IB Fotograf Collection. ALBA Photo 11-0122. The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York.

Photograph 3. Philip Lucas Detro, Battalion Commander, Lincoln-Washington November 1937. Photograph by Harry Randall: XV IB Fotograf Collection. ALBA Photo 11-0608. The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York.

Photograph 4. A break, December 1937. John Hunter, member of the machine gun company num. 1 of the Lincoln-Washington Battalion. Photograph by Harry Randall: XV IB Photograph Collection. ALBA Photo 11-0639. The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York.

Photograph 5. Transportation of the anti-tank battery in Ambite, September, 1937. Harry Randall: XV IB Photograph Collection, n° 1233. ALBA Photo. The Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive. New York.

Photograph 6. Returning brigadists of the Lincoln Battalion aboard the City of Paris. Hank Rubin standing on the far left. Harold Hoff in the front row far left. Harold Hoff's collection.

Photograph 7. George Green playing the cello in the interior patio at Huete Hospital (Cuenca). Behind, playing the accordion, Nan Green, his wife and the brigade and German violinist Willi Remmel. Spanish Collection, 32/4/9a. Courtesy Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School, London Foundation.

Photograph 8. Sitting, Monks is the first on the left (Monks, 2012).

Photograph 9. The Republican Government set up an education program for refugee children at Benicassim. Some of these



schools were supported by international aid and the International Brigades. Photograph taken by Alec Wainman, © The Estate of Alexander Wheeler Wainman, John Alexander Wainman (Serge Alternês), IWM, London, ref. HU33021.

Photograph 10. British nurses of the British Medical Unit at the Poleniño Hospital, (Salas Franco, 2011: 78).



Illustrations

- Illustration 1.** Pencil sketch of David Lomon drawn by Clive Branson. Clive Branson Collection. Courtesy, Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School, London Foundation.
- Illustration 2.** Periodical of the XV International Brigade, *The Volunteer for Liberty*. CRAI, Archive Pavelló de la República.
- Illustration 3.** Newspaper of the XV International Brigade, *The Volunteer for Liberty*. Library-newspaper archive Conde Duque, Madrid, microfilm section, film reel 1052/87.
- Illustration 4.** Poem published in *The Volunteer for Liberty*, II, 6, Barcelona. February 19, 1938, two weeks before his death during the Aragon retreats.
- Illustration 5.** The retreats from Aragón's front, March-April 1938. Bessie (2002).
- Illustration 6.** Joseph Selligman's death certificate. RGASPI, Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History. Fond 545/Opis 6/ Delo 985 / p. 7.
- Illustration 7.** Document property of the author.
- Illustration 8.** Newspaper of the XVth International Brigade, *The Volunteer for Liberty*. Library-newspaper archive Conde Duque, Madrid, microfilm section, film reel 1052/87.
- Illustration 9.** *The Volunteer for Liberty*. CRAI Archive Pavelló de la República, Barcelona. SCW, publications, V6.
- Illustration 10.** RGASPI, Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow. Fond 545/Opis 2/Delo 58 p. 25.
- Illustration 11.** Loyalist army and rebel army positions sketch by Monks (Monks, 2011: 130).
- Illustration 12.** The newspaper of the brigade, *The Volunteer for Liberty*. Library-newspaper archive Conde Duque, Madrid, microfilm section, film reel 1052/87.
- Illustration 13.** Cartoon drawn by Deyo Jacobs, American brigadist of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. Deyo Jacobs illustrates an article by Herbert Kline published in the same issue in *The New Masses* in July 20, 1937. <<https://www.unz.org/Pub/NewMasses-1937jul20-00005?View=PDF>>.



Illustration 14. Map of the area controlled by the Lincoln Brigade June 10, 1937. Extracted from *The Book of the XV Brigade* (Graham, 1974: 69).

Illustration 15. The poem was published three months after the invasion and occupation of Asturias by the rebel army and its allies, the Legion Condor and the Italian fascist troops.

Illustration 16. *Boletín de Información de las Brigadas Internacionales*, mimeographed in the Jarama trenches. Newspaper archive of Valencia.

Illustration 17. *News Bulletin of the International Brigades*, mimeographed in the Jarama trenches. Newspaper library of Valencia.



Preliminary. The Neglected Poetry

The First World War was the last European war which was only fought on the battlefield. Eight million soldiers died and there were six million disabled. During the inter-war years, the time between the Great War and the Second World War, there was another war in Europe, called the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish war was considered an isolated conflict during this twenty-one-year parenthesis of relative peace in a Europe that had made room for four dictators: Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and Joseph Stalin. The Second World War involved more countries than the First World War; its duration and the use of massive new military technology caused nearly seventy million deaths. The First World War lasted four years and took place mainly in the trenches. There were periods when the front stayed in the same position for at least a year. This prolonged wait was sometimes filled with the writing of spontaneous poems or verses which collected the soldiers' feelings about their experiences at the front. The majority of the soldiers lacked primary studies and there was a high percentage of illiteracy which made it difficult for them to write poems. Nevertheless, there was an important amount of poems written in English (as well as in other languages) by Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, Thomas, Graves and so on. The majority of them would not be known until many years later because most of their works were not published regularly until the mid-twenties. However, when their poems were released, given their literary and historic value, the poets were not neglected for having participated in that war. Neither their pacifist ideology, nor their satirical themes were marginalised and nowadays they are considered canonical poets in the English language.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, in spite of the enduring work of the Pedagogical Missions and the impulse for public schooling during the Republic, the illiteracy rate among the native population was extremely high. Langston Hughes explained this in his book *Escritos sobre España* (2011). For example, he said that the kitchen head at the Albacete base had problems to make the kitchen work, because what the brigadists wanted was to fight, not to cook, and the majority of the Spaniards could neither read, nor understand the orders, nor the menus.



This has meant a double task for Louis who speaks little Spanish. He evidently depends on an interpreter. However as many of the kitchen workers did not know how to read nor write, writing down the orders and making lists of menus was impossible at the beginning.

Out of 27 cooks and helpers, only 7 knew how to read and write and therefore, Louis organised classes for them. After five months seventeen have really learned to read in their own language, Spanish. Due to this achievement, the U.G.T trade union, to which the kitchen workers belong to, have congratulated Louis in an official letter. (Hughes et al., 2011:80, the translation is ours).

During the war and in spite of the difficult conditions, the Alliance of the Antifascist Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture, in which the majority of the poets from the Generation of '27 participated, developed a project of literary diffusion which materialised in *El Mono Azul*,¹ among other activities.

At the same time, and this being a fundamental question for the anthology, the government, different cultural associations, trade unions, political parties, and military units also edited their own monthly, weekly, or daily publications.

As a consequence of the proposal of the agreement of non-intervention ²and the large scale military collaboration between the European fascist powers, and the Moroccan Legion, supporting the rebels, the International Communist, at the request of Joseph Stalin, organised the formation of the International Columns after September 1936 (Castells, 1974: 56). The French Communist Party (FCP), led by André Marty, carried out the recruiting and organization. Many of the volunteers who joined came from countries with dictatorships, such as Germany or Italy, but the majority came from democratic countries, such as France, England, Ireland, Belgium, the United States, Argentina and Chile, among others. However, not all the brigadists were Stalinists, as Casanova states, "There were a good many in the Brigades who were Stalinists, especially at

1 *El Mono Azul* was a magazine published on the Loyalist side during the Spanish Civil War under the auspices of the Alliance of Antifascists Intellectuals.

2 The Committee of Non-Intervention, promoted by the French Government at the beginning of the war, ended with an agreement which was signed in London on the 3rd of September of 1937. Twenty-seven countries, including the great European powers, signed a pact in which they committed themselves not to get involved in the Spanish War.



the organisational level, but there were thousands who were not" (2010: 95).

The volunteers of the International Brigades came spontaneously to defend the Spanish Republic because of their ideals of solidarity; many of them sacrificed their lives for the Republic's defamed right of self-defence because they knew that, what was at stake in Spain was the liberty of the entire world.

The birth of the brigades cannot be understood without the existence of the Non-Intervention Committee that had blocked Democratic Spain. Confronted with all the evidence of Hitler's and Mussolini's tangible support to Franco, the Republic declared that the neighbouring countries hid behind the hypocrisy of the words "the keeping of world peace" to disguise the reality of the facts: the breaking of all the previous agreements of collaboration of mutual help among democratic countries, with France and Great Britain as their head (Núñez, 2004: 121, the translation is ours).

The International Brigades were consolidated into five brigades; the XV was the English speaking brigade, mainly formed by English, Irish, Canadian, American and Australian brigade members.

The volunteers from the working class had a tradition of writing poetry, given that the leftist publications in England or Ireland promoted the publication of stories and poems about their personal experiences (Jump, 2006: 15). Different from the recruited men in the First World War, these men formed part of the first literate worker generation (Jump, 2006: 15). Newspapers, such as *New Writing*, *Left Review* or *Poetry and the People*, encouraged the writers and poets mainly from the working class to publish poetry. Continuing that blossoming tradition, any volunteer brigadist could feel free to express an idea or a feeling without feeling inhibited for not being a professional writer. Some of these poems were published in *The Volunteer for Liberty*, the XV International Brigade's weekly paper written in English and edited in Madrid from February until March 1938, when the publisher moved to Barcelona because of the development of the war. The majority of the XV International Brigade poetry was practically unknown. Only the names and the works by John Cornford, Stephen Spender and Charles Donnelly, writers who enlisted in the International Brigades, were known.



The brigadists, who fought for the defence of the Republican cause, left a valuable testimonial legacy in which the poetry that was written in the battlefield stands out.

Nevertheless, the subsequent war development, with the Second World War following the Spanish War and after this the Cold War,³ had negative repercussions on this legacy, since one of the consequences was the global polarization into two main political blocks, one communist and the other, capitalist. Sectarianism imposed the rules of the game. Everything related to communism or leftist issues was instantly attacked, chased or ignored in the capitalist sphere. The same thing happened in the communist countries regarding the countries under the influence of capitalism.

3 The Cold War was a historic period of tension between the capitalist block, with United States as head, and the communist bloc, headed by the USSR, which lasted from 1945 to 1991. Its origin was the end of the Second World War, and it was called this because no war between these nations was started, probably because of the fear of a nuclear war. During this conflict two wars occurred where both powers directly or indirectly intervened: Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1964-1975).



Introduction

Justification for the Anthology

Nancy Cunard, helped by W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender, carried out a survey among the English and Irish writers to know who supported the legal government of the Republic, who did not, and who did not choose either of the two options. The survey was named *Authors Take Sides On the Spanish War* and its results were published in *Left Review* in 1937.

Thanks to initiatives like Cunard's, poetry was written in English from Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, and evidently, also from other countries and in other languages. This poetry had two clear functions: on the one hand to defend the Spanish democracy, and, on the other, to let the citizens from those countries know that, in spite of the non-intervention agreement, an invasion, supporting the rebel's coup d'état, was being carried out by Nazi and Fascist Italian troops. The function of this poetry was evidently used as propaganda:

The immense majority of writers, as is known, adheres to the cause of the young Spanish Republic, although voices which celebrated the coup d'état were not lacking- the most notorious case, not only for the large amount of verses, which were dedicated to it, but also for the undisputable quality of some of them, is that of the South African poet Roy Campbell. The ideological answer is heterogeneous among the committed or sympathizers writers of the Spanish Republic, as diverse as the mosaic of forces of the "Spanish labyrinth" (Álvarez & López, 1986: 5, the translation is ours).

Regarding the poems written by the brigadists during the war in Spain, the references to the territory where the war was fought were fundamental and continuous: the trenches, the bombed cities, the ambulances, the hospitals and so on. The temporal axis corresponded to that of the brigades during the civil war, from their arrival in Spain at the end of summer in 1936, until their departure in November 1938. This poetry, as Álvarez & López (2006) indicate, did not have the function of propaganda or, at least, not at first. The experience and the reality of the war did not admit its idealization,



nor its violence, although the brigadists fought for and vindicated ideals:

Paradoxically, we find the most intimate notes and a language with smaller doses of political propaganda, especially in the writings of the poets who fought in Spain. On the other hand, the verses with the largest ideological accent were produced far from the battlefronts. The poetry by “poets in uniform” generally springs from their own experiences in the trenches; they know “blood and death,” and do not admit the heroic touches, nor the idealization of violence which usually decorates the propagandistic poetry (Álvarez & López, 1986: 6, the translation is ours).

This research extends the scope of this poetic legacy and, apart from analysing the poems included in the anthology more in depth, it also includes a subgroup of poems written by brigadists who wrote them after going back to their countries; this subgroup is called Retrospective, and poems written by those poets who supported the Spanish Republic from abroad, most of whom were canonical poets at that time; that was the case of Wallace Stevens or Cecil Day-Lewis. Therefore, as it will be seen, we have classified the poems according to spatial criteria regarding those poems written in Spain or written from abroad, and temporal criteria, during or after the war.

Poems for Spain was the first anthology published in 1939 by Stephen Spender and John Lehman. In 1964, Robert Skelton published an anthology under the name *Poetry of the Thirties*, where there is a chapter dedicated to a few poets who supported the Spanish Republic and to some brigadists. As far as the United States was concerned, in 1965 Ford published a monographic study of this poetry, but as the title *A Poet's war: British Poets and the Spanish Civil War* indicates, American poets were not included in this anthology. This may be due to the fact that the United States was at the height of the persecution of leftist intellectuals, known as *The Witch Hunt*, headed by the republican senator Arthur McCarthy. Ford gave an accurate account of some canonical poets, such as W.H. Auden, Herbert Read, Stephen Spender and many other poets of the 1920s and 1930s, even those from the First World War. He did likewise with the brigadists such as John Cornford, Christopher Caudwell, Julian Bell and so on.

The year 1966 was when John M. Muste published *Say that we saw Spain to Die: Literary Consequences of the Spanish Civil war*. The author



reviewed the literature from the Spanish Civil War. He commented on some poems written by the volunteers, like John Cornford, Stephen Spender and Edwin Rolfe, and supporters, such as Margot Heinemann and W. H. Auden. In 1969, Maxwell reviewed the poets of the 1930s and published *Poets of the Thirties*. Three brigadists were studied: Christopher Caudwell, John Cornford, and Stephen Spender, who already was a canonical poet; and two canonical poets who took side for the Spanish Republic, Daniel Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice.

Valentine Cunningham published *Spanish Civil War Verse* in 1980, an anthology that contained many previously unpublished poems. This anthology not only included poems written by British poets, but also included letters, press articles, personal memoirs, and Spanish poems translated into English. As Cunningham indicates there are several factors which make this anthology special:

Special too, about this collection are the previously unpublished things it contains: Several poems by Miles Tomalin; several by Clive Branson, among them his unique concentration camp verses... My Introduction is also the first account of this War's relation to English literature that's been able to draw on the valuable new Archive of the International Brigade... For one prime intention of this anthology is to put firmly the work of those undeservedly too-little known poets Charles Donnelly, Ewart Milne, Clive Branson, Tom Wintringham and Miles Tomalin. Another is to reveal the considerable (in every sense) extent of Stephen Spender's contribution, in verse and prose, to the literature of Spain (1980: 16-17).

In the United States in 2002, Cary Nelson published an anthology that assembled poems written by American volunteers, some poems of supporters and others written by late contributors. In 2006, a British brigadist's son, Jim Jump, published the last anthology written by British and Irish brigadists who volunteered for the Loyal Spanish front, *Poems from Spain*.

There are also two anthologies published in Spain, one bilingual by Álvarez & López in 1986 *Poesía Anglo-Americana de la Guerra Civil Española* and another in Spanish by Montero (AABI) in 2001, *Voluntarios de la libertad*. In 1981, Bernd Dietz published a monograph under the title *El Impacto de la Guerra Civil Española en la Poesía Inglesa (1936-1939)*.



The poetry from the First World War impacted the brigadists, due to the fact that some of them were sons or relatives of soldiers who had fought in that war. That was the case of John Cornford, whose father had fought in the First World War and, in the case of Captain Thomas Wintringham, he himself had fought.

The consultation of primary sources for evidence on original works, such as biographies, diaries and memoirs, photos, letters and so on written by the brigadists or war correspondents, referring to their daily routine during the war, will be crucial for our research in order to connect this legacy to the social context where the poets lived and to explore the complex set of factors that determined the commitment they held, either as participants or supporters.

Looking back

This anthology has taken into account the considerations stated by Álvarez & López (1986) about the differences between the poetry written by the brigadists and the one by poets who supported the Spanish Republic from abroad.

Using field research techniques was indispensable to gather data to contribute additionally to the study of this poetic legacy by, firstly, developing an insightful stylistic analysis of the poems in order to understand the interaction between the poems, their authors and audience and, secondly, focusing on the criteria employed to select the poems, singling out their structure and poetical devices, themes and tone.

I would also like to show that the tone of some of these poems written abroad is different from those based on personal war experience, because they had been written mainly as propaganda to collect money, food and other goods needed by the Spanish Republic, or to prompt governments to repeal the non-intervention agreement.

Reading the first-hand testimonies found in the poems written by the three groups of poets help me to elucidate and understanding some of the reasons behind the fact that this poetic legacy has been neglected and is still neglected today

As mentioned in the Preliminary, Álvarez & López (2006) considered some differences between the poetry written by the brigadists and the one by poets who supported the Spanish Republic from



abroad. Their anthology opened a door for future research, therefore, I found this anthology inspiring and understood it as an invitation to deepen the study of this legacy.

Thus, the present anthology substantiates not only those differences, but also the similarities between the three groups of poets; that are, the Brigadists, Retrospective and Abroad groups.

Following this, the poetic legacy gathered in the anthology is first-hand evidence of the reality, on one hand, based on the direct war experience of the brigadists and, on the other, on the direct experience of the viewer from abroad. Although each group through their poets was analysed through their poems separately, at the same time, I approached them as a whole, as a single voice which would make the poems alive again, the testimony of their memories