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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE

BRITISH LITERARY RIGHT

IT IS WELL KNOWN that British writers reacted passionately to the Spanish Civil War. The majority of those writing supported the Spanish Republic, and all those actually fighting in Spain were either anti-fascists or left-wingers. As a result there has been little attention paid to the British writers of the Right during the Spanish Civil War. There is general knowledge that Wyndham Lewis supported Franco as well as Hitler in the mid-thirties; that Evelyn Waugh, although not himself a fascist, had declared that he would choose to become a fascist rather than a communist if those were the only choices open to him.¹ Edmund Blunden is known to have supported Franco.² Roy Campbell's own tales of his exploits with Franco's armies are vaguely remembered, and it is widely known that his long and passionate poem, *Flowering Rifle*, is in praise of Franco's rebellion.

Beyond these vague impressions there is little common knowledge about the attitudes towards the war of the British literary Right. Of three recent studies dealing with writers and the Spanish Civil War, one is concerned almost exclusively with the great anti-Franco works,³ one has an inaccurate chapter on Roy Campbell as the "Voice of the Insurgents",⁴ and only the third study has a useful chapter on right-wing reaction to the war.⁵ Even it, however, cannot give precise information about Campbell's whereabouts during the war, and its author is clearly more at home in her four other chapters on the reactions of the Left.

The reasons for the lack of interest in the literary right-wing during the Spanish Civil War are clear enough. Not only was there no significant pro-Franco literature produced, but also several great pro-Republican works were

written. The young left-wing writers who committed themselves to the Republican cause were vogue figures who attracted attention because they belonged to much-publicised coteries. The heroic romanticism connected with their commitment was an element in the situation which was bound to foster public interest. And when gifted young men like Christopher Caudwell, John Cornford, and Julian Bell were killed in Spain, the glamour of their cause was assured. There was no comparable glamour on the opposing side.

The left-wing writers whom we refer to rather loosely as the Auden group did not dominate the literary scene in the way their confident assertions would lead one to believe. Nevertheless, the established writers of the era remained uncommitted on the war, and therefore did not add their stature to the anti-Republican cause. In reply to the questionnaire on Spain published by the *Left Review* in their pamphlet *Authors Take Sides*, Ezra Pound declared himself neutral, as did T. S. Eliot, with his famous comment, "While I am naturally sympathetic, I still feel that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities".⁶ With big guns like Eliot remaining neutral, the field was inevitably dominated by the more numerous writers of the Left. The results of the poll conducted by Nancy Cunard and published in *Authors Take Sides* show a massive support for the Republic. The question asked was: "Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against Franco and Fascism?" There were 127 replies for the Republic, 5 against, and 16 neutral.

It is, of course, not only the status or numbers of the writers supporting each side which affect the sympathy shown for their views. In retrospect the Spanish Civil War is usually seen as a preliminary to the Second World War; the dictators flexing their muscles and testing equipment in preparation for the real thing. Franco's terrorism, the cynicism of Hitler's and Mussolini's attitude towards non-intervention, their lies and manipulation of facts, are all seen as precursors to the European holocaust of 1939-45. As a result, pro-Franco writers are frequently seen as part of the Axis propaganda machine. To be for Franco was to be for his allies too, for Hitler and Mussolini. Not to support the Republic was to accept the overthrow by military dictatorship of a democratically elected government.

There is a great deal of truth in this view. The two writers who supported Franco's cause most vigorously, Roy Campbell and Wyndham Lewis, were also, at the time, convinced that it was folly to oppose Hitler and Mussolini militarily. The degree of their admiration for Hitler's Germany varied con-

stantly, but by and large it is true to say that until 1939 they were most sympathetic towards him. Both changed their opinions radically in 1939. In that year Lewis published an anti-Hitler book, *The Hitler Cult*, and, although living in Franco's Spain, Campbell began to think of enlisting in the British army once war had been declared. These writers' mistakes about Hitler were thus recognised by them before 1940, and can comfortably be placed as part of the general English-speaking gullibility of the 1930's.

Because our emotions are so unequivocally involved in the horror of Hitler's fascism, and because the war which crushed it can be seen in moral black and white, it is difficult to do justice to those who wrote about the Spanish Civil War. Most of the pro-Republican writers were also disillusioned with their cause by the end of the war, although still totally opposed to Franco. The great works in English to emerge from the war, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Homage to Catalonia*, are bitterly critical of aspects of the Republican regime. The belief that they were deluded informs almost all the autobiographical accounts of literary figures who went to Spain to support the Republic. Nevertheless, the general literary public tends to disregard these writers' own statements of disillusion, and still to condemn any writers who pointed out at the time that the Left were deluded in Spain.

My aim in this paper is to discuss the attitudes of Wyndham Lewis in general and Roy Campbell in particular towards the Spanish situation, and to illustrate what led writers of such distinction to identify themselves with a cause which has become so distasteful. Although my own sympathies are strongly Republican, I hope to be able to show some consistency in attitudes which are usually regarded as merely perverse.

From the mid-twenties on Wyndham Lewis had set himself up as the prime "Enemy" of the new post-war mass society. As a casual member of London Bohemian circles in 1921-2, Roy Campbell had met Lewis and had become fascinated by his views. The poet's clashes with his native South African culture and with the British literary establishment had left him too an isolated "enemy" by 1931. In that year his satire, *The Georgiad*, had appeared. The satirised literary world turned a cold reviewer's shoulder to Campbell's work, and he himself began to lead an outsider's life, first in Martigues and later in Spain. Lewis's consistent attacks during the Twenties on the mediocrity and conformism of contemporary culture are more subtle and varied than Campbell's emotional reaction during the Thirties against a society he dislikes. But Lewis dislikes the same things that Campbell dislikes. Feminism, the abdication of the male through inversion, and homosexuality are seen by Lewis

in *The Art of Being Ruled* as part of the "Sex War" which elevates "youth", the "Peter Pan", in order to render man impotent. Campbell incorporates this scorn for the "Peter Pan" into his writings and praises Hitler in a way which suggests that he is taking at face value Lewis's cynical tribute to the efficiency of the monolithic fascist structure in achieving reform without interference from the mob. Campbell uses Charlie Chaplin, the "Charlie", as his symbol of the degraded, pedestrian, shop-keeping values of urban civilisation. Wyndham Lewis has a chapter in *Time and Western Man* on "The secret of the success of Charlie Chaplin", whom he sees as a symbol of the contemporary wish for the small to defeat the great or for the infant to give Dad a wallop.

Lewis's distrust of coteries, and of mass-thinking, together with his firm belief in individualism, naturally made him an opponent of left-wing literary movements. His insight into the emptiness of their Utopian theory and abstract social values was balanced by a naivety in his attitude towards Hitler. After a brief visit to Germany, he published *Hitler* in 1931, which set out to illustrate Hitler's positive achievements and to discount his menacing statements and theories. From that point until 1939 there was warfare between him and the literary Left. In his attacks on English gullibility and Soviet hypocrisy he showed insight which history has confirmed. This insight was usually coupled, however, with absurdly naive attitudes towards the fascist dictators. In *Left Wings Over Europe* (1936) he is sympathetic to Mussolini's Abyssinian invasion. In *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive* (1937) he attacks British war hysteria and the 1935 Franco-Soviet alliance against Hitler. As part of his exposé of the one-sidedness of British public opinion, he tries to explain away Hitler's military aspirations, and to point to the real menace—Soviet manipulation of Western thinking. He sees Western blindness to the dangers of Soviet domination in Republican Spain as a significant illustration of the subservience of the democracies to Soviet propaganda. This is Lewis's most explicit commentary on the Spanish Civil War. His views on Spain are only part of a general attack on the English herd-mind, and, like his views on Hitler himself, were to be completely altered by 1939 in *The Hitler Cult*.

Roy Campbell's views on the Spanish Civil War were much more specific than his old mentor's, and held until his death. They are derived from an essentially similar impulse, however: a passionate belief in heroic individualism, growing out of a real isolation, and a corresponding hatred of exclusive coteries or group-thinking of any kind. Like Lewis, Campbell associated group-thinking only with the group from whom he had suffered most—the literary Left. There was no equivalent in his own painfully isolated situation

to the fascist automata whom he and Lewis mistakenly saw as a bulwark against leftist double-think.

In 1935 Campbell and his family had moved to Toledo. In 1934 they had been received into the Roman Catholic Church, and it was as a Catholic and conservative that the poet began his residence in Toledo. The beautiful old cathedral city deeply affected Campbell, and became for him a symbol of the traditional, pious Catholic life that he celebrates in his poetry of the period. Throughout their stay in Toledo, the Campbells were particularly friendly with the Carmelite monks of the city, and pursued their religious interests and friendships with complete disregard for the danger in which this could involve them at a time when the forces of the far Left were more than ready to settle old scores with the established Church. When anti-clerical feeling was running high before the outbreak of hostilities in the Civil War, and shortly after hostilities began, Campbell openly maintained his Christian loyalty, and protected the Carmelite archives in his house. The fighting in Toledo was severe after the right-wing rising by its military garrison in July 1936, and the Campbells were evacuated to England in August.

Campbell's long "epic", *Flowering Rifle*, reflects every aspect of his political stand in Spain. The circumstances in which it was written made objectivity virtually impossible. After being evacuated from Toledo in 1936, the Campbells stayed with relatives in Binstead, Sussex. Early in 1937 Campbell returned to Spain as a war correspondent for *The Tablet*. After a short time in the country, however, he was asked to abandon any desire to enlist in the Nationalist forces, and to use his talents as a propagandist for the Nationalist cause. As a result, the poet left Spain shortly after his return in 1937 and settled at Estombar in Southern Portugal. His family joined him there, and he began working feverishly on *Flowering Rifle*, which shows all too many signs of the speed with which it was written. His total acceptance of Nationalist propaganda and his complete identification with the Nationalist cause are apparent throughout. The fact that he had been outside Spain for most of the war might be the reason for his absolute acceptance of the official Nationalist point of view. His personal experience of the struggle was at its most intense in the very early days in Toledo when the revolutionary terror was at its height, as the "people's army" reacted against the military rebellion aimed at toppling the Republic. He returned to Toledo in 1939 after a visit to Rome, where he attended the funeral of Pope Pius XI.

Campbell's Spanish poems written before the outbreak of hostilities make clear his new-found delight in traditional, pastoral and religious values.

At the same time, he attacks bitterly any materialist outlook threatening those traditional values that were dear to him. In the poems written about the war itself, his conservative instinct and his wish to eliminate socialist activity are both naturally allied to Franco's cause. His religious convictions were also inseparable from his political convictions in the first few months of the war when a reign of terror was unleashed against the Church in Republican territory. Campbell's horror at the persecution of the Church is an inevitable reaction. But the political deductions he makes about that persecution ignore the fact that the Church itself played a political role in Spain and was seen by the Left as a consistent supporter of the military and landowning classes. In the Basque provinces, which remained loyal to the Republic and preserved a middle-class social order, there was no persecution of the Church. Basque priests remained with their parishes and supported the *status quo*. After the capture of Northern Spain by Franco's forces, Basque Catholics were persecuted by the Nationalists. Monks and priests were imprisoned and deported. Sixteen were executed.

The legitimacy of Franco's rebellion against the elected Republican government, and the "Red" nature of that Republican regime, are points accepted by both Wyndham Lewis and Roy Campbell. They need further elucidation. The military rebellion that occurred in Spain in July 1936 began the Civil War that lasted until 1939. It was carried out by military leaders, most of the Civil Guard, and supported by right-wing elements throughout the country. The immediate occasion for the rising was the murder by *Asaltos*, the police force loyal to the Republic during the war, of Calvo Sotelo, one of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition. The murder of Calvo Sotelo, by regular police, was the culmination of two years of violence, plots, and counter-plots which had plagued the Spanish Republic.

Since the establishment of the Republic in 1931 there had been three periods of parliamentary rule. The first, left-wing government had suppressed a military rising by the Right in 1932, and then had been defeated in the 1933 elections by a swing to the Right. The election of a right-wing government had resulted in 1934 in a left-wing rebellion of miners in Asturias, and a separatist rising of Catalans in Barcelona. Both risings had been brutally suppressed, and in the period between 1934 and 1936 both extreme Left and Right began arming and plotting to secure, by force if necessary, the political aims which were denied them by the parliamentary Republic. The right-wing, hating working-class discontent, socialist aspirations, and the bewildering lack of a central ordering principle in liberal democracy, were plotting to restore

conservatism in the form of a dictatorship. The violent left-wing were obsessed with the revolutionary ideals of Marxism, Trotskyism, and Anarchism.

In 1936 the elections were won by a Popular Front government. Those right-wing rebels who rose against that government based much of their subsequent propaganda on the danger to Spain of a mass communist revolution. The logic of the argument is highly questionable—as is the evidence—since the Popular Front concept was formulated by the Comintern, and the Popular Front was the legal government of Spain in 1936. When the right-wing rebellion broke out in the military garrisons and Civil Guard barracks in July 1936, the Republic, against which the military were rebelling, was virtually without armed forces to protect itself other than the loyal *Asaltos*, many seamen who revolted against their rebellious officers, and part of the air force. The military rebellion was further supported by the Foreign Legion, the pick of the country's fighting forces, and the well-trained Moorish mercenary army that fought with them, both units being transported to Spain itself from Morocco shortly after the rising. In the face of this overwhelming military threat, the Republic was virtually without defence except for the armed factions within the Left, of trade unions and political parties, who had been using their guns in the previous six months of gang warfare amongst themselves, and against the gangsters of the Right. The union arms were not enough, however, to withstand the rebellious army, and on July 18, 1936, the people of Madrid came out into the streets demanding arms to oppose the rebellion. The President and Prime Minister of the Republic delayed the issuing of arms to the masses until the Prime Minister was referred to by the crowd as *Civilon*, or "civilian" after a bull who would not defend himself in the ring. Finally on July 19, in the early morning, the Prime Minister resigned, and a new government composed of middle-class liberals, but supported by the communists and socialists, was formed. It immediately threw open the public arsenals to the trade unions and the masses.

Because of this step the rebellion was met by what amounted to a revolution, for the armed crowds both resisted the rebellious army, in many cases successfully, and embarked on a reign of terror against any supporters of the Right or known opponents of the Republican regime. The government completely lost control over the revolutionary masses. What had begun as a rising against a military rebellion became a proletarian, anti-bourgeois revolution, which the middle-class government was powerless to stop. Old enmities and hatreds fanned passions throughout Spain during this period, and terror and murder were the norm. This is the terror to which Campbell refers in his Span-

ish writings. The violence and brutality were exactly as he describes them, but what he does not mention is that the revolution began as a defensive measure against the military revolt, and that in Toledo itself the revolutionaries were fighting to reconquer the town from the military rebels whom they finally forced into the Alcazar. The typical post-rising propaganda of the Nationalists was that they had risen to prevent the reign of terror, which they knew was imminent. Campbell accepts this argument completely, and in his autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse*, has a chapter entitled "The Coming of the Terror", while he gives the official Nationalist line in *Flowering Rifle*: "Since for five months we'd turned the other cheek/And only stalled the Terror by a week". The terror was, however a result of the military rebellion, directly caused by mass opposition to the military rebels and their allies of the bourgeoisie, Church and Falange. The arms which made the terror possible were issued by the Republic in self-defence.

Revolution and terror sickened many supporters of the Republic and changed the nature of the conflict. Through the revolution, and the fact that the only major power prepared to aid the Republic was the Soviet Union, the communists gradually gained control of most positions of influence within the government. By the later days of the war they had instituted a secret military police, the SIM, which behaved like its model, at that time engaged in supervising the great purges in the Soviet Union. Many Republican officials including the last Prime Minister, Dr. Negrin, were not communists, but co-operated fully with the Soviet regime because on it depended the flow of arms and supplies. Campbell's depiction of the military rising as anti-revolutionary is not accurate, but he is justified in many of his attacks on the totalitarian nature of the communism which was gaining a hold over his opponents.

What Campbell does not mention, however, and what at times he takes pains to deny, is that there were terror and persecution on the side of the Nationalists. The difference between Nationalist and Republican killings was broadly that the Republican murders were mainly committed in the first few months of the war by uncontrollable revolutionary forces. Apart from political persecution of individuals there was virtually no mass killing in the Republic once order had been restored. On the Nationalist side, mass executions were part of a policy of repression in occupied areas, and were carried out throughout the war and after it. Gabriel Jackson is "certain that close to 200,000 men died in the years 1939-43"⁷ in the Nationalist attempt to exterminate the conquered "Reds" after the war. He goes on to say, "When Heinrich Himmler

visited Madrid in 1941 in connection with the training of the Spanish political police, he disapproved, on practical grounds, the rate of execution."⁸

Campbell's defence of the rising against a freely elected government is typical of Nationalist propaganda. At times he states that the elections were not democratic, and that the Popular Front was not representative:

The votes, as if Democracy to slight,
And show its rusted workings to the sight,
Seated the left, yet counted for the right—
And this in spite of violated urns,
Shots at the booths, and falsified returns.⁹

His criticism of the elections does not rely solely on allegations of the unfairness of the electoral procedure, however. A sense of the futility of democracy with its "rusted workings" underlies the complaint about the undemocratic nature of the 1936 elections. This attitude, of the falsity of the whole democratic system, is that which Campbell offers most frequently in *Flowering Rifle* as the reason for flouting its workings to establish "order" and control. "Devout" "style" is continually contrasted with the materialist values of democracy. The following lines are typical, both in their lack of poetic distinction and in their evocation of the mystique of the ordered and the uniform:

Whether it's guns to fire, or bricks to pile,
Matter is always sensitive to style
(Which is the breathing rhythm of the soul)
And shows itself Devout from pole to pole:
In storms and shocks it always looks for order
The waves in uniform, with silver border,
Still fight to keep in equidistant ranks
As we against artillery and tanks:
Happier still to worship than to grovel
It shows in the Cathedral than the hovel,
And there of centuries will take the polish
Requiring tons of Nitre to demolish:
But when democracy begins to soar
To whom the jail, the brothel, and the store,
Stand for the Church, and tries for like proportions
Matter complies with sorrowful distortions.

(168)

In contrast with these "sordid", "outworn" conditions in the democratic state, Campbell describes the mystique of his ideal state. It is that of the "clean

rejuvenated nation", led by one leader to a purer form of national existence which spurns the degrading influences of both capitalism and communism. The influence of the fascist views of José Antonio Primo de Rivera and his Falange are clearly noticeable in these passages, which show the chivalric and Catholic overtones that distinguish Spanish fascism of the period. The leader principle can appear to be simply part of Campbell's fervid belief in the generalship of the war:

It was not 'liberty' that thus could level
Mankind in common bondage to the Devil
Nor yours, kind Labour, was this ghastly birth
Of squalor—though to camouflage the stain,
Our intellectuals take your name in vain;
Only where Franco rules you seem to shine
Whose influence reaches to our foremost line.

(230)

A sneer at false beliefs in "liberty", the compliment to "kind Labour", and the insistence on efficiency, when coupled with an assertion of the "shining" rule of the leader, are too close to the official fascist line to be accidental. The number of semi-messianic leaders in *Flowering Rifle* is surprising. Calvo Sotelo and Salazar are celebrated in much the same way as Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange. In each case, however, the mystical qualities associated with the leader cult combine in Campbell's political apologies with the suggestion of the health and new life which they bring:

Creative rhythm shuns their blistered hands
And is a thing no Fiscal understands
While style and unity and emulation
Inform each clean rejuvenated Nation,
Wherever there's a Leader to rebel
Against the outworn socialistic Hell,
And muzzle up the soul-destroying Lie
Which Lenin was the first to Magnify.

(225)

The idea of a clean rejuvenated nation in which all sectors of the population benefit from the central ordering principle of the leader, and which becomes an organic entity, is essentially the aim of José Antonio Primo de Rivera's fascism. In 1933 he wrote: "The country is a historical totality . . . superior to

each of us and to our groups. The state is founded on two principles—service to the united nation and the co-operation of classes". In the next year his views showed even more of the mystical quality of the fascist dream: "Fascism is a European inquietude. It is a way of knowing everything—history, the State, the achievement of the proletarianisation of public life, a new way of knowing the phenomena of our epoch. Fascism has already triumphed in some countries and in some, as in Germany, by the most irreproachable democratic means".¹⁰ Before the Asturias rising he had written to Franco offering support for a military *coup d'état* to restore the "lost historical destiny of the country".¹¹ Even after his arrest in 1936 José Antonio continued in the same vein, and in May wrote an open letter from prison to Spanish soldiers in which he called for assistance to protect "the sacred identity of Spain", continuing, "in the last resort", as Spengler puts it, "it has always been a platoon of soldiers who have saved civilisation."¹²

Campbell's old devotion to what is heroic and distinguished in life modulates easily into political views of this sort:

The racket of the Invert and the Jew
 Which is through art and science to subdue,
 Humiliate, and to a pulp reduce
 The Human Spirit for industrial use
 Whether by Capital or Communism
 It's all the same, despite their seeming schism,
 In that for human serfs they both require
 Limpness, servility and lack of fire.

(212-3)

The heroic ethic in Spanish nationalism is intimately connected with the desire to resurrect the greatness of ancient Spain, and in that way is also connected with the belief in the Catholic character of the race and the part religion played in its past grandeur. Campbell's Catholicism is central to his thinking from this period until his death and is not in any way a convenient political concept for him. Nevertheless, his religious beliefs become part of his concept of the politics of the ideal state. In particular, his belief in the unyielding militarism of his cause and its need for realistic and often self-sacrificing surgery is closely linked to the concept of a redemptive sacrifice:

The Christ of Salamanca teaches this,
 The devil-routing Lord of the Abyss
 Who, till this time of men resigned and bold,

Ignatius was the last man to behold—
 Since then, till now, men fought for greed or lust
 To seize the booty or to bite the dust,
 But the old world is 'braver' than the 'new',
 Can use it as its foot-stool or its shoe:
 Or when it rots as it's begun to do,
 As a sharp knife can cut that Stilton through
 Cough though the scientist or squirm the Jew,
 Or stink, abjectly dead, the poets too.
 That God was never brilliantined or curled
 Who out of Chaos saw his battles won,
 And gave, like Moscardo, his only Son,
 To save the charred Alcazar of the world.
 For of all gods, he only breathed our breath
 To live the solar myths, and conquer death.

(174)

Christ is the "Christ of Salamanca", explicitly associated with a Spanish religious leader in the devil-routing of the unfaithful, and quite clearly "Lord of the Abyss". So close is the identification of politics with religion that even the central sacrificial experience of the Christian faith is presented in terms of the siege of the Alcazar. Colonel Moscardo, besieged in the Alcazar, made a telephonic farewell to his son whom the besiegers finally executed after failing in their attempt to blackmail the colonel into surrender.

A sense of Christ's being a military ally of the Nationalists is repeated throughout *Flowering Rifle*, though when describing Christian persecution Campbell prefers to picture a loving and harmless Church. In the poem Christ can be the sword, and Mary the shield. God's vengeance is not often tempered with mercy:

And well may they abominate the Sword,
 The bared and naked vengeance of the Lord—
 And curse the Soldier, him, the human brand,
 That came to lop the sacrilegious Hand,
 And root the godless vermin from the land.

(170)

The obviously biased tone of the passages I have quoted is one of the worst features of *Flowering Rifle*. An approval of the slaughter of one's enemies not only creates a sense of one-sidedness, however. Stephen Spender, in reviewing the poem, declared that there were many passages in it which

made him physically sick.¹³ In spite of its excesses, though, there are successful moments in *Flowering Rifle*. At times Campbell can articulate his scorn for Utopian dreams of social progress. His insistence on the abstract and theoretic nature of communism at the expense of the real is his most consistent and sensible criticism of his opponents. Much more moving, however, are those passages in which he writes subjectively or imaginatively. At such moments he rises above political harangue. Typical is the passage describing his own fear in Toledo during the first days of the war:

Cut off from the Alcazar as we lay
 With nothing save to listen and to pray,
 To listen and to start at fancied sounds
 While the Infernal searchers went their rounds,
 And life, a fly upon a rum-glass rim
 Was subject to the vilest drunkard's whim.

* * * * *

Abomination flawless and profound,
 Loathing turned joy, as if some fearful tumour
 Could find expression in the realm of sound:
 Or be translated by a rabid hound,
 With hoary mane erect and foetid breath,
 Into a cry whose echo in the gloom
 Would jog with fear the very bones of death
 And bristle up the grass upon the tomb.

(193)

The genuine quality in the lines gives them a conviction which totally eludes the denunciatory passages.

Lines in which Campbell describes an experience directly are similarly convincing:

Cooped in a trench, it was my chance to study,
 My neighbour for a day or two, a bloody
 Unburied arm, left lying in the snow
 Which melted now its attitude to show,
 Quite independent of its late discarder,
 Clenching its fist on Nothing, clenching harder
 Than to a stolen penny clings a child:
 But to the desert scene unreconciled
 That seemed so well to sympathize with it,
 With knuckles so inextricably knit,

It seemed against the Universe to hit,
As it would storm and hammer at the sun
Knocking for entry till the world be done.

(245)

His unconcerned acceptance of the severed arm creates an air of objectivity. The value judgments which he goes on to make grow so easily out of the experience as a whole and are founded on such a clearly personal and articulate reaction towards the communistic clenched fist that their effectiveness is independent of politics:

But here his fury is external yet
In frozen paroxysm fixed and set
Constricted on the Nothing in its hold
A clenched fist that Nothing can unfold
Nothing can satisfy, Nothing appease,
Though in its grasp that zeroid treasure freeze
And there is Nothing more for it to seize—
All that it wished to leave of the crushed world,
Compassed, and in its grip of lock-jaw curled—
And yet with its contorted boomerang
Of hate, it seemed my vigil to harangue
And on my mind, as on its table, bang.

(245)

Real experience informs passages like this. They embody an attitude towards the war which transcends political loyalty, although growing out of Campbell's own political convictions. He can be humane at times like this in the midst of what is a terrifyingly inhumane poem.

Campbell re-aligned his loyalties, and Lewis published *The Hitler Cult* in the last year of the decade. In later years Wyndham Lewis readily admitted how mistaken he had been in his attitude towards the fascist dictators. In his autobiography, *Rude Assignment* (1950), he dismisses his polemical works of the mid-thirties as ill-judged and harmful. He regards their basic assumption—the attempt to appease a “demented military adventurer”¹⁴—as fallacious. His statements explain clearly enough his reasons for avoiding the popular left-wing attitude towards the fascist dictators. But perhaps a more heartfelt *mea culpa* is needed as a gloss on statements such as:

General Franco is an ordinary old-fashioned anti-monarchical Spanish liberal, like his airman brother. And if the Spanish Marxists hadn't been so clumsy he

wouldn't be in the field against them at all. He'd be at their side. Franco is part of sleepy old bull-fighting Spain,—no more a Fascist than you are, but a Catholic soldier who didn't like seeing priests and nuns killed. He just didn't want to see all his friends murdered for no better reason than that they all went to mass and to the more expensive cafés and usually were able to scrape enough money together to have a haircut and a shave.¹⁵

Lewis was often as much a victim of his own theory as those whom he insistently attacked between the wars as dupes of theoretic dreams.

Campbell never officially altered his position on the Spanish Civil War. He stood by his earlier views until his death in 1957, and a revised version of *Flowering Rifle* was published in the same year. However, once he had decided to support Britain in the war against Hitler, he developed a new *persona* which helped him overcome embarrassment caused by his Spanish crusade. From 1942-4 he was an N.C.O. in the British army. He adopted the manner of the cynical, worldly-wise Sergeant who has no illusions about the politics of the cause for which he is fighting. As an "old sweat" he must make a personal stand against tyranny even though he knows that all wars are really only fought for the benefit of a few politicians. All politics are now nasty and treacherous. In this way he can continue to attack the literary Left and also abandon his own support for the dictatorial Right without appearing to contradict himself. The closest he comes to a statement on his passionate support for Franco is in a general comment on the futility of political commitment to wars or crusades:

Let me be there to share the strain
And with the poorest pull my weight
As in the catacombs of Spain
When all the world was Red with hate!
I know that all ideals miscarry,
That cowards use the blows we strike,
That liars aim the guns we carry
Screeching their hatred on the Mike.¹⁶

Disillusion of this kind is genuine and convincing. Not only is it a natural development of Campbell's earlier down-to-earth opposition to group-thinking and group-values. It also typifies the disillusion of almost all those writers who were involved in the frenetic political debate of one of the most politically conscious decades in British literary history.

Both Campbell and Lewis were badly mistaken in their attitude towards the Axis in Spain. Their insistence that the pro-Republicans were deluded,

however, has in many cases been borne out by those pro-Republicans themselves. Although scorned at the time, their repeated attacks on the totalitarian politics of the communists within the Republic have been substantiated by many of the old Left. The sympathy which Lewis and Campbell had for Franco, Hitler, and in Campbell's case even fascist theory, severely limit their insights into the failings of the Republic, however. It is the old idealists of the Left who give the most moving statements of the cynical exploitation of ideals which supporters of both sides only partly sensed during the war itself. The ex-Comintern agent, Arthur Koestler, with a humanity which eludes Campbell and Lewis, has the last word on the tragedy:

All this we know today, but we did not know then. We know now that our truth was a half-truth, our fight a battle in the mist, and that those who suffered and died in it were pawns in a complicated game between the two totalitarian pretenders for world domination. But when the International Brigades saved Madrid on November 8, 1936, we all felt that they would go down in history as the defenders of Thermopylae did; and when the first Russian fighters appeared in the skies of battered Madrid, all of us who had lived through the agony of the defenceless town felt that they were the saviours of civilisation.¹⁷

NOTES

1. *Authors Take Sides* (London: Left Review, 1937). No page numbers.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms: The Literary Impact of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1967).
4. Hugh D. Ford, *A Poet's War: British Poets and the Spanish Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965).
5. Katharine Bail Hoskins, *Today the Struggle: Literature and Politics in England during the Spanish Civil War* (Austin and London: University of Texas press, 1969).
6. The editors of *Authors Take Sides* added a question mark to the heading under which they listed writers unwilling to take sides. "Neutral?" is perhaps the most accurate description of Pound's statement: "Questionnaire an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think; too lazy to investigate the nature of money, its mode of issue, the control of such issue by the Banque de France and the stank [*sic*] of England. You are all had. Spain is an emotional luxury to a gang of sap-headed dilettantes."
7. Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War 1931-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 538.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 540.

9. *Collected Poems Volume Two* (London: Bodley Head, 1957), p. 146. Subsequent references to this volume appear in parentheses after the passage quoted. All such quotations are from the revised version of *Flowering Rifle*.
10. Quoted by Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), p. 70.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.
13. *The New Statesman and Nation*, 11 March 1939, p. 370.
14. *Rude Assignment: A Narrative of My Career Up-to-date* (London: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 209.
15. *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive!* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1937), p. 196.
16. "Monologue", *Collected Poems Volume Two*, p. 69.
17. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (London: Collins with Hamish Hamilton, 1954), p. 325.