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| Campbell, Roy (1901-1957) |
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| Roy Campbell was a South African poet and satirist. Born Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell and schooled in South Africa, Campbell went to Oxford in 1919, but never entered the university. After his marriage to Mary Garman in 1922, and the success of his first major work, he returned briefly to Natal, to edit *Voorslag,* but thereafter lived most of his life in France, Spain and Portugal, apart from army service in Africa and residence in England during World War II. |
| Roy Campbell was a South African poet and satirist. Born Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell and schooled in South Africa, Campbell went to Oxford in 1919, but never entered the university. After his marriage to Mary Garman in 1922, and the success of his first major work, he returned briefly to Natal, to edit *Voorslag,* but thereafter lived most of his life in France, Spain and Portugal, apart from army service in Africa and residence in England during World War II.  *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924), an epic manifesto, established the essentials of Campbell’s poetic style: exuberant imagery, traditional versification, idiosyncratic intensity and self-projection (‘The man clear-cut, against the last horizon’). The poetic persona was usually a romantic figure from an imagined pre-industrial world. Successive disappointments (the short life of *Voorslag* and his marriage threatened by adultery) released hilarious satire: *The Wayzgoose* (1930) is a lampoon of the pretensions of settler culture; *The Georgiad* (1931) suggests that, like Thomas Pringle (1789-1834) in his clash with the Cape Governor Somerset, Campbell suffered and baulked at the hauteur and moral indifference of the English aristocracy.  The lyric vein on which Campbell’s reputation rests emerged early in his publication of ‘The Porpoise’ (*Oxford Poetry*, 1920), but Campbell’s true voice was first clearly heard in the anthology pieces of 1926 and in the Provençal poems collected with them in *Adamastor* (1930). Here Campbell also fashioned poetic self-figurations as *isolato* – lyrical projections of the satirist’s stance. Inspiration and control came from French poets (Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Corbière, Valéry): their influence would last. That *Flowering Reeds* (1933), which reads like pure lyric, is the achievement of a mature poet; these poems incorporate and transmute loss, compromise, and transience in their intelligence and formal precision.  Provence continued to inspire the solar and taurine mythology of *Mithraic Emblems* (1936), which, completed after the Campbell’s conversion to Roman Catholicism, includes early responses to the outbreak of the Civil War and begins to identify the Spanish landscape in South African terms. Campbell was at home in a part of Europe close to Africa and extended the demotic reach of his poetic diction.  During the later portion of his career, Campbell almost fell off the map of the Anglophone literary establishment. His Francoist satirical epic *Flowering Rifle*: *a Poem from the Battlefield of Spain* (1939) isolated him completely. The achievements of the post-war years, Campbell’s last decade, include lyrics, from *Talking Bronco* (1946) and ‘Early and Late Poems’, acknowledging that he had found his *querencia* (a reference to a fighting bull’s preferred location in the bull-ring) in the European tradition, and translations, of San Juan de la Cruz (1951) and Baudelaire (1952).  Satire was Campbell’s occasional mode, while lyric was his continuum. His humanist materialism, his pre-Freudian concept of the self, and his prosody, determined by an allegiance to a tradition of the poet as craftsman and sage, set him out of tune with both modernism and modernity. Equally, he opposed any instrumental, future-directed historicist sense. His conversion to Catholicism may have been a calling to his craft as the creation of a world of words, a naïve and primitive energy powering both the satirical and the lyric of his work. |
| Further reading:  (Alexander)  (Campbell, eds.: Alexander and Chapman)  (Voss) |