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### Six *Romances* of the Spanish Civil War and their English Translations by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Sylvia Townsend Warner<sup>1</sup> et al., transcriptions by Alicia Fernández Gallego-Casilda<sup>2,\*</sup>

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Five of the six poems first appeared in *Romancero general de la guerra de España* (1937).

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# Six *Romances* of the Spanish Civil War and their English Translations by Sylvia Townsend Warner

*Sylvia Townsend Warner, transcriptions by Alicia Fernández Gallego-Casilda*

## Abstract

This article presents parallel Spanish–English texts of six poems translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner from their Spanish originals following her attendance at the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Spain in 1937. The poems are by Leopoldo Urrutia, Manuel Altolaguirre, Julio D. Guillén, José Herrera Petere, Félix Paredes and Francisco Fuentes. Five of the six first appeared in *Romancero general de la guerra de España* (1937).

**Keywords** translation; Spanish Civil War; Sylvia Townsend Warner; Federico García Lorca; Leopoldo Urrutia; Manuel Altolaguirre; Julio D. Guillén; José Herrera Petere; Félix Paredes; Francisco Fuentes.

*Editor's note: Sylvia Townsend Warner translated six poems from their Spanish originals following her attendance at the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Spain in 1937. The original poems and the translations follow below. Five of the six Spanish poems were first published in Romancero general de la guerra de España (1937). Warner's translation of the second section of Urrutia's 'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca' was published in Poems for Spain (1939), edited by Stephen Spender and John Lehmann; her other translations were first published posthumously, 'El Heroe' in her Selected Poems (1982) (but*

reproduced below from Warner's manuscript version, which is four lines longer) and the other four in *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (1980), edited by Valentine Cunningham.

The poems and translations are discussed further in this issue of the *Journal* by Alicia Fernández Gallego-Casilda in her prize-winning essay titled 'Translation and ideology in Sylvia Townsend Warner: Six Romances of the Spanish Civil War into English' (pp. 77–96).

1. 'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca', section II  
Leopoldo Urrutia

II

Por los patios de la Alhambra  
a la ventana mudéjar,  
subía un olor agudo  
de azahares y de adelfas.  
Por los patios de la Alhambra,  
por entre las alamedas  
¡ay, cómo olía que olía  
a una infinita tristeza!  
¡Jardín del Generalife,  
y cómo olían a pena  
tus viejísimos laureles,  
a pena reciente y tierna!

Hasta los celestes prados  
sube el ciprés su tristeza,  
y el álamo majestuoso  
infinito de amarguras  
blandamente cabecea.  
No corre un soplo de viento.  
Todo se llena de pena,  
y en el aire del bochorno  
su abanico verde y grande  
deja caer la palmera.

¡Está llorando Granada,  
todo Granada, de pena!

El pico del Monte Sacro,  
las altas Torres Bermejas  
con un pañuelo en los ojos  
tristemente la contemplan.

¡Ay, Federico García,  
que triste se está poniendo  
tu vieja ciudad morena!

'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca'  
Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

In the courts of the Alhambra  
The scent of lemon-flower, the scent  
Of the rose-laurel, rises pungent  
To the mute lattice.  
In the courts of the Alhambra,  
And down the avenues,  
Scent after scent renews  
An infinite sadness;  
And grief has bruised  
From the timeless laurels of the Generalife  
A childish fragrance, tender and innocent.

Towards the heavenly meadows  
The cypress rears a shape of sorrow,  
To long and lofty grief resigned  
The poplar nods its head.  
There stirs no breath of wind:  
Instead, grief is the air all things respire;  
And in the sultry calm the palm lets fall  
Its large green fan.

Granada, all Granada,  
Weeps for a woe.

The peak of Monte Sacro,  
Holding to its sad eyes  
The turrets of Bermejas,  
Looks an Alas!

– ¿Por qué lloráis, mis jardines;  
por qué estáis tristes, palmeras?

– ¡Ay, Federico García,  
lloramos por una muerte  
que se acerca!

El mar estaba llorando  
del alba contra las puertas.  
Salpicaba las ventanas  
de la playa con estrellas.

– ¿Por qué lloras así, mar,  
despeinada la melena  
de tus desflecadas olas,  
qué lloras de esa manera?

– ¡Ay, Federico García,  
que lloro por una muerte  
que se acerca!

Las palabras, en la noche,  
como fina caña eran,  
frágiles y quebradizas  
como fina caña seca.

¡Cómo lloraba el silencio  
escondido entre palmeras!

Todo Granada lloraba  
como una triste doncella,  
con ojos de mar y cielo  
en la madrugada tierna.

Por los picos de la Elvira  
la Muerte baja a la Sierra,  
viene afilada y segura  
sobre la ciudad derecha.

Ay, Federico Garcia,  
How sad in this sunsetting  
Sinks down your old, your gipsy-coloured town!

Why so sorrowful, my gardens?  
Palm-tree, why do you sigh?

Ay, Federico Garcia,  
We weep for a death that draws nigh!

And grieving, the sea  
Conveys the pallor of day to the doors,  
And spatters with salt stars  
The windows along the quay.

Why so sorrowful, O sea,  
With your unlustred waves tangled awry,  
As a woman despairing tangles her hair?

Ay, Federico Garcia,  
I weep for a death that draws nigh!

Words rustled in the night:  
A brittle message, and snapped  
Short like the speech of reeds grown dry.

Bitterly, bitterly,  
Among the palm-trees secluded,  
The silence wept.

And all Granada  
Grieved like a maid forlorn,  
Lamenting in the tender early morning  
With eyes of sea and sky.

Death has crossed the mountain,  
And down the mountain-side

De miedo y dolor, del Darro  
se estremecen las riberas.

(¡Ay, Federico García,  
con un puñal en la mano  
cómo la muerte se acerca!)

‘No.  
No se lo claves.  
No’.

La Muerte se ha disfrazado  
con vestiduras de crimen  
y de traición la careta.  
Viene despacio, en silencio;  
todo Granada, con pena,  
la ve venir, paso a paso;  
viene buscando su presa.

(¡Ay, Federico García,  
que la Muerte ya se acerca!  
¡Todo Granada la ve  
y él aún no se ha dado cuenta!  
¡Por allí, por Sierra Elvira,  
vestida de pistolera!)

Todo Granada la ha visto  
y a Federico García  
le ha cogido de sorpresa.

*(Romancero general de la guerra de España, 1937, pp. 127–8)*



Comes sure of purpose and fast.  
Ah, what was that which traversed  
Me? – cried the river.  
And shuddered like a man in fever.

Ay, Federico Garcia,  
How swiftly death, dagger in hand, draws nigh!

With wickedness for a gown,  
With treachery for a hood,  
Soft-foot, sure-foot,  
Death walks into the town.  
Granada with weeping eyes  
Must watch it, step by step  
Hunting its quarry down.

*'What are these chimes?  
I do not know them.'*

Ay, Federico Garcia,  
Death is here, is here!  
All Granada has seen it.  
He only sees it not –  
The death that has come hither  
Hid in a bandolier.

All Granada has seen it.  
But Federico Garcia  
They took by a surprise.

*(Poems for Spain, 1939, pp. 105–8)*

## 2. 'El héroe'

Manuel Altolaguirre

Nadie ha sabido su nombre,  
que no se escribió en papeles.

Le vieron subir cantando  
por la empinada vertiente;  
llevaba el fusil al hombro,  
y entre los matojos verdes  
su mono azul era un grito  
que avisaba a los rebeldes.  
Sonó un disparo en la tarde  
carmesí de sol poniente,  
y su cuerpo cayó a tierra  
con una herida en la frente.

En el viento de la Sierra  
montan los gritos de muerte.  
La noche, sobre su cara,  
puso un pañuelo de nieve,  
y sobre su cara el alba  
deshojó flores silvestres.  
En el collado seguían  
manando todas las fuentes.

Nadie ha sabido su nombre,  
que no se escribió en papeles.

*(Romancero general de la guerra de España, 1937, pp. 81–2)*

'El Heroe'

Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Nobody knew his name.  
Pen nor paper will tell it.

We saw him rise up singing  
Where the freshet leaps and falls.  
With a gun at his shoulder,  
Among the briars and brambles  
His blue overalls  
Were like a taunt sent ringing  
Out to the eyes of the rebels.

And the western sky was flushed  
With the setting sun when a shot  
Rang out, and he fell to the ground  
With a bullet through the head.

The mountain wind arising  
Keened all night for woe;  
Midnight laid on his face  
A handkerchief of snow;  
Dawn came with a handful  
Of woodland flowers to strow;  
Like mourners through the hills  
The freshets began to flow.

Nobody knew his name.  
Pen nor paper will tell it.

(Dorset History Centre, reference D/TWA/A21a)

### 3. 'La peña'

Julio D. Guillén

Salí yo de guardia  
una noche negra;  
me tocó de puesto  
detrás de una peña.  
Silencio de muerte  
se guarda en la Sierra,  
y en leves susurros  
rompe a hablar la peña:  
'¡Vigila tranquilo,  
soldado, en tu puesto,  
que balas traidoras  
no herirán tu cuerpo!'  
No habló más la peña  
aquélla del puesto.  
Aún me pregunto  
si aquello fué un sueño;  
pero no lo era,  
que estaba despierto.  
Es que aquella peña  
tiene sentimientos,  
y lucha a su modo  
al lado del pueblo.

*(Romancero general de la guerra de España, 1937, p. 90)*

'La peña'

Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Dark was the night  
when I went on guard,  
and took my station  
behind a rock.

A silence of death  
was in the hills;  
then in a whisper  
the rock spoke:

Keep quiet watch,  
soldier, tonight.  
No traitor bullet  
shall pierce your flesh.

So much and no more  
said the rock to me.  
Was it a dream? –  
I ask. But no!  
I did not slumber,  
no dream was there.

But the rock, may be,  
fellowed my feeling,  
and after its fashion  
fought for the people.

*(The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, 1980, pp. 281–2)*

4. 'El día que no vendrá'  
José Herrera Peterre

Día de metal, día de misa,  
de campanas y cañones,  
balas 'dum-dum' y custodias,  
tierra fresca, sangre y flores  
que los fascistas querían  
celebrar tras de la noche  
en que tomasen Madrid  
a dentelladas y coces.

Día de metal, día de misa  
pregonado con tambores  
por las voces de los loros,  
por los loros de las voces;  
mañana, no; al otro día,  
el miércoles por la noche,  
Radio Burgos se desata:  
Cuando el alba quiebre albores,  
en la calle de Alcalá  
bajará Franco de un coche  
azul como el porvenir,  
rosa como los pitones  
de doña Carmen de Polo  
de Franco, más bien del Norte,  
los moros que la acompañan  
degollarán españoles,  
y el arzobispo de Burgos  
dará grandes bendiciones  
a árabes, beduínos,  
nazis, etíopes, frisonos  
y demás representantes  
de patrióticos valores.  
Día de metal, día de misa,  
rosiclaras ilusiones,  
estivales devaneos  
de un puñado de traidores.

'El día que no vendrá'

Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Day of metal, day of masses,  
Day of cannon, day of churchbells,  
Day of shrines and day of bullets,  
Strewn with fresh blood and with blossoms –  
Such the day the Fascists looked for  
On that morrow of that nightfall  
When they took Madrid.

Day of metal and of masses –  
All the Fascist drums foretold it,  
All the parrot voices hailed it.  
Not tomorrow? Well, the next day,  
Wednesday perhaps, or Thursday  
(All are one to Radio Burgos).  
Then the morning's light would lighten  
Under the triumphal archway  
Franco stepping from his chariot;  
Then the Moors would swing their sabres  
And the Spanish heads go rolling;  
Then the Archbishop of Burgos  
Would bestow an ample blessing  
On the Arabs and the Bedouins,  
On the Nazis and the Ethiops,  
On the frizzled and the smooth-haired  
Saviours of Spain.

Day of metal, day of masses,  
Day of rose-coloured illusions,  
Dog-day dream of raving traitors,

¿Cuándo es la entrada en Madrid?  
¿Cuándo mulos percherones  
del carro en que marcha Hitler  
para propios horizontes?

No fué el día de Santiago  
ni en octubre el día doce;  
ya las fiestas de noviembre  
se pierden en los vapores  
del tiempo pasado y muerto;  
Navidades, Concepciones,  
Purísimas, Año Nuevo,  
todo huyó, lluvias y soles,  
y Franco y Mola no entran  
en Madrid con uniformes  
de caballos enjaezados  
para grandes procesiones.

Día de metal, día de misa,  
día de sangres y horrores  
que la clueca fascista  
cacarea a todas voces.  
Los madrileños decimos:  
no brillarán tus albores,  
quedarás en noche negra  
para negros corazones.

*(Romancero general de la guerra de España, 1937, pp. 40–1)*



When, oh when, shall we behold it?  
When is the triumphal entry?  
When shall we behold the mule-team  
Dragging Hitler and his baggage  
To our city gates?

It was not Saint James's feast-day  
Nor the tenth day of October,  
And the slow days of November  
All are hidden in the vapour  
Of time gone and days departed.  
Christmas came, and New Year's Day,  
Candlemas and Lady Day,  
And the calendar sighed onward  
But the day long-looked-for came not.  
Where is Franco? Where is Mola?  
When will those bedizened warriors,  
Fat and spruce like horseshow stallions,  
Prance into Madrid?

Day of metal, day of masses,  
Day of bloodshed, day of terror,  
Day of days the Fascist sewer  
Clamours for with all its voices –  
From Madrid we toss this greeting:  
Day, remain in endless darkness  
Of the black hearts that desired you.  
Never shall you dawn.

*(The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, 1980,  
pp. 291–3)*

## 5. 'Encarnación Jiménez'

Félix Paredes

Encarnación te llamaste  
y encarnaban tu Destino  
como pago a tus virtudes  
fusiles de cinco tiros.  
En un Consejo de guerra  
se te culpó de un delito  
que no perdonan jamás  
los que interpretan al Cristo:  
haber lavado la ropa  
de milicianos heridos.  
Con frases afirmativas  
los Evangelios han dicho  
que Myriam de Nazareth  
pañales lavó del Hijo.  
Ellos creen en esas cosas,  
pero al hallarte en el río  
un Tribunal te formaron  
y la tumba fué contigo.  
Encarnación, lavandera  
sin edad y sin ludibrio,  
lavandera cuyos brazos  
eran expresión de trinos  
entre espuma de jabones  
y maternales deliquios  
sobre las ropas leales  
de tus invencibles chicos:  
nosotros, todos nosotros,  
ante ti nos descubrimos,  
y cada clavel sangriento  
que encontraste en los trapillos  
– heridas de las descargas  
que ametrallaron sin tino –  
nos ha legado claveles  
cinco veces florecidos:  
un aroma de explosiones  
una flor por cada tiro.

'Encarnación Jiménez'

Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Her name confessed the Word  
made Flesh: fate fleshed in her –  
curt payment for her virtues –  
five times a rifle-fire.

The Council sat and judged:  
her crime was clear and plain –  
a crime which those who interpret Christ  
religiously arraign:  
for she had washed the linen  
of wounded militia-men.

In words of holy writ  
the Evangelists have told  
how Mary of Heaven and Nazareth  
washed the clouts of the Child:  
so they believe who judged her,  
so they believe who gave  
sentence on the brook's evidence –  
death, and a handy grave.

Good laundress Incarnation,  
out of the foaming suds  
what love-tokens of clean linen  
you fetched for your brave lads!  
How many times the aches  
through your old bones have gone  
like labour-pangs, washing for many  
as for one wounded son!

Old and guileless – we greet you  
we bare our heads in your honour,  
and greet on your tattered carcass  
each springing gillyflower,  
each gout of blood blossoming  
under the metal shower.

¡Pobre Encarnación Jiménez!  
Tus sienes han conocido  
la blasfemia en que se amparan  
los crímenes del fascismo.

*(Romancero general de la guerra de España, 1937,  
pp. 153–4)*

And from your gillyflowers left us  
we will raise others, and prouder,  
five times more flowering,  
that bloom at the barrel's point  
with a fine scent of powder.

*(The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, 1980,  
pp. 289–90)*

## 6. 'Madrid revolucionario'

Francisco Fuentes

Madrid revolucionario,  
tú siempre lo has demostrado.  
¡El día tan memorable,  
aquel día Dos de Mayo!  
¡Viva la Revolución  
de todo el proletariado!  
¡Los de Asturias, los de Oviedo,  
los rusos, los madrileños armados,  
que defienden su Madrid  
como un solo miliciano!  
Nosotros, los campesinos,  
todos a la voz del mando  
gritamos: '¡No pasarán  
mientras quede un miliciano;  
que luchamos por el pan,  
por el campo soberano,  
que nos quieren arrebatar  
Mola y Queipo de Llano;  
pero que no sueñen eso,  
que lo vayan olvidando!'  
Nosotros, los campesinos  
todos estamos armados,  
y gritamos con valor:  
'¡Que vivan los milicianos,  
que luchamos por el pan,  
por un porvenir más sano!'  
Por eso, cuando pudimos,  
todos fuimos enrolados.  
¡Viva el comandante Lister!  
¡Viva el comandante Carlos!  
¡Viva el Frente Popular  
de todo el proletariado,  
que lucha por la victoria  
sin sosiego y sin descanso!

'Revolutionary Madrid'

Translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Revolutionary Madrid!  
You have proved your worth today,  
In a day that will be remembered  
With the glorious Second of May!  
Long live the Revolution  
Of all the working-class,  
The men of Oviedo,  
The men of Asturias,  
And the workers of Madrid –  
Who like one man have taken  
Up arms, and stand on guard!

We, the men of the fields,  
Shout out like a word of command  
Our slogan: They shall not pass!  
Not while a soldier stands  
To fight for the people's bread,  
To fight for the people's land.  
Our land, that is above all:  
Queipo and Mola may snatch at it,  
But we will make their names  
A byword for future times.

We, the men of the fields,  
Today are all in arms;  
And our shout rings overhead.  
Long live the People's Army  
That fights for the people's bread,  
And for better times to come!  
And it is for this reason  
We march to the beat of the drum.  
Long life to our Captain Lister!  
Long life to our Captain Carlos!  
Long life to the People's Front  
That stands for the working-class,  
That will not rest or falter  
Till the victory is ours!

Me despido cordialmente  
de todos los milicianos,  
y que perdonéis la falta  
a un campesino cerrado.  
Si queréis saber quién soy,  
Francisco Fuentes me llamo.

(*Milicia Popular* 114, 1936, p. 3)



And now I take my leave  
Of all soldiers and friends,  
And if my song is amiss  
Remember a countryman made it.  
And if you would know my name,  
Francis Fuentes I am.

*(The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, 1980,  
pp. 279–80)*

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