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The Mary Jacobs Prize Essay 2023: ‘Translation and Ideology in Sylvia Townsend Warner: Six *Romances* of the Spanish Civil War into English’

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The Mary Jacobs Prize Essay 2023: 'Translation and Ideology in Sylvia Townsend Warner: Six *Romances* of the Spanish Civil War into English'

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Abstract

Upon her return to Britain from Spain following her attendance at the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture held in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia in 1937, Sylvia Townsend Warner translated six Spanish *romances*. Five of the six Spanish poems examined here – those by Leopoldo Urrutia, Manuel Altolaguirre, Julio D. Guillén, José Herrera Petere and Félix Paredes – first appeared in *Romancero general de la guerra de España* (1937). The sixth, by Francisco Fuentes, had been published in 1936 in *Milicia Popular*. This article analyses Warner's English versions of these poems with the aims of illuminating the political motives behind her translation decisions and adding to our knowledge of her relation to the urgent cultural politics of the late 1930s.

Keywords ideology; Spanish Civil War; translation; poetry; propaganda; *romancero*; Sylvia Townsend Warner.

At a time when the socio-economic problems that followed the Great War were still strongly felt in Britain, the coming to power of Hitler in Germany in 1933 and the subsequent invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini in 1935 further contributed to the general climate of crisis in the West. Against this background, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936

was the final push that made the British intelligentsia embrace anti-fascist doctrines in great numbers. In Spain, most Leftist poets placed their writing at the service of the Republican cause. For their poetry to operate effectively in ideological terms, they astutely looked back on the Spanish lyrical tradition and found in the metric form of the *romance* an ideal instrument for their literary fight. Against this backdrop, the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture was held in 1937. Attended by numerous foreign intellectuals, it constituted the catalyst for many translations into English of Spanish poems that were intended to influence government policy and public opinion. Sylvia Townsend Warner, who was among the attendees of the Congress, translated a series of *romances* upon her return to Britain. My examination of these translations aims to disclose the political motives behind her linguistic decisions, as well as to provide a better understanding of her relation to the dominant cultural politics of the 1930s. In this article I also seek to illuminate the much wider infrastructure of political propaganda and cultural cooperation that was in place between Spain and Britain from 1936 to 1939.

In his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, published in 1980, Valentine Cunningham highlights how the most peculiar feature of the Spanish Civil War was that, despite its relatively small scale, a remarkable number of writers took part in it.¹ It is therefore not surprising that the Spanish conflict has been widely described as ‘a poets’ war’.² Until now, the repute surrounding the so-called Oxford Group – made up of writers Louis MacNeice, Wystan Hugh Auden, Cecil Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood – has dominated existing accounts of British interwar literature. Unlike the members of the Oxford Group, Sylvia Townsend Warner’s name is widely absent – or grossly downplayed – in the scholarly literature about the British poetry of the Spanish Civil War.³ She was nonetheless, alongside Nancy Cunard – and with the exception of an isolated collaboration between Inez Pearn and her then husband Stephen Spender – the only woman translator of Spanish poetry of the Civil War into English. Consequently, my wider purpose in this article is to revise the literary history of the 1930s to incorporate a gender perspective that showcases the value of the neglected work of women writers of the Spanish Civil War. More specifically, I bring out the importance of Sylvia Townsend Warner’s contribution, through English translations of Spanish *romances*, to the larger context of cultural exchanges and political alliances between Britain and Spain in the last years of the 1930s.

To achieve this goal, I examine certain Spanish poems translated by Sylvia Townsend Warner during the Spanish Civil War through an approach that connects her ideological positioning and the historical circumstances of the production of the translations. The corpus of this analysis is made up of six Spanish Civil War poems translated into English by Warner while the conflict was still being waged: 'Madrid revolucionario' (Francisco Fuentes, 1936), 'La peña' (Julio D. Guillén, 1937), 'Encarnación Jiménez' (Félix Paredes, 1937), 'El día que no vendrá' (José Herrera Petere, 1937), 'El héroe' (Manuel Altolaguirre, 1937) and 'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca' (Leopoldo Urrutia de Luis, 1937). Except for Warner's version of the latter, which was published in Stephen Spender's anthology *Poems for Spain* in 1939, and her English rendering of Altolaguirre's 'El héroe' – whose authorship has thus far been attributed to her by various scholars – the rest of these translations are undated and were never published in her lifetime. They were printed for the first time in 1980 in *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, edited by Valentine Cunningham.⁴

Despite Spender's attendance at the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Spain in 1937 as part of the British delegation along with Warner, and despite Warner's contribution of three poems – two of her own and a translation – to Spender's anthology of Spanish Civil War poetry, *Poems for Spain*, co-edited with John Lehmann, he failed to mention Warner by name in his autobiography *World Within World*, published in 1951. Instead, he refers to her as 'a Communist lady writer' who 'looked like, and behaved like, a vicar's wife presiding over a tea party given on a vicarage lawn as large as the whole of Republican Spain'.⁵ This caricature of Warner illustrates the complicated relationship that existed in the 1930s between women writers and the hegemonic patriarchal paradigms of the decade. Warner and other women writers thus had to deal with prejudices and stereotypes concerning their writing and to negotiate the poetic forms, styles and symbols of the male literary tradition of the 1930s. Some women published poetry and prose alongside their male counterparts in the main literary journals of the 1930s during the Spanish Civil War – of which the *Left Review* is said by Maroula Joannou to have featured the highest proportion of women contributors,⁶ including Warner – and some of them even ran their own printing houses, such as Nancy Cunard's *The Hours Press*. However, their frequent lack of formal education must have diminished the availability of the kind of spaces of intellectual association and mutual promotion that Auden and his comrades had enjoyed at

Oxford and Cambridge. In the words of Barbara Brothers, those women, like Warner, whose writing expressed a profound radicalism during the interwar years suffered a 'double jeopardy' – first, for opposing the dominant political neutrality encouraged by the British government at the time of the Spanish Civil War and, second, for daring to do so at a time when British society still gave little credence to women's political opinions.⁷

In addition to her two poems about the Spanish Civil War titled 'Benicasim' and 'Waiting at Cerbère', *Poems for Spain* included – as has been pointed out – Warner's English translation of the second section of the poem 'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca', originally written by Leopoldo Urrutia de Luis. Warner's translation was included in the last of the six sections of the anthology, the one entirely dedicated to the memory of Lorca. The fact that she chose to translate this poem for the anthology is evidence of how, as the end of the war was nearing, she felt – perhaps more strongly than ever – what a fascist victory would mean for people of her 'kind'. This was the word she herself used in one of the poems of a series from the Spanish Civil War dedicated to her partner, Valentine Ackland, where the amorous lesbian content is intertwined with their experience of social revolution in Barcelona:

We did not go there with hearts unexercised
In love, and falling in love, and the minds' marriage –
Love for each other was the chiefest part of our baggage,
Love for our kind, too. But more than we surmised...⁸

Warner's translation in *Poems for Spain* thus aids the consolidation of the symbolic value of the murder of Lorca during the Spanish Civil War beyond political terms, evidencing its homophobic nature as well.

In his elegy, Urrutia de Luis shows his support for the Republican cause. Like Warner, Urrutia de Luis firmly believed in the effectiveness of poetry as a force of political action. Proof of this literary commitment – which translated into his fighting on the front, where he was wounded – comes in his works *Romances de un combatiente* (1937) and *Versos en la guerra* (1938), published in collaboration with Miguel Hernández and Gabriel Aldrich. Various of his *romances* also appeared in the periodical *Ahora* and in the *Romancero general de la guerra de España* (1937).⁹ It was in this last volume that the poem 'Romancero a la muerte de Federico García Lorca' was included. Urrutia de Luis's original poem, composed of three sections, 'imagines Death stalking

Lorca throughout Granada' and is full of 'invocations of Lorca's poetic style', including his repeated use of the lamenting interjection 'ay'.¹⁰ The opening section of the poem sets the scene of the event and announces the death of the poet, naming him only once, as Federico ('En su tierra de Granada, / junto a sus memorias viejas, / han matado a Federico, / nuestro cárdeno poeta'), while the third section focuses on the pain of the loss of Andalusian people, without naming Lorca at all:

Lloran todas las muchachas
de la Andalucía Reina;
de la Andalucía alta,
de la Andalucía baja...,
¡todas las niñas morenas!
Todas las 'niñas de España'
se están muriendo de pena!' (RGGE 127–9)

Nonetheless, Warner chose for her translation the second section of the poem. Her decision may have to do with the length of the section: its 85 lines make it the longest of the three and it concentrates the highest number of explicit references to Lorca, in addition to many descriptions of the landscape of Granada:

<p>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! (RGGE 127)</p>	<p>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. (PS 105–6)</p>
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Urrutia de Luis employs sensory elements – landscape and smells – as an allegory of the emotions – sorrow and grief – triggered by the murder of

Lorca, something that must have caught Warner's attention, accustomed as she was to the use of landscape as a metaphor. The 'ventana mudéjar' – in reference to the Hispano-Moresque style of ornamentation – of the Spanish version transforms in Warner's translation into a 'mute' lattice, through what may be a lack of full understanding of the original language, taking 'mudéjar' to mean 'muda' instead of 'in the mudejar style'. However, paradoxically the mistake does contribute to the sense of helplessness and silence evoked by the Spanish poem, which Warner intensifies by describing silence's weeping as 'bitter'. The original poem's line '¡Cómo lloraba el silencio / escondido entre palmeras!' ('How silence wept / hidden among palm trees') thus becomes, in Warner's translation, 'Bitterly, bitterly, / Among the palm-trees secluded, / The silence wept'. Death seems to have paralysed life in the city, catching Granada – and Lorca himself – by surprise:

<p>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 de bochorno su abanico verde y grande deja caer la palmera. (RGGE 127–8)</p>	<p>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. (PS 106)</p>
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The translation of these verses illustrates how Warner favours the poetic harnessing of the figurative resources of the original over fidelity to the metric and rhyming structure, which results in shorter stanzas in the English version. Besides, the expository dryness of the original, where description and juxtaposition abound, is slightly interrupted by Warner's prosaic tendency, thus strengthening the coexistence of natural elements through the introduction of the word 'instead', which is not present in the original. Consequently, in Warner's translation, the cypress does not lift its sadness but deploys a 'shape of sorrow' – a subtler and more suggestive action which contributes to the sombreness of the poem.

Nevertheless, despite her translation choice, Warner does not entirely renounce the colloquialism present in Urrutia de Luis's poem. On the contrary, in her version she skilfully combines certain stylistic

features of the *romancero* with her own poetic style, which Jane Dowson defines as a mix between the ‘literary’ and the ‘popular’ through both ‘conversational’ and ‘formal’ registers.¹¹ In the translation of the following verses, rhyme (*gown / hood / foot / town*) and free verse coexist alongside direct and indirect style, colloquial language (‘ay’) and elevated language (‘nigh’, ‘hither’). While here Warner respects the sound structure characteristic of the *romance* through the repetition of the refrains and maintaining the warning about the arrival of Death (‘Death is here, is here!’), she takes the liberty of adapting the direct speech of the original, perhaps mistaking ‘No se lo claves’ (‘Do not stab him’) for ‘I do not know the keys’, and consequently introducing a reference to the tolling of bells, a quintessentially elegiac element:

(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 lo ha visto
y a Federico García
le ha cogido de sorpresa.
(RGGE 128)

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 hither
Hid in a bandolier.

All Granada has seen it.
But Federico Garcia
They took by a surprise.
(PS 107–8)

Elegiac remembrance is also the tone that dominates another of the poems translated by Warner during the Spanish Civil War, and taken from the *Romancero general de la guerra de España*, specifically from the section titled ‘Romances del Frente del Centro’. The poem, written by Manuel Altolaguirre, is titled ‘El héroe’. It recounts the fall in battle of an anonymous soldier without glorifying the event, unlike many of the *romances* written during the war – of which ‘El miliciano desconocido’ by Vicente Aleixandre is a clear example:

No sé quién fue, quién ha sido;
 ¡toda la ciudad lo tiene!
 Madrid, a su espalda, le alienta,
 Madrid entero lo sostiene!

¡Un cuerpo, un alma, una vida
 como un gigante se yerguen,
 a las puertas del Madrid
 del miliciano valiente! (RGGE 57–8)

‘El héroe’, in its English version, has often been wrongly attributed to Warner as her own poem.¹² This confusion is in a way appropriate, however, since Altolaguirre’s poem offers a clear representation of the collective spirit of Republican Spain through a focus on the anonymity of the very many soldiers who died fighting against fascism. For Aguirre, the importance that this composition places on collectivity over individuality is an inherently Marxist feature,¹³ which might be a reason why the authorship of Warner’s translated version has remained unquestioned. Warner must have surely found in ‘El héroe’ the expression of much she firmly believed in, which would explain her willingness to translate it:

Nadie ha sabido su nombre, que no se escribió en papeles.	Nobody knew his name. Pen nor paper will tell it.
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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	We saw him rise up singing Where the freshet leaps and fails. 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.
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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.
(RGGE 81–2)

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 his 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.¹⁴

Although the English version respects the rhyming scheme of Altolaguirre's *romance* at some points, it is possible to appreciate, on a connotative level, Warner's poetic licence – to the extent that she likens the soldier's cry to warn off the Nationalists to a 'taunt' to the fascist troops. Besides, the 'empinada vertiente' ('steep slope') which the Republican soldier climbs in the Spanish *romance*, becomes a 'freshet' in Warner's version which comes and goes repeatedly – an image which recalls the fruitfulness offered by the red clouds depicted in 'Journey to Barcelona'. Possibly through a lack of understanding of the Spanish term, Warner interprets 'vertiente' ('steep') as a word derived from 'verter' and consequently resorts to the symbolism of fertility associated with rain in several of her own poems of the Spanish Civil War. At other points of the poem, Warner equally alters the meaning of certain verses, as is the case of lines 13–14 of the original – 'En el viento de la Sierra / montan los gritos de muerte' – which, in Warner's English, acquire a more intense and poetic dramatic character. It is no longer the grieving laments that can be heard in the wind, but the wind itself, rising, afflicted, to mourn through the night. The same thing occurs in the penultimate stanza of the poem, where lines 19–20 – 'En el collado seguían / manando todas las fuentes' – refer to life continuing its course in spite of death. It almost seems as if the fountains, by flowing, are mourning those lives lost for the cause of freedom. It might be, with this last interpretation in mind, that Warner decides to overlook the

mention of the earth in the original to focus, instead, on the course of water flowing through the hills – hills which she personifies, just as she does with the wind, as if she was witnessing a funerary parade: ‘Like mourners through the hills’.

Warner also intensifies the graphic nature of the death of the soldier in her translation. The poem uses prolepsis to establish the causal relationship between hearing a shot and the fall of the soldier’s body, with a wound in his forehead. In Warner’s English version, however, she seeks to strengthen the effect produced in the reader by the soldier’s death – it is the soldier *himself* who falls, not merely his body, and she explicitly indicates that a bullet has pierced his head. Even though the translation of Altolaguirre’s ‘El héroe’ was never published in Warner’s lifetime, the typescript of her English version can be found among the Sylvia Townsend Warner papers at the Dorset History Centre. The poem was included under the title ‘El Heroe’ in the selection of her poetry published posthumously in 1982 and reprinted in 1985.¹⁵ Lines 10–13 above (‘And the western sky was flushed ... with a bullet through his head’) are manually crossed out in Warner’s typescript and were not included in the published version.¹⁶ It might be that the intensity of the image which Warner created in the last stretch of the Spanish Civil War seemed to her problematic when isolated from the contingency imposed by the reality of the war, and she therefore was minded to leave it out of her printed works.

Another one of the war poems translated by Warner, also originally published in the *Romancero general de la guerra de España*, was ‘La Peña’ written in Spanish by Julio D. Guillén, political commissaire of the 27th brigade. ‘La Peña’ is a brief composition, included – like ‘El héroe’ – in the section titled ‘Romances del Frente del Centro’. The speaker in this poem is a soldier who recalls an encounter in the mountains with a rock that addresses him to ease his fear of dying:

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,

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:

soldado, en tu puesto,
que balas traidoras
no herirán tu cuerpo!
No habló más la peña
aquella 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. (RGGE 90)

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,
followed my feeling,
and after its fashion
fought for the people.
(TPB 281–2)

On this occasion, Warner's translation is considerably more conservative than her previous efforts, which might be due to the original poem's inherent simplicity. Her interest in folklore and legends, which over the years led to the inclusion in her narratives of witches (*Lolly Willowes*, 1926) and fairies (*Kingdoms of Elfin*, 1977), among other fantastic creatures, could have aroused her appreciation for this *romance* in which, much as in a fable, an inanimate object comes to life. In formal terms, Warner's translation attempts to preserve the metric structure employed by Guillén, converting his mainly hexasyllabic verses into verses of mostly four and five syllables, thus adapting the composition to the lesser linguistic extension characteristic of English. Besides, Warner's version maintains the narrative chronology of the original, although she does incorporate certain rhetorical effects that dramatise the story; for instance, in English, the rock tells the soldier that bullets will not 'pierce' – instead of 'hurt', as in Guillén's poem – his flesh. In this same vein, where Guillén simply suggests that the rock 'has feelings' ('tiene sentimientos'), Warner explicitly aligns the feelings of the rock with those of the poetic voice of the soldier – for it is those anti-fascist feelings that have led the Republican soldier to fight in defence of the Spanish people.

More propagandistic than her translation of 'La Peña' is undoubtedly her English version of the poem by José Herrera Petere titled 'El día que no vendrá', which Warner found, once again, in the *Romancero*

general de la guerra de España. It can therefore be concluded that Warner must have acquired a copy of this anthology, which was distributed by the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture during the Second International Congress of Writers held in Spain in 1937. This poem by Herrera Petere, included in the first section of the collection – ‘Romances de la Defensa de Madrid’ – deploys a defiant tone, directly addressing the Nationalist troops who are trying to take the city of Madrid, as well as those who support them: Moors, bishops and Nazis, among other allies. Herrera Petere ridicules the fascists who, like parrots, threaten repeatedly to besiege Madrid, without success:

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 quiere
 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, frisoner
 y demás representantes
 de patrióticos valores.

(*RGGE* 40–1)

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. (*TPB* 291)

Despite the obstacles posed by the English language to respecting the syllabic structure of the Spanish poem, and consequently the verse distribution of the original, Warner manages to save the musicality of Herrera

Petere's litany. He himself achieves this through the enumerative nature of the second half of this fragment, in which the recurrence of commas provides a markedly rhythmic cadence to the poem. Warner's English version notably preserves the irony of the original, which is remarkable considering the abundance of cultural references it contains. Warner retains most of these but omits Herrera Petere's reference to Carmen Polo, Franco's wife, whose coldness in the face of her husband's cruelty he compares to that of the North Pole. Warner's decision might perhaps have been due to her lack of knowledge about the figure of Franco's wife or, more likely, to her thinking that such a digression would dilute the anger that the poem directs collectively against the Nationalist forces and their military allies. Warner also omits the description of the future as 'blue' if the Nationalists were to win the war, a reference to the colour of the shirts worn by the Falange.

There is also an instance in which Warner manipulates the references of the original *romance* in a seemingly intentional manner. Such is the case of 'calle de Alcalá', which in Warner's translation becomes a 'triumphal archway'; this translation strategy is complemented in the next verse with the translation of 'coche' as 'chariot' and the introduction of the possessive 'his' to reiterate that the chariot belongs to Franco, who is depicted as an emperor arriving in the conquered city. Warner thus criticises Franco's delusions of grandeur, inspired by Spain's imperial past. Lastly, it can also be conceded that Warner does sometimes make simple errors in translation. This is the case in the reference to 'frisiones' ('Friesians') in the original, who are the inhabitants of the historical region of Frisia, in Holland, where the war of Flanders was waged against Phillip II. In the Spanish poem, this is Herrera Petere's way of situating the fascist support for Franco throughout the West within Spain's belligerent history – something that Warner misses in mistaking the word 'frisiones' for 'frizzled', a term which seems to make her think of the curly hair attributed to the citizens of Ethiopia, which was then under Italian control. In this way, Warner leverages her confusion to condemn fascists who are supporting the Nationalist troops from both Africa – 'frizzled' – and Europe – 'smooth-haired', that is, Aryan. While this mistake results in a forced and racially problematic image, in another moment Warner commits an error that paradoxically enriches her version. In the final stanza of the poem, Warner does not replicate Herrera Petere's repeated comparison of the fascists with birds – 'parrots' first, then 'hens' – to accuse them of insistently proclaiming their intentions of crushing Republican resistance in Madrid. Warner seems to understand the Spanish word 'clueca' ('hen') to

mean 'cloaca', thereby referring to the Nationalists as a 'sewer', a decision which intensifies the ideological virulence of the poem:

Día de metal, día de misa,
día de sangres y horrores
que la clueca fascista
cacarea a todas voces.
(RGGE 41)

Day of metal, day of masses,
Day of bloodshed, day of terror,
Day of days the Fascist sewer
Clamours for with all its voices –
(TPB 293)

The last of the Spanish Civil War poems from the *Romancero general de la guerra de España* translated by Warner was 'Encarnación Jiménez', originally written by Félix Paredes and included in the section 'Romances de los Frentes del Sur', specifically, in the subsection devoted to Málaga. The Spanish poem is an elegy dedicated to a local washerwoman who, having been accused of washing the clothes of several wounded Republican soldiers, was shot by the Nationalists:

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.
(RGGE 153)

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 inter-
pret Christ
religiously arraign:
for she had washed the linen
of wounded militia-men.
(TPB 289)

In her translation, Warner leverages the play on words concerning the woman's name which initiates the Spanish poem, transforming her into the 'Word / made Flesh'. As in 'El héroe', the fact that this poem's protagonist is a civilian who humbly defends the Republican cause explains, in my opinion, Warner's disposition to translate it. For Warner, war's martyrs are not only those soldiers who are honoured for their services but also the Spanish people as a whole who, through daily actions such as washing a Republican soldier's clothes, contribute to the anti-fascist struggle. Besides, as can be appreciated in the verses quoted above, this poem contains a

critique of the Catholic Church – a recurring theme in Warner’s own war poetry, which might also have contributed to her interest in this *romance*.

Warner allows herself greater creative freedom in her translation of the final stanzas of the Spanish poem:

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. ¡Pobre Encarnación Jiménez! Tus sienes han conocido la blasfemia en que se amparan los crímenes del fascismo. (RGGE 153–4)	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. 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. (TPB 289–90)
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In addition to omitting the final stanza of the poem, perhaps to avoid the suggestion of victimhood, here Warner resorts to one of her most common translation strategies: she creates a much more explicit scene in the English version, converting ‘cada clavel sangriento’ – ‘each bloody carnation’ – which represents an exit wound, into a ‘tattered carcass’ that drips blood. Despite the graphic intensity of this image, Warner closes her translation with the hopefulness characteristic of much of her war poetry. The sacrifice performed by Encarnación Jiménez, and by many other ordinary women like her, favours the flourishing of new lives, and these will continue to fight against fascism.

Finally, the only one of the poems translated by Warner during the Spanish Civil War that is not included in the *Romancero general de la guerra de España* is ‘Madrid revolucionario’ written by Francisco Fuentes. The Spanish poem was originally published in the November 1936 issue of the periodical *Milicia Popular* – Warner must have obtained a copy of it during one of her two visits to Spain. Warner’s translation is tactically adapted to her ideological stance. What had attracted her to communism in the 1930s had precisely been, according to Brothers, the possibility of a richer life of the body and the spirit for her and all human beings.¹⁷

Despite her open support of Soviet diktats during the 1930s, Warner's political position was closer to humanism than to a firm Stalinism – an impression sustained by the fact that, while one of her poems published before the Spanish Civil War refers to Lenin,¹⁸ Stalin is never explicitly mentioned in her poetry. This might be the explanation for Warner's removal of the reference to the role of the USSR in the defence of Madrid in her English translation of 'Madrid revolucionario'. It may also be the case that, fascinated by the 'austere' beauty of Spain and the bravery of its people in the fight against fascism,¹⁹ she decided to discard an explicit mention of Soviet interference in her translation. Additionally, since the poem denounces foreign support of the fascist troops, Warner could have wished to avoid being accused of hypocrisy through evidencing Russian assistance to the Republicans. Despite this omission, Warner's translation remains loyal to the syllabic and rhythmic structure of the Spanish *romance*, transforming rhymes into assonance to facilitate her task without ever imposing a distorting formal systematisation. What Warner tries hardest to preserve are Fuentes's cultural references in the poem, as is the case with the popular uprising of the people of Madrid against French occupying troops in 1808:

Madrid revolucionario,	Revolutionary Madrid!
tú siempre lo has demostrado.	You have proved your worth
¡El día tan memorable,	today,
aquel día Dos de Mayo!	In a day that will be remembered
¡Viva la Revolución	With the glorious Second of May!
de todo el proletariado!	Long live the Revolution
	Of all the working-class,
('Madrid revolucionario': 3)	(TPB 279)

Warner combines omissions with insertions to defend her ideology in the English version of the poem. In this sense, Madrid is not just revolutionary but also brave – for it has proven its endurance and prevented fascist control of the city. Besides, Warner does not simply mention the War of Independence against France. Instead, she defines the event as 'glorious', possibly aware of the role played by the people of Madrid in defeating Napoleon's troops – a true revolutionary victory of the working class. Although Warner's 1935 poem 'Red Front!' had portrayed Napoleon as a liberator against Russian Cossacks in January 1814 – 'Comrade, are you grim enough, / Taut to fighting-trim enough – / Hark! – to march with us today / On the tall Bastille of Nay?'²⁰ – her translation of Fuentes's poem

during the Spanish Civil War leverages the depiction of Napoleon as an invading tyrant whose attack was successfully deterred by the Spanish people in May 1808, just as they will now defeat the Nationalists who wish to take over Madrid. This provides an example of the malleability of historical symbolism in the poetry of the Spanish Civil War.

Warner deliberately rewrites those *romances* which she finds most sympathetic to her political beliefs, always combining the Modernist legacy she had inherited with folkloric and popular elements which in most cases, despite her flawed command of the Spanish language, she manages to successfully incorporate into the English version. The emotive intimacy she favoured in many of her own poems does not seem to be the explanation for the war poems she chose to translate. The selection of *romances* she translated expresses her own powerful commitment to the Republican cause, for these pieces are focused on the brutal reality of the Spanish war.

Note on Contributor

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Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

Notes

- 1 *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, ed. Valentine Cunningham (1980; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. xxi. Henceforth *TPB* in the poem sources, with page numbers indicated in the body of the text.
- 2 Some of the works that use the term are: Hugh Ford, *A Poets' War: British poets and the Spanish Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965); Murray Sperber (ed.), *And I Remember Spain: Spanish Civil War anthology* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974); Michele Haapamaki, 'Writers in arms and the just war: The Spanish Civil War, literary activism, and Leftist masculinity', *Left History* 12, no. 2 (2005), pp. 33–52.
- 3 The name and work of Sylvia Townsend Warner is absent from the previously quoted publications by Ford, *A Poets' War*, and Sperber (ed.), *And I Remember Spain*, as well as from the following works and anthologies: Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms: The literary impact of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1967); Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause: The intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War* (London: W. H. Allen, 1968); Katharine Bail Hoskins, *Today the Struggle: Literature and politics in England during the Spanish Civil War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969); Celia Wallhead (ed.), *Writers of the Spanish Civil War: The testimony of their auto/biographies* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011); Maurizio Serra, *Une génération perdue: les poètes guerriers dans l'Europe des années 1930* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015).
- 4 Stephen Spender and John Lehmann (eds), *Poems for Spain* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939); henceforth *PS*, with page numbers indicated in the body of the text. The Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Valentine Ackland Archive at the Dorset History Centre includes, in addition to the poems examined in this article, the typescript of two other *romances* translated by Warner in this period, namely 'Ganarás el pan' by Antonio Agraz and 'Romance de nuestro encuentro con Bernardo del Carpio y de lo que en él nos dijo' by Félix Parede.
- 5 Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (1951; London: Readers Union, 1953), p. 244.
- 6 Maroula Joannou, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner in the 1930s', in *A Weapon in the Struggle: The cultural history of the Communist Party in Britain*, ed. Andy Croft (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 91.
- 7 Barbara Brothers, 'Writing against the grain: Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Spanish Civil War', in *Women's Writing in Exile*, eds. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela J. C. Ingram (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 351.
- 8 Mercedes Aguirre, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner's Spanish Civil War love poems, with an introduction by Mercedes Aguirre', *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society* 19, no. 1–2 (2020), p. 66.
- 9 Henceforth *RGGE* in the poem sources, with page numbers indicated in the body of the text.
- 10 Gayle Rogers, *Modernism and the New Spain: Britain, cosmopolitan Europe, and literary history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 184.
- 11 Jane Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry 1910–1939: Resisting femininity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), p. 232.
- 12 It first appears in Claire Harman's editions, *Sylvia Townsend Warner: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1982), pp. 43–4, and then her *New Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2008), pp. 256–7. Later attributions of this poem as an original by Warner which I located during the course of my research occur in the following works: Jane Dowson, ed., *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 153–4; Mercedes Aguirre,

- 'The Spanish Civil War in the works of Nancy Cunard, Martha Gellhorn, and Sylvia Townsend Warner', PhD dissertation, UCL, 2015, p. 136; Carmelo Medina Casado, *Poetas ingleses del siglo XX* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2007), p. 133; Barbara Brothers, "'Through the Pantry Window": Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Spanish Civil War', in *Rewriting the Good Fight: Critical essays on the literature of the Spanish Civil War*, eds. Frieda S. Brown et al. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1989), p. 169; Jane Dowson, 'Women poets and the political voice', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, politics and history*, ed. Maroula Joannou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 48; Jane Dowson, 'Poetry, 1920–1945', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1920–1945*, ed. Maroula Joannou (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 173.
- 13 Aguirre, 'The Spanish Civil War', p. 136.
- 14 Lines 10–13 of Warner's translation have been transcribed here from her own typewritten translation, archived in the Dorset History Centre. Reference: D/TWA/A21a. Claire Harman includes this omitted stanza in the notes to Warner's *New Collected Poems*, p. 376.
- 15 Typescript poems archived in the Dorset History Centre. Reference: D/TWA/A21a. The description of the item reads: 'Poems entitled "El Heroe"; "Ganas el Pan, Antonio Agraz. Romancero. p220"; one untitled begins "Through the Kingdom of Leon"; some manuscript emendations by STW'.
- 16 Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner: Selected poems*, pp. 43–4.
- 17 Brothers, 'Writing against the grain', p. 162.
- 18 Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'In this midwinter', *Left Review* 1, no. 4 (1935), p. 101.
- 19 Maud Ellmann, 'After the Death of Don Juan: Sylvia Townsend Warner's Spanish novel', *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society* 17, no. 2 (2017), p. 4.
- 20 Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'Red Front!', *Left Review* 1, no. 7 (1935), p. 256.

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